

The operation of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (1 Cor. 12)

Part 1

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[00:00:01] The operation of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, such is the title of the talk to be given this evening, as dictated by those who've been on their knees and been before the Lord for weeks and maybe months as the subject of this conference. And this evening, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly.

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity.

And in case anybody here says, ah, but the word Trinity is not in the Scripture from the beginning to the end. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He laid down the formula for baptism in the 19th verse of the 28th chapter of Matthew, [00:01:05] said, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

And there we have Him, the Holy Ghost. I say Him, and these things are well known, probably to every person in this room. But here we are, to read and to look at the Word of God from which we purport to get the truth we believe and teach.

The Holy Spirit is seen exercising power throughout the whole of the Scripture.

In fact, not only exercising power in the way of influence, [00:02:05] not merely the power behind the throne, as some people seem to think, nor the source of a secret energy, merely.

But going further back to the beginning than even we went this afternoon, in the second verse of Genesis, when this world in which we know, this world in the form we know it, was about to be cast into its present form, it says, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

I'm no scientist, but I have been told that the scientists believe that the earth at one time was covered entirely by waters. I don't know why I said that, because I'm not really interested [00:03:03] in what the scientists say, but I like to hear them talk. But it does say, and it's the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit of God moved, not just sat, but moved over the waters before the words are heard, let there be light.

So He's a prime mover in the finest sense in the Scripture, and throughout the Scripture until we

come to those last verses which were touched on this afternoon, where then again we have the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, uttering one of the most powerful invitations to the most powerful person in the universe, come, Lord Jesus. There's the kind of person we are speaking of. [00:04:04] But you know, let us be very firm about this, that He is God.

The Holy Spirit is God, not merely a godly influence, as some would say.

And His personality, ah yes, not just a god who cannot be understood at all, though no man can understand why the Spirit does this or that necessarily. The wind bloweth where it listeth or where it likes, the Lord Jesus said, and so is every one that is of the Spirit. The Spirit is sovereign, the Holy Spirit is God, and His personality is revealed in the Scripture time and time again. [00:05:02] Let me quote you one instance which is very well known. It was the Holy Spirit as godly men in the beginning of the Christian era, but after our Lord had gone on high, the Holy Spirit who said as they fasted and prayed, separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.

He has, as it were, an important role in every movement of God.

In fact, I believe that He is seen, as one reads the Scriptures, to be the moving power behind and sometimes directly in [00:06:01] every single manifestation of God.

There are big words, it's a large concept, but that I believe to be the function of the Holy Spirit who is Himself God with all the power that attaches to Godhead. Far above any words that I can produce, of course. But let's look at a few instances. We've spoken about Him moving upon the waters before a word was uttered in the way of creation as we know it in this world. But you remember, of course, the children here will remember that the topstone of God's creation, after those marvellous six days of work [00:07:01] in Genesis, the last was God's masterpiece.

He has been called Man, whom He made after His own image in His likeness. And there we have a creature not made to not know where He's going, not to raise His educated mind and His refined hands and say, what's it all about? God did not make man for that, of course. But He made him so that He might communicate the marvellous things of God to a creature in this world who could respond. I don't want to be led off into all kinds of sidetracks, which is rather an occupational risk of mine, I fear. [00:08:01] I want to say that the Holy Spirit is the power of communication of the things of God to man. We only need one scripture for this. There are many more. This is it.

If there's anybody here who has walked in from the street and doesn't know who we are or what we're doing, this is God's holy word.

And from cover to cover it is said of this word that holy men of old speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

That's how it came to pass. That is why this word is 100% reliable.

That is why we keep discovering 2,000 years after the last of it was written, after the last of it was written, [00:09:01] why we keep discovering that it lets us into secrets which normally only God can know. Because the Holy Spirit was used to communicate what we need to know about God. It's a lovely thought, too, that all we need to know about God is between the covers of this Bible.

But there came a moment when God the Son stepped into the world he had made. It's a wonderful story. Were it not in the Bible and under the power of the Holy Spirit, an impossible story to believe. But when the moment for incarnation came for the second person in the Trinity, [00:10:02] the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, is seen to be the power by which it's done.

You remember the words, don't you? To his mother it was said, at least to his father it was said, that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And to his mother it was said, the Holy Spirit shall overshadow thee.

To the complete relaxation and comfort and strengthening of both that pair, who were worried about what was happening until they received this direct communication and the Holy Spirit revealed. That was he who once again was fulfilling his function [00:11:05] and he was directly involved in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. There came a day when the blessed Holy Savior, the one who went about doing good, defeating the works of the devil, when he went to Calvary's cross and there he gave himself. And it is recorded in words almost too holy for my lips to speak, that by the eternal Spirit he, the Son of God, becomes Son of Man, offered himself as sacrifice to God.

By the eternal Spirit, [00:12:03] I'm sorry but I cannot expand that for you this evening, lest I do it of violence. I'm only drawing attention to the importance of this person, the Holy Spirit, the power of this person who is God, the Holy Spirit.

And then came the creation, the recreation of a man, the making of a sinner into a saint. And lest anybody should ever persuade you at a gospel rally that all you have to do is to give your heart to Christ, let us say that though it's been made simple for you and me to come to the Lord Jesus and take him simply as our Savior, [00:13:01] the real work is one that equals or outshines the work of the creation itself. When it says, the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, ye must be born again.

Born again, Lord. Yes, born of water and of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is involved in the creation of a saint out of what seemed to be, was a sinner.

If any man be in Christ, says the Apostle Paul, he is a new creation.

He is not just a secondhand model that's been refurbished. [00:14:02] He is something new, a new creation. And that is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are by these few scriptures reminding ourselves, are we not, of the tremendous weight and importance which must attach to this person, the Holy Spirit. And then the empowering of the saint, recreation of the sinner, empowering of the saint. Jesus, our blessed Savior, said, he, the Holy Spirit, shall be in you.

In you.

Indwelling so thoroughly the believer that the blessed Apostle Paul could exclaim, what? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?

[00:15:09] My dear young saint, my young sister, my young brother, that which God has made you is so important that none of us can grasp its significance fully. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is perhaps the

miracle of the age in which we live. It's the wonder of the age of this in which we live and it's so true that we should ever be mindful, and I speak to myself, that my body, frail, unimportant in the world, [00:16:07] which can be tortured and cast into a concentration camp, which can be counted as nothing by the enemy, is the temple of the Holy Spirit who himself is God, so powerful that every manifestation of God down the ages has been accompanied by his direct power.

I want for a moment to speak of the power that he used to create the assembly. I'm likely to touch points which were touched this afternoon. In fact, I thought our brother this afternoon might well have touched all the points that my poor, frail mind can think of for this evening, [00:17:01] but mercifully, gently, he did not.

But no sooner had our Lord Jesus Christ been exalted in heaven than those newly created believers on earth were baptized into one body.

Now this isn't just a signed declaration of agreement on all points of doctrine. This is not a human arrangement. Baptized into one body by the Holy Spirit.

We won't look at Acts just now, but we all know it, don't we? But on that occasion, in a wonderful way, all the new believers that the Holy Spirit had made by introducing them to the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior [00:18:05] were suddenly baptized into one body, and that's how we are today. We belong to each other more effectively than if we had all had the same human father and human mother. We're closer than that. We are baptized into one body.

Well, we heard that this afternoon. I just want to make a point. It's beautiful, I think. When we think of the one body of believers on earth, it's Christ's body we're thinking about on earth because he is the head in heaven. I believe it's because the creation of such a marvelous thing on earth [00:19:02] awaited the elevation of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the head in heaven. And as we think of the church as his body, our hearts are lifted and our eyes, our thoughts, our renewed spirits are raised to communicate with the head in heaven. Though I know that he uses it to communicate with the earth as the head directs the body. But the church is also the temple of God.

Or as two Ephesians, the second of Ephesians puts it, we are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

See, there it comes in again. Through the Holy Spirit we are builded. [00:20:02] That sounds a bit more earthy. We are built together to form a habitation for God in this world.

There's the two aspects, as we all know, of this wonderful view of the church that we get. And just as we can say, as we think of the body with the head in heaven, our eyes and our spiritual sight and our innermost spiritual feelings rise from earth to heaven, so as we think of God's habitation on earth, just as surely we think of God in heaven having something which can express him, his thoughts, his feelings on earth. A habitation of God through the Spirit.

[00:21:03] Now I feel it's important at this point to make quite certain that we gather to the name, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the Lord Jesus.

It's the Lord Jesus who is the head of the body, not the Holy Spirit. I just make that point only because there's so much abroad in the world today which seems likely to glorify the Holy Spirit at the

expense of the Lord Jesus. Damn, the Holy Spirit won't have that. We gather to his name, the name of the Lord Jesus.

He said, where two or three are gathered together in my name, [00:22:02] or to my name, there am I.

But the Holy Spirit is the power who does the gathering, the power who has done the gathering so well that he has baptized us. What a wonderful phrase that is. It's easier felt than spoken about, surely. Baptized us into one body.

There's another beautiful thing emerges from this thought, and that is that the Holy Spirit, who is God in his own right, has graciously stoked to be the servant of the Savior.

Just as the Lord Jesus, Son of God, with all the power and dignity of Godhead vested in himself, [00:23:08] came into this world and took a servant's form, he became the servant of the Father, for the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. And in obedience, the Son of God came to be the Savior of the world. And now we have the Holy Spirit come down for the specific purpose of serving the great head of the assembly in this world.

I was going to say before this afternoon's Bible reading, I hope you'll believe me, I think you will, that I was going to liken the work of the Holy Spirit among us to that of Abraham's servant, [00:24:05] who took the presence, took the valuable jewels belonging to his master, and showed them to his potential bride.

Rebekah was given a sight, a feel, a dress, a dressing of the very expensive jewels that belonged to her master before she met him, so weak.

By word of mouth, that servant passed on the jewels of truth to that prospective bride, didn't he?

By word of the Scripture, which is word by mouth of holy men [00:25:05] moved by the Holy Ghost, we are shown the superlative treasures of our master, of our Lord, of our Lord Jesus Christ, before ever we've seen him.

We're on the way.

We're only too glad to leap from that camel, I think. I've never heard that expression before. I'm grateful to the brother who used it. Alighted from the camel is one thing, leaping off its back is another, and I prefer dear Jane Derby in that case.

Energy of affection towards the Lord Jesus Christ, not just an acceptance of the good old brethren truths, [00:26:04] not just an automatic infiltration, shall we say, of things I've absorbed over a lifetime, not the sudden grasp of some new nice thoughts, if I've never heard them before, now I'm a believer, but I've met these thoughts through God's servants. Not just that, but a real burning love for one whom I haven't seen, but who has given every proof of his standing, quality, wealth, love, everything and more than human mind can desire in a faithful lover. It's not only that we're going to have these things, we've got them now, and how? Through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the assembly.

[00:27:05] Oh, I know, the Holy Spirit can and does wonderfully pull out the jewels and let them glisten

in your study, on your city, especially on your knees. It may be a darkened room, the Holy Spirit has this wonderful personal service to offer each one of us, personal service, because he, believe it, indwells each one of us, so that he can take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. He not only can, but he does. And then when we come together, he helps us to share as a wonderful body, [00:28:04] which is also his pride, that which belongs to Christ. You know these things, don't you? I'm only reminding you of what you've known and do know. But it brings me to the point that the Holy Spirit is not only the gracious power of God which created the assembly, he is the power which operates the assembly. He is not only in the midst of us to influence us, how I dislike that word, it has done a great deal of damage, I believe, in Christendom. Some people think that the Holy Spirit is only a mighty influence, but only an influence. He's a person, a person who does influence, [00:29:03] but he does more than that. He operates the assembly, if we let him, in Ephesians, which speaks so eloquently of the privileges conferred upon us and the responsibility which devolves upon us, because the two things go together. Conferred privilege always brings responsibility, doesn't it? It does in our jobs in life, it does in our family connections, it must be a great thing to have a nice family. But by observation, I notice, it brings tremendous responsibilities as well. And Ephesians, which speaks of these things so eloquently, about being the body of Christ, [00:30:04] shows us that this wonderful head in heaven has liberally provided this body of his with gifts.

It has been said that the gifts in Ephesians are men, they are the Lord who had descended, then ascended, having defeated all captivity that could possibly enslave us.

He then received gifts, but he gives gifts onto his body.

I would expect that to be so, being who he is. The Lord in heaven is no theoretical head, he is one who loves the members of his body, and he has bestowed gifts upon us.

[00:31:02] But the chapter we've read, I believe, not to oversimplify, but a little to simplify because of the time, the chapter we've read in Corinthians shows the power by which those gifts operate on earth in the body.

It's noticeable just in passing that the gifts in Ephesians have a specific and special look towards the welfare of the body. The glorious head in heaven, like our heads, try to direct the rest of our body into healthy activity.

Our glorious head in heaven is desirous that his body on earth [00:32:05] should be directed into healthy activity.

Whereas that list of gifts in Corinthians 12 is more like God, who is in heaven, seeking a representative on earth to witness to his power, his love, and the earth is his sphere, maybe.

But how does the Holy Spirit work in the assembly? How does it work? That is my task this evening as I conceive it. Well, he indwells each true member of Christ's body and operates for the glory of Christ [00:33:01] by directing the individuals who form the assembly.

There's no mystical notion, at least there may be the notion, but there's no fact, I think, to support the idea that in some airy-fairy sort of manner the Holy Spirit is operative in the assembly apart from its members.

Every member is indwelt and as the Holy Spirit operates the members in conjunction and unison with each other so the whole body is helped internally into healthy exercise and helped externally to show the world what God has to show, to spread the message of the glad tidings [00:34:02] which God has sent down through his beloved Son.

There are three things, there are many things we could speak about in connection with the way in which the Holy Spirit operates in the assembly.

But I've selected three here just for our consideration. I believe that healthy operation of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, begins at home.

I nearly said it's like charity begins at home but it's the reverse sort of thing. I believe that the preparation for each one of us brother and sister to a proper use of the Holy Spirit of whatever he may have given me as an individual [00:35:04] I believe that it is important to understand that that will not be fully operative if operative at all unless I as an individual look to the Lord for the guidance and direction and strengthening I need. Romans 12 I think helps us to some extent in this. There it comes, we're exhorted by the Apostle Paul to let us wait on our ministry or occupy ourselves with our ministry.

Somebody's going to say that's all very well for some gifted brother that's all very well, I can understand it when it comes to the evangelist [00:36:03] looking to the Lord for the message I believe it's far wider than that there isn't a single member of the body of Christ that hasn't got a gift from the head it may not be something that my brethren recognize as a gift but it is something given by the Lord that only I in my weakness and inconspicuous character only I can do and it's that what I am to my Lord as one that he thought was worth going to Calvary's cross to say. I pause there.

It's not the assessment of the church or the theologian, is it? It's not the assessment of those who are learned in the scripture [00:37:04] but the Lord thought that every individual member of his body was worth dying for, giving himself for unto that person he has given a very specific ability to do this or that however seemingly small but it certainly and most certainly does apply to those who have gifts that can help in the ministry in the ministry of the word either inside or out and the varying assortment of that kind of power and to Timothy the apostle said, didn't he neglect not the gift that is in thee [00:38:05] Timothy was a gifted man yes but maybe Timothy didn't think very much about the idea that he had an important gift which had to be looked after so the apostle, his father in the faith and how glad some of us are we had fathers in the faith how good to have one who can say neglect not the gift that is in thee I looked at that scripture again was it an exhortation to Timothy to jump onto the nearest platform and talk was it an exhortation to Timothy to command the attention of all the brethren [00:39:02] in the next open ministry meeting not a bit of it he was to look after, to nurse, to cherish to go to the Lord about this precious gift which had been given Lord, here I am with this it's too big for me help me to use it aright because I based that on another word meditate, says the apostle meditate, you don't do that on a platform you don't do that in a ministry meeting when you're in the limelight you do that in the quietness of your closet and it was part of the apostle's instruction to Timothy regarding the non-neglect or the prosecution of his gift from the Lord and continue in them [00:40:01] and then it comes at the end that you may profit thereby and them that hear thee a warning all wrapped up in it to Timothy, be careful young man you have been selected to Timothy he could say you have been specially prepared to Timothy he could say you had a good start, a good mother a good grandmother and now you've been given a gift a special gift but be careful because it's possible that you won't get the benefit and if you don't get the benefit those that hear you will suffer it'll be to

the profit of those who hear you yes indeed oh well perhaps the motor car provides a rather homely illustration maybe too homely [00:41:04] but you know that the motor car won't work unless it has fuel in the tank and fuel is expensive to put in the tank it's not an easy matter taking in and storing up that which will be the raw material of any gift the sister who has a gift for making the person next to her feel at home and helped who has a special gift of warmth to lead on the hesitant or difficult sister the sort of thing that Paul had in mind perhaps when he was [00:42:01] talking to Syntyche and Euodius as the man the poor old brother asked to read the scripture pronounced and Syntyche perhaps I shouldn't have said that but the apostle was a very down to earth minister of the word but one of them no doubt had a gift both of them certainly had a gift and he said wait upon your gift and do something about it but you need to get into the lord's presence and with your scripture, your bible and for pity's sake I nearly said put fuel in the tank otherwise it will be obvious that that machine won't work when you try [00:43:01] and the battery to be well charged so that there's a good fat live spark when we want the firing to be done and then the contact points must be kept clean we know this about this simple thing called a car and having charged the fuel tank and seeing to it that the battery is charged and the contact points clean all we need to do is turn the switch I know the car is now ready for the one who should operate it to do it at the right time as he sees fit so I go to the meeting charged fuel gone to the lord for the cleansing of the points seeing to it that I've been in the place [00:44:03] where the real power comes from and then I wait till he who has the right turns the switch maybe he won't he doesn't need me on that occasion I don't do it because I'm ready I do it when he turns the switch that's how I believe if you'll bear with me how the holy spirit operates the assembly we wait on each other don't we the results the results are what matter aren't they and there again many examples come to mind but there's the prayer meeting if this is our preparation [00:45:02] if we are really as members of Christ's body highly gifted highly privileged baptized into one unit and the body of Christ all right we come to the prayer meeting and we get up and we tell God a lot of we give him a lot of information which he knew already and we're likely if we're in our home prayer meeting to give a lot of information that the brethren know already been said so many times before that's not prayer I only mention it I only dare to mention it because it's done the holy spirit will take the prepared person the prepared brother and he'll help him to pray [00:46:02] if there are twenty brothers there who could pray he might just conceivably move that man to pray for ten minutes but hardly likely it's more likely to be six or five if there are twenty persons there because the holy spirit believes in a musical instrument with an infinite number of strings the greatest number possible one of the ways to make sure perhaps that the strings are going to become fewer and fewer is for a few to so act as though there were only two there anyhow or only three or four prayer of course is the heartfelt thankfulness and heartfelt desire for what we need [00:47:02] where do I gain that? at home I say to my lord I'm going to the prayer meeting thank god I'm able to go to the prayer meeting thank god for the privilege of going to the prayer meeting she said I thought it was a duty to go to the prayer meeting my dear brother that's what empties prayer meetings the sense that any meeting is a duty the holy spirit is there it's a great privilege and he strikes the right chord through striking individual notes with something fresh something that comes of fresh exercise from each individual every time then at the worship meeting worship in spirit and in truth well yes [00:48:03] very plainly and simply that is based upon a personal appreciation of christ there is absolutely no possibility of it being automatic or learned by heart or a recapitulation of beautiful things I've read it is a simple soul with an appreciation of christ feeling the touch give out that hymn get up and say and there's the witness as our third instance the ministry of the word now the recapitulation once again affects [00:49:01] real ministry of the word is having a word of scripture which meets the need that is present whether I know the need or not oh I'm not belittling the teacher we need the teachers to take it all by rope and teachers but I'm speaking now of the positive operation of the holy spirit in the assembly having given some brother a word pressing on his mind after he's spent a long time pressing his knees into the floorboards maybe

in anxiety about felt need he gets the word so he rushes down to the meeting and struggles to his feet [00:50:01] or springs to his feet or no he prepares in case the holy spirit may whilst he's there touch the ignition switch and set the whole matter flowing for the benefit of the saints you know what I mean if I'm saying it badly, don't you? and the gospel too somebody says who is sufficient for these things how can I or anyone minister to the need that's there whether I know it's there or not only the holy spirit but that's what we're talking about, isn't it? the operation of the holy spirit in the assembly finally there's a power of the holy spirit [00:51:03] to preserve the assembly there are other things he does outside all these but it's a power to preserve and it brings me again to Ephesians 4 the lord gave those gifts the ascended lord gave the gifts and the reason is stated it's for the perfecting of the saints ah, people say we could do with a lot of that for the perfecting of the saints well, that's why the gifts have been given for the edifying of the body of Christ he wants it nourished up built up and the end [00:52:02] we had it this afternoon till we all come onto the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and in Ephesians 4 it is by one spirit one body glorious thought one spirit simple and wonderful thought working through the gifts to one end that we might be brought to the glorious measure of that glorious person that's the ultimate object but this is his function and how he works as revealed in the scripture [00:53:01] but as a glorious last thought in the last verses of the bible never tell me young man young skeptic that the bible is a raggy book of old and dusty documents that came to place somehow by accident that the book of Daniel is highly suspect that the book of this and that and that Jonah's book is far too far fetched to be believed never try to sell me that one for one, of course, the Lord Jesus caught that argument out in advance by picking the most controversial point the controversial book of Jonah and saying that is a sign given hundreds of years in advance of what's going to happen to me three days [00:54:02] in the tomb that's the answer to that one but the scripture as we look at the path of the Holy Spirit through it even in this cursory glance finishes with this glorious thought the spirit and the bride say come and I like to think of it and the sisters will appreciate this if the brothers don't, I think that the Holy Spirit takes the exalted position of giving away the bride to Christ he joins her, as it were in saying at the slightest hint [00:55:01] when the Lord of Glory says behold, I come quickly the spirit joins the bride empowers the bride in saying come Lord Jesus it can't be a moment too soon