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What is the Holy Spirit? by Paul W. Brownlow

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News and Notes

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

(Bible quotations are from the Revised Version unless otherwise indicated.)

Paul W. Brownlow

In considering this question, we must bear in mind that the Bible sets the truth forward in a positive way, that is, it does not examine alternatives in order to arrive at truth. We will not find it stated in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is *not* a person coequal with God. Instead, there are a great number of positive statements concerning the Spirit's functions and qualities. By considering these statements together, knowing that one scripture does not contradict another but complements it, we may arrive at an understanding of what the Spirit is. At the same time, what it is not should become readily apparent.

In the Old Testament, the name 'Holy Spirit' is used infrequently, and the more common expression is 'the Spirit of God' or 'the Spirit of the Lord'. There is, however, no special distinction to be drawn, and we may regard these terms as synonymous.

The Hebrew and Greek words translated 'spirit' (Hebrew: *ruwach*; Greek: *pneuma*) are equivalent, both meaning 'wind', or 'breath', by resemblance 'spirit' [Strong's Concordance].

The word 'spirit', as it appears in the Bible, is used in two broad senses. First, and most often, it denotes a quality, usually possessed by individuals, occasionally by groups of people collectively (2 Chronicles 21:16), of a nation (Isaiah 19:3), even of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12). The second use of 'spirit' is to denote a spirit being, divine (John 4:24), angelic (Hebrews 1:14) or demonic (Mark 3:11). Every use of 'spirit' falls into one of these two categories. Determining in which group the Holy Spirit belongs will assist us greatly in understanding what the Spirit is.

The Holy Spirit as power

It is significant that, with few exceptions, what is said in the Bible about the Spirit of God has to do with the Spirit's effect upon men. This effect is most conspicuous in the giving by God to chosen individuals abilities above man's natural capacity, for the accomplishment of God's purposes. Moses was given the power to prophesy and the wisdom to judge Israel. His gift was also delegated to others (Numbers 11:16-29). To certain of the Israelites under Moses, God gave the skills necessary to make the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant and the other special furniture of the sanctuary (Exodus 31:1-11). Samson was given immense physical strength, which God used to punish the Philistines

(Judges 13:24,25; 14:5,6). Throughout Israel's history God also put His words in the mouth of His prophets for the guidance of His people:

2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the *Holy Ghost.

* RV margin '*Or Holy Spirit*'

At His baptism, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit from heaven, and He performed many miraculous works in the years following. During this time He also conferred the Holy Spirit in miracle-working power upon the apostles, and later appointed seventy others who also received miraculous gifts (Matthew 3:13-17; John 1:29-34; Matthew 10:1-20; Luke 10:1-16). On the Day of Pentecost, in fulfilment of Jesus' promise (John 16:7), the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven upon the apostles and other believers gathered in the upper room (Acts 2). From that day forth, during the time of the apostles, those who believed on Jesus Christ were privileged to have special abilities bestowed on them by the Spirit.

These things were all examples of God exerting a powerful effect upon men, but to say that the Holy Spirit is purely the power of God is not an adequate description.

The Holy Spirit as God's influence

Before the Flood, in a time when intense evil prevailed on the earth, God said,

Genesis 6:3 My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh; yet shall his days be an hundred and twenty years.

There is no suggestion here that God's power was insufficient to deal with man. Rather, God set a time limit upon His efforts to persuade "the world that then was" to turn from its wicked course. In this case, the Holy Spirit is the influence of God.

The spirit of man

Though he is a created being, man is also credited by Scripture with a spirit. In some cases the original word has been translated 'spirit' when the more literal meaning, 'breath', would have better suited the context. In Ecclesiastes we read,

Ecclesiastes 8:8 There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death.

Here 'spirit' indicates a man's power to live, literally his 'breath', but in most occurrences of the word this is not the case, and 'spirit' is an accurate rendering.

We have said that the Spirit of God may be His power or influence. Let us consider in this connection the spirit of man. We find in Genesis 41, concerning Pharaoh's dream,

Genesis 41:8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled.

We could not say in this place that Pharaoh's 'power' was troubled, or that his 'influence' was troubled. Nor would we do justice to the context with the literal translation, "in the morning Pharaoh had trouble breathing". Clearly, Pharaoh was troubled in his mind.

When Moses called for voluntary offerings for the tabernacle, the response of the Israelites is recorded thus,

Exodus 35:21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whose spirit made him willing

In other places, the spirit of individuals is described as 'jealous' (Numbers 5:14), 'hard' (Deuteronomy 2:30), 'sad' (1 Kings 21:5), 'anguished' (Job 7:11), 'contrite' (Psalm 34:8), 'broken' (Psalm 51:17), 'faithful' (Proverbs 11:13), 'hasty' (Proverbs 14:29), 'haughty', 'humble' (Proverbs 16:18,19), 'patient', 'proud' (Ecclesiastes 7:8), 'perverse' (Isaiah 19:14) 'erring' (Isaiah 29:24), 'grieved' (Isaiah 54:6), 'ready' (Mark 14:38), 'meek', 'quiet' (1 Peter 3:4).

In all these instances the context shows that the spirit has to do with the inward man, that is, the word 'spirit' has been used to indicate the state of mind of the person concerned.

Elsewhere, the spirit of groups of people is described, where a particular mentality exists in common. Israel's idolatry is portrayed this way,

Hosea 1:12 the spirit of whoredom hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

The "spirit of whoredom" was the disposition to be unfaithful, spiritually promiscuous, so to speak, as displayed in those who turned from Yahweh to serve other gods. Their outward acts of idolatry demonstrated their inner 'spirit', or mental attitude. And we find that in almost every case, the 'spirit' of a man is a function of his mind.

God's Spirit and the spirit of man

Our examination of man's spirit in endeavouring to find out about the spirit of God is valid, because the Scripture itself makes such a comparison. In First Corinthians, Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 2:11 For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so, the things of God none knoweth, save the spirit of God.

Here the apostle tells us that the spirit of a man knows "the things of a man". A man's spirit is therefore not only a function of his mind, but a conscious function (the words 'conscious' and 'conscience' both derive from the Latin, meaning 'with knowledge'). And there is a comparison made: we are familiar with man, and the Scripture uses what we can understand about ourselves to tell us something about God. It says, "even so", that is, 'similarly', "the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God". We cannot escape the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is a function, or characteristic, of the mind of God.

Paul specially qualifies his statement here concerning man in two ways. Firstly, he says, "who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man ...". God is able to perceive the features of a man's spirit even before that spirit becomes manifested in words and deeds; we are unable to do that. We can, as the verse suggests, by introspection make some judgements concerning ourselves, but in the case of another we can only detect the mind of that person by what they show us, through what they say and do. Similarly, we can only perceive the things of God as He is pleased to reveal them. Secondly, Paul says, "the spirit of the man, *which is in him*", but does not restrict God's Spirit with the same wording. God's Spirit is not confined to a particular location, but is able to proceed from Him for the accomplishment of His purposes (John 15:26).

The meaning of "holy"

The word 'holy', in the mouth of God's prophets, only ever refers to God Himself, and to persons and things associated with God or His worship. The Hebrew root means literally "to be clean", and is therefore a reference to the purity of God's character. By extension, it means 'sanctity', and indicates God's separateness from all unrighteousness. The word in the Greek scriptures also means 'sacred'; physically 'pure', morally 'blameless' [Strong's Concordance]. When used of persons or things associated with God, both words mean 'consecrated' or 'dedicated' to God.

We are now in a position to frame a tentative answer to the question, 'What is the Holy Spirit?.'

Generally speaking, we may say that the Holy Spirit is a function, or property, of the mind of God, inseparable from His divine character. Where the Spirit proceeds from Him, and exerts an effect upon man, it is God's power or influence. It remains for us to see if there is any mention in Scripture of the Holy Spirit that cannot be accommodated in these terms.

Spirit and will

It is important for us to carry our examination of the spirit of man a little further. We can see that a man's spirit has been in some cases opposed to God, and censured by the prophets, and in other cases approved of by God (Numbers 14:24; Psalms 34:18; Isaiah 57:15-21), making that individual eligible for God's blessings. But man is not a helpless victim of his own spirit; he has control over it. We have seen from Paul's words that a man's spirit "knoweth the things of a man" and therefore has to do with the conscious mind. The spirit of man must then, at least in principle, be under the control of man's will. God knows that this is so; in the closing chapters of the Old Testament, Malachi rebukes Israel, saying,

Malachi 2:16 ... take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

In these few words, "take heed to your spirit", it is implied that a man may undergo an alteration in spirit, if he is willing. Were that not possible, there would have been no point in the prophet saying the words. God's desire in speaking thus through Malachi, indeed through all the prophets, was that those to whom the prophet spoke might heed the word of God, and change their minds.

A man's will stands between his spirit and the word of God.

Acts 7 records the inspired testimony of Stephen before the Jewish council. Having laid before them the shameful history of Israel's apostasy, he said,

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears; ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

A man cannot resist God, except in his mind. The Jews against whom Stephen witnessed had filled up the measure of their fathers in refusing to submit to the words of God's prophets. They had opposed their wills to God, shutting out His influence. Their minds could not be changed and

their spirit was unaltered, manifesting itself in their actions. They had already betrayed and murdered the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, and upon hearing Stephen's testimony against them, they took him and stoned him to death.

Their wills were involved in this course of events in two ways. Firstly, they had the choice to receive Stephen's testimony or to close their minds to it; they chose the latter. The phrase, "uncircumcised in heart and ears", described their state of mind in terms they would well have understood. Circumcision was a sign in the flesh of Israel's consecration, or dedication, to God. "Uncircumcised in ears" - unwilling to commit their hearing to (or heed) God's word; "uncircumcised in heart" - unwilling to commit themselves to God in trust; in short, lack of faith. Secondly, though they refused to hear God's word, they still had a choice regarding their actions toward Stephen. They were not compelled to kill him, even though they made a pretence of obeying the Law; they chose to do it.

So we see that a man's will stands guard on the way into the mind, and also on the way out. If a man is guided by his spirit, then his state of mind is revealed to us in his speech and actions. We refer to this as character. Likewise, the things which God has said and done and caused to be recorded reveal to us His divine character.

A new spirit

During the Babylonian captivity, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, saying,

- Ezekiel 36:25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
- 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
- 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.

The spirit which God would put in His people would not be 'new', in the sense of an innovation; it would be His Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Malachi 3:6 I, the LORD, change not.

But in man, it would indeed be new. A new heart and a new spirit would amount to nothing less than a radical change in the inward man, with a

corresponding change in character; and because the new spirit would be God's Spirit, the resulting new character would necessarily be like God's. They would walk in His statutes and keep His judgements not from any external constraint, but from the heart, because they and God would be of like mind, and His standards would be reflected in all their thinking.

It is a fundamental principle of God's dealings with the human race that He will not override the will of man in order to make unfaithful men faithful; the choice has always belonged to man to respond to God or to turn away from Him. It was true of Adam (Genesis 2:17; 3:3,6), of Abraham (Genesis 22:2,12,18), of Moses (Hebrews 11:25-27) and the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 30:19), of Christ (Matthew 26:39; Hebrews 5:7,8); it is so now (Hebrews 4:7,11; 10:26,38; 12:25) and it will be so in the Kingdom age, for it says in Revelation,

Revelation 22:17 He that will, let him take of the water of life freely.

A man's spirit will not be changed unless he is willing for that change to take place. The "new spirit" of which Ezekiel prophesied would consequently find no place in a man, without that man first opening his mind to the influence of God. We see therefore that what Ezekiel spoke of would involve an alteration of man's spirit, indeed a transformation of that spirit, through God's influence.

It was prophesied that this change would follow a cleansing process; the Lord said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you".

The apostle Peter, addressing the men of Israel on the Day of Pentecost, urged his hearers,

Acts 2:38 Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] (RV & margin).

In this one sentence, the steps toward a change in spirit have been concisely set forward. "Repent ye ..."; the Greek word *metanoeo* means, quite literally, 'to change the mind'. Repentance is proof that the way to the mind is not closed. The preaching of the word of God is recognised as truth, leading to a man's acknowledgement of his former disobedience, and his humble request for God's forgiveness. This act of contrition is a sign that the mind has been opened to the influence of God and that a man is willing to act in accordance with the knowledge that he has received.

“be baptised ... in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ...” We see now what the Lord’s statement in Ezekiel, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you”, referred to: not the act of baptism, but the remission of sins through a man’s repentance and faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice. As it is written,

1 John 1:7,9 the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin ...
 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to
 forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all
 unrighteousness.

The “filthiness” of Israel was its unrighteousness.

“... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]”. A blessing from God is not forced upon any man, but must be received voluntarily, by the fulfilment of the conditions set down by God. The implanting of the Holy Spirit in the believer depends upon his willingness to receive it.

It is quite understandable that God’s cleansing of the believer from unrighteousness required Christ’s blood to have been shed. It is perhaps not quite so apparent why the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was also held back until this time, but the two things are linked. There is a fundamental difference between the Jewish age and the Gospel age, expressed in John thus,

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses;
 grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Grace is the favour of God toward us, manifested in justification by faith, which is the reckoning by God of righteousness to the believer on account of that individual’s faith in Jesus Christ. It is God’s free gift (Romans 5:15-18).

Truth is that revelation of knowledge given to us by God. It comprises the whole body of Scripture, of which the New Testament is the key.

Conscience

In repenting, we have opened our minds to the influence of God. Our new-found knowledge of God’s grace then manifests itself in the cleansing of our conscience (Hebrews 10:22), and that forms the basis of our spiritual change by removing the impediment of guilt and self-reproach. This was not possible under the Law.

‘Conscience’ is not instinct or emotion, nor is it something we are born with. By definition it has to do with knowledge and understanding; it is formed from what we have learned and believe to be correct, and is our

standard of truth, justice and morality. It is the 'inner judge' by which we also assess our own thoughts and conduct. The Jew under the Law Covenant would not have felt guilt, had he not known that the Law condemned him for the smallest infringement (Romans 7:7; James 2:10). The Law was in his conscience, sitting in judgement upon him and condemning him, without reprieve (Zechariah 9:11). Because of this, his 'spirit', or state of mind, was one of bondage, bound for life to the service of the Law, striving to be righteous but because of the weakness of the flesh always falling short of the Law's standard of righteousness.

Our conscience could not be cleansed if we did not know that God has reckoned us righteous, and we learn this from His word.

Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The old spirit of bondage (Jews to the Law, Gentiles to false gods) and constant fear of retribution and death is gone. We no longer have any reason to fear, knowing that if we confess our sins He is just to forgive us, for Christ's sake, and we are able to continue in a cleansed and justified condition, in perfect covenant-relationship with God, not having fallen from His favour because of the weakness of our flesh.

For despite our best efforts we continue to commit sin (1 John 1:8-10), and justification is a means which God has provided to allow us to be received as sons. With this assurance, the change in our state of mind is profound, especially in our attitude toward God (Hebrews 10:22).

Upon this spiritual foundation, our conscience is restructured by the word of God. With the New Testament the vital key, the whole Bible now reveals to us the mind and character of God. Above all, we have the perfect example of the Lord Jesus. With patient attention to the scriptures and prayer for understanding, our conscience is built anew according to divine standards and becomes available to us as a guide in every judgement that we are called upon to make.

With a conscience of truth, its influence is no longer solely on the outside, but exists within. Jesus prayed to His Father, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth". The Greek word translated "sanctify" means 'make holy'; we are made holy by the influence of God's word.

Faith

Grace, truth; there remains one other factor in our spiritual change, and that is the inner commitment to be guided by the knowledge that we have received. This commitment is faith.

The fact that miraculous abilities were given by God to believers at and after Pentecost should not distract us from the principles involved. Essentially, those special gifts were no different from the manifestations of the Holy Spirit recorded in earlier parts of the Bible, and had no direct effect upon the character of those who possessed them. The miraculous gifts existed for a particular purpose in the early Church, and when that purpose had been served, they ceased. They were a means to God's end, and not an end in themselves. Their function was to establish the Church, firstly by demonstrating that the preaching was God-ordained and secondly, in the absence of the New Testament, to provide the substance of that preaching. Once the New Testament had been delivered to the Church, there remained no further need for inspired human witnesses, and the miracles ceased.

It does not fit into the present phase of God's plan for us to work miracles, nor would it suit His purpose, with respect to our mental processes, to perform miracles on us. What God desires in us is the development of the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is Himself the image of the Father (Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4). The outward likeness in character cannot be produced without our minds being formed in the image of His mind: does not the apostle say, "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16)? Our knowledge is not to be compared with His for completeness, nor are our faith and self-control to be compared with His for strength, but the principle is the same. As displayed in the man Christ Jesus, character is the product of a consecrated will guided by the knowledge of God.

The answer to our question, 'What is the Holy Spirit?', may be summed up in this way: firstly, the Holy Spirit is a quality of the mind of God; secondly, where it proceeds from Him for the accomplishment of His purposes, it is His power or influence. Lastly, where the Holy Spirit is said to be within the believer, it is a renewal of mind, after the pattern of Christ, through the word of God. Paul wrote,

Ephesians 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18 being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart;
19 who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
20 But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus;

- 21 that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit;
- 22 and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.



The Fruit of the Spirit (Part 2)

Linton Roe

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22,23; ASV).

In the previous newsletter we looked at the first five fruits, so now let us turn our attention to the final four.

6. Goodness

How should we understand the next fruit, **goodness**? If we look up a Greek Bible dictionary, we find that the word translated “goodness” is derived from the word for 'good', which has the idea of something beneficial, or pleasing to God.

In the Bible, Jesus described our Heavenly Father as the only absolutely good being, “*Why do you call me good?*” *Jesus answered. 'No one is good – except God alone' ”* (Luke 18:19; NIV).

Nevertheless, some individuals in the Bible are also described as good, or of good character. Examples include Joseph of Arimathea - “*Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man, ...*” (Luke 23:50), Barnabas - “*He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith...*” (Acts 11:24), and people in general - “*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him*” (Matthew 12:35).

How can we develop the fruit of goodness? The New Testament gives us many examples. Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, had this advice: “*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; **cling to what is good***”. He then proceeded to list some practical examples of how to do this; “*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s*

people who are in need. Practise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:9-18).

This long list sounds like mission impossible on the first reading, but it does give us a framework of things to practise, to try to develop goodness. Let's consider some of the items on this list in the light of some everyday issues.

- Love must be sincere. When we are about to talk to someone, do we ask ourselves how we might be able to assist that person? Are we sincere in our desire to be helpful, or is our motive selfish?
- Be devoted to one another. We all have problems. Are we prepared to keep communicating with friends who may have gone off the rails or down a different path from us? Don't give up on a friendship.
- Honour one another above yourselves. Do not be proud or conceited. We all need to beware of pride, of thinking that we are somehow better than others. When thinking about others, do we see their strengths? Perhaps we could practise reflecting on, and stating, the qualities we LIKE in others, rather than dwelling on the things we don't like.
- Don't be lacking in zeal. It is desirable to be passionate for a cause that we believe to be right (but we do need to beware of having zeal without knowledge, such as the Jews showed in Paul's time – Romans 10:2). If our zeal will help and edify others, then let us put energy and enthusiasm into our endeavours and not be lazy or lukewarm.
- Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Let us remember that God offers us a wonderful future, and rejoice, even when we're going through tough times. We should make prayer a habit, and not just include things we would like, but be thankful for all things, even experiences that hurt.
- Practise hospitality. Most of us have homes. Can we invite someone to come over for a cup of tea and a chat, and discipline ourselves to listen?
- Bless and do not curse. When people injure us in some way, either knowingly or unknowingly, we need to look at it as a learning experience and pray that God will bring about a blessing from the situation.

- Rejoice, mourn and live in harmony. Rejoicing with others encourages them. Mourning when appropriate also shows compassion and love. I think that it is impossible to always be in harmony with everyone (see Romans 12:18), but we must do our best to try to create harmony with others through kind words and actions.
- Do not repay evil for evil. Isn't it tempting to 'get them back' when someone has done something we find annoying or embarrassing? Take a deep breath, go somewhere else and remember that Christ is the judge of all actions, including what we do. Ask God to forgive whatever needs to be forgiven.

7. Faithfulness

The next fruit of the spirit in Paul's list is **faithfulness**. In the King James Version the word is rendered "*faith*". The Greek word is 'pistis', which is a person's belief system or their conviction of the truth of something, but in particular, of the existence of God and trust in His word.

Because faith is an abstract concept it is perhaps best understood by examples. The Scriptures are full of accounts of how people have shown faith. Hebrews 11 is perhaps the definitive chapter on faith, and is well worth reading in its entirety, but here is part of the description of how Abraham demonstrated faith. *"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, **obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God"* (Hebrews 11:8 to 10).

We see from Abraham and countless other examples, that faith is demonstrated when we trust in God and feel confident that what we are doing is right in His sight, even though what we are being asked to do may seem counter-intuitive, counter-cultural or against what we are able to prove.

As we progress through this life, we may discover that others do not accept the existence of God and will not accept the natural world as evidence of a creator. This realisation on our part may be an opportunity for us to develop a deeper faith when we realise that we cannot 'prove' in a scientific sense that God exists, but that it is a choice that we have made.

Here are some practical tips for developing faith.

- Pray. Ask God to strengthen your faith, like Jesus did for Peter (Luke 22:32).
- Look at nature. Take time to examine the beauty and complexity of the natural world and reflect on how it came to be.
- Read. Follow the lives of other faithful people of God and learn from them.
- Fellowship. Meet with other Christians and ask them about their faith.

8. Meekness

The eighth fruit in our passage is meekness or gentleness (NIV). The Greek word (#4236) is derived from the words for gentle, meek or mild and has the sense of being of quiet, humble or lowly of character.

Moses demonstrated meekness (but not weakness), because he led his people faithfully, but always humbled himself before God; *“Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12:3).

Jesus promised a blessing for those who are meek (Matthew 5:5), and described himself as having a meek or gentle character; *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:29).

Is it possible for us to develop meekness? I think that it is possible, when we ask for God’s assistance and allow His spirit to work within us. It begins with us acknowledging that everything we have comes originally from Him and that we need to choose to submit to His will and not to give in to Satan’s voice in our minds.

James gave us good advice along these lines; *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up”* (James 4:7 to 10).

Here are some practical ideas that might help us to develop meekness:

- Give thanks. We should reflect on the skills and abilities that we have and where they came from, and give thanks for these gifts.
- Listen. We can practise 'active listening' during a conversation; it may be helpful to concentrate on what the other person is saying, empathise with them, and not be in a hurry to anticipate or complete their sentences for them.

- Put others first in our thinking. Be glad when someone else expresses a thought or mentions some verses that we had in mind during a study; be thankful that the thought has been expressed rather than desiring to add our own comment, that 'I had that thought too'.
- Be eager to forgive. When someone has inconvenienced us, for example by keeping us waiting, perhaps we could express our pleasure that we are able to catch up, rather than pointing out that 'they' have put 'us' out.
- Work hard. Idleness and lack of direction can lead to temptation and negative or selfish thinking. *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

9. Self-control

While the King James Version translates this word as *“temperance”*, the meaning given by Dr. Strong makes it clear what is meant; 'Egkrateia' (#1466): self-control (the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, esp. his sensual appetites).

The Scriptures make it clear that God desires His children to master sinful, sensual tendencies, implying that we do have choices over our carnal instincts. Here are a few examples.

(a) God’s words to Cain: *“If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it”* (Genesis 4:7).

(b) Joshua’s advice to his people: *“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD”* (Joshua 24:15).

(c) Solomon’s advice: *“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control”* (Proverbs 25:28).

(d) Paul’s words to Titus: *“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age”* (Titus 2:11-12).

Given that the Bible indicates that we do have the ability to control ourselves, here are a few practical suggestions for developing this fruit.

- Recognise and acknowledge our weaknesses. We all have them, but if we are not aware of them, or if we are trying to pretend that they do not exist, then it is difficult to do anything to overcome them.
- Pray about our failures. We can take our guilty feelings and sinful actions to the Lord, ask for forgiveness, and for the strength to improve and find a new way forward.
- Learn to say 'No, thank you'. We are constantly presented with choices; when we recognize that we have something better we could do, or that one of our choices is less healthy, we need to be strong and say, 'No, thank you, I feel it would be better if I did this instead'.
- Deny yourself. Take up your cross. We know that eating too many chocolates is not healthy. Likewise, continuing to behave in ways that are undisciplined can be negative for us and for those around us. Let us choose to make a small, positive step towards being more disciplined and self-controlled. This might include setting aside 10 minutes each morning for a Bible reading; it might mean giving up a cup of coffee or a snack for ourselves and putting aside the money to give to those who have less. It might mean picking up the phone and making that apology call or call of encouragement that we have been putting off.

Conclusion

We have seen in this series that natural fruits are the product of a mature plant, are healthy and delicious, and therefore desirable to eat. Similarly, the fruit or fruits of the spirit are the mature products of a life led by God's spirit. These fruits benefit both us and others, and there is no law against them. Let us pray for God's blessings as we seek to develop the fruits that He is seeking.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23; ASV).



WILLIAM TYNDALE (c.1494-1536) A Hero of the Gospel Age

by Russell Collins

Background

About a hundred years before William Tyndale was born, John Wycliffe (1330-1384) was the first man to translate the Scriptures into the English language. John Wycliffe lived in an age of ignorance and superstition, of worldly ambition and corruption in high places of the established Church.

But a strong spirit of independence was rising among the people. Rome demanded obedience and annual tribute from England, but in 1366 Edward III and his Parliament refused to pay. In Wycliffe's lifetime, the era was one of crisis. The famous schism of the Papacy in 1378 resulted in two Popes being placed at the head of the Church, one in Rome and the other in Avignon. Each anathematised the other, and each raised armies resulting in the slaughter of helpless women and children for the sole purpose of aggrandisement for each of the pretenders to the title 'vicar of Christ'.

John Wycliffe was chief among the leaders opposing Roman aggression and corruption. He was a famous scholar and leader of thought in his time. He led a life of devotion and self-sacrifice, and was a most devoted student of Scripture. To him we are indebted for the first translation in 1383 of the Scriptures from Latin into English, the language of the people.

But God's time for reformation of the worldly and corrupt Christian Church was coming. Some notable discoveries and historical events took place soon after Wycliffe's death. The main ones were:

- The invention of printing in 1450 and movable type in 1454.
- The Renaissance and the revival of Greek learning.
- The Greek New Testament by the Greek scholar Erasmus.
- The work of William Tyndale.

William Tyndale (c.1494-1536)

More than one hundred years after the death of Wycliffe, and a few years after the birth of Martin Luther, William Tyndale was born.

William Tyndale grew up a thoughtful studious man, and at an early age won a distinguished position at Oxford University for scholarship. He moved to Cambridge University at the time when Cambridge had received Erasmus's Greek New Testament. To Tyndale, this work of Erasmus was an inspiration, and probably set him on the task which was to become the object of his life.

The established Roman Catholic Church was opposed to translating the Scriptures into the language of the people, and Tyndale's wish and purpose to translate the Scriptures into the English language met with general opposition from Church authorities.

At the outset of his monumental work of translation, Tyndale declared, 'I defy the Pope and all his laws; and if God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of the Scripture than the Pope does'.

To accomplish his translation, Tyndale had to leave England and work in exile. He left England in 1524, and did not see it again. At Hamburg in Germany, in poverty and distress, and amid constant danger, the brave-hearted exile worked at his translation so diligently that in the following year he delivered the first sheets of his quarto New Testament to a printer in Cologne. But the Church discovered his work, and he had to flee to Worms, where the enthusiasm for Luther and the Reformation was then at its height. There, at length, he achieved his purpose, producing for the first time a completely printed New Testament in English translated from Greek manuscripts.

Because of the opposition of the established Church, and the utmost vigilance of the authorities at the ports, Tyndale's New Testaments had to be smuggled into England in cases, barrels, bales of cloth, sacks of flour and every secret way that could be devised. Many were discovered, but many were not, and in a few years the books were scattered far and wide throughout the country.

William Tyndale then pressed on with his translation of the Old Testament Scriptures, in continuing financial difficulty, distress and danger, until finally he was betrayed and imprisoned in the Castle of Vilvorden. It is pitiful to read of the poor prisoner there, in his cold and misery and rags, writing to the governor to beg "your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here during the winter, you will request the procureur to be kind enough to send me from my goods which he has in his possession a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from a perpetual catarrh, which is much increased by this cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin; also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings – my shirts too are worn out. ... Also that he would suffer me to have my Hebrew Bible and Grammar and Dictionary."

There was no hope of escape or release, and in 1536 William Tyndale, the brave and courageous martyr, was strangled at the stake and his body burnt to ashes.

Poverty, distress and misrepresentation were Tyndale's constant lot, and imprisonment and death were ever staring him in the face, but he pressed on unflinchingly with his translation work until his final betrayal.

Among all the heroes of the Reformation, William Tyndale was certainly worthy of honour.

Tyndale's Translation and Notes

All English versions of the Scriptures before Tyndale were translations of translations, being derived from the Vulgate or older Latin versions. The Vulgate was a Latin version of the Scriptures translated by Jerome in the 4th century AD. Tyndale for the first time went back to the original Hebrew and Greek, though the manuscripts available to him were neither as old or as authoritative as those available to more recent translators of the Scriptures.

Not only did Tyndale go back to the original languages in his desire to make public the truth of the Scriptures, but he embodied that truth in so noble a translation that his expression has been only slightly improved even to the present day, except of course for modern-day spelling and vocabulary. The King James Version owes to him the dignity, stateliness and overall appeal for which it has been so greatly admired.

One commentator, J.A. Froude, wrote: 'The peculiar genius which breathes through the English Bible, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the grandeur, unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars – all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, and that man William Tyndale'.

The New Testament was the work to which Tyndale chiefly devoted himself, bringing out edition after edition as he saw anything that could be improved. Of the Old Testament he translated only the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and some of the Prophets.

Many of Tyndale's expressions, which now seem quaint to us, have been altered in succeeding versions, not always, however, for the better.

Genesis 39:2 - *"And the Lorde was with Joseph, and he was a luckie felowe"* [*"a prosperous man"*; KJV].

Matthew 26:30 - *"When they had said grace"* [*"And when they had sung an hymn"*; KJV].

Mark 6:27 - *"He sent forth the hangman"* [*"The king sent an executioner"*; KJV].

Revelation 1:10 - *"I was in the Sprete on a Sondaye"* [*"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"*; KJV].

Matthew 27:62 - *"The daye that foloweth Good Fridaye"* [*"The day of the preparation"*; KJV].

1 Corinthians 16:8 - *"I will tarry at Ephesus til Witsontyde"* [*".. until Pentecost"*; KJV].

Acts 13:15 - *“The rulers of the synagogue sent to them after the lecture, saying, If ye have any sermon to exhort the people, say on”* [“And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people say on”; KJV].

Acts 14:13- *“Brought oxen and garlandes to the churche porche”* [... brought oxen and garlands unto the gates”; KJV].

1 Peter 5:3 - *“Be not as lordes over the parishes”* [“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage”; KJV].

Hebrews 12:16 - *“Which for one breakfast sold his birthright”* [“Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright”; KJV].

Matthew 4:24 - *“Holden of divers diseases and gripinges”* [“...that were taken with divers diseases and torments”; KJV].

Matthew 6:7 - *“When ye pray, bable not moche”* [“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions”; KJV].

Matthew 15:27 - *“The whelpes eat of the crommes”* [“the dogs eat of the crumbs”; KJV].

Mark 12:2 - *“He sent to the tenauntes a servant”* [“He sent to the husbandmen a servant”; KJV].

Luke 20:9 - *“He lett it forthe to fermers”* [“let it forth to husbandmen”; KJV].

It is to William Tyndale that we owe such expressions as these:

The teaching of the Ransom is the *“touchstone to try all teachings”*;
“Fight the good fight”;
“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”.

Many more such expressions as these which originated with William Tyndale can be seen in any reputable dictionary of quotations.

Examples Of Tyndale’s Marginal Notes

Tyndale’s translation contains a running commentary on the text, and some of his notes reveal (sometimes amusingly) his strong feelings against the Pope and the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

In the margin of Exodus 32:35 Tyndale wrote, “The Pope’s bull slayeth more than Aaron’s calf”.

Beside Leviticus 21:6 he wrote, “Of the heathen priests, these, our prelates took the example of their bald pates”.

In Exodus 36:5 and onwards, the people were forbidden to bring any more offerings for the building of the tabernacle. Tyndale's marginal note says, "When will the Pope say hold! And forbid an offering for the building of St. Peter's Church? And when will our spirituality say hold! And forbid to give them more land? Never until they have all."

Final Note

Other translations followed Tyndale's, notably Miles Coverdale's Bible, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible.

Subsequently, in January 1604 a conference of bishops and clergy was held in Hampton Court Palace under the presidency of King James I of England. James I decreed that a new translation of the Bible was to be made, and he showed great wisdom in his arrangements for carrying out the work.

The result was the production of the King James (Authorised) Version of the Bible, which has had a far-reaching influence and benefit to the English language, and has done more than any other work to unite and enlighten English-speaking people everywhere.

For more than two centuries English Protestant writers have spoken of it in terms of almost unanimous praise – its "grace and dignity" its "flowing words", its "masterly English style". Even a Roman Catholic divine, Dr. Geddes (1786) declared that "if accuracy and strictest attention to the letter of the text be supposed to constitute an excellent version, this is of all versions the most excellent". And an almost touching tribute was paid it by one who evidently looked back on it with yearning regret, after having exchanged its beauties for the uncouthness of the Romanist versions. "Who will say", wrote Father Faber, "that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten, like the sound of church bells, which the convert scarcely knows how he can forego. Its felicities seem often to be almost things rather than words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of the national seriousness. Nay, it is worshipped with a positive idolatry, in extenuation of whose fanaticism its intrinsic beauty pleads availingly with the scholar. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. It is the representative of a man's best moments; all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing, which doubt never dimmed and controversy never soiled; and in the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."

It must be noted as fact that since the King James Version appeared in 1611, many words used by the translators have become obsolete, and many have completely changed their meaning.

The Revised Version of 1885 brought about many desirable changes to the language of the King James Version, and the modern versions have made many verses and passages clear to present-day readers. Some of these versions may be more accurate, more scholarly and more valuable to the understanding of Christian believers.

But the King James Version remains a literary masterpiece, the noblest and most beautiful translation of the Scriptures. Its language, like Shakespeare's, is still familiar and accessible to thoughtful, diligent readers. It has a wonderful charm and gracefulness, which have not in my opinion been equalled.

The basis for this truly great work was laid by William Tyndale, the heroic martyr, because his translations from the original Hebrew and Greek were followed closely time after time by the King James Version translators. It is a sad fact of history that Tyndale did not live to see the eventual fruit and triumph of his labours.

Excerpt from Tyndale's Prologue to the Cologne quarto, 1525

"I have here translated (brethren and sisters most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ) the New Testament for your spiritual edifying, consolation and solace; exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are better seen in the tongues than I, and that have higher gifts of grace to interpret the sense of the Scripture, and meaning of the Spirit, than I, to consider and ponder my labor, and that with the spirit of meekness.

"And if they perceive in any places that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the Scripture, or have not given the right English word, that they put to their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do. For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them; but for to bestow them unto the honoring of God and Christ, and edifying of the congregation, which is the body of Christ."



NEWS AND NOTES

2018 Conference Report

Our annual conference was again held at the Comfort Inn Main Lead in Ballarat, from Friday 6th to Sunday 8th April. The theme for the conference was 'People of God', with six presentations elaborating on aspects of this topic. There were also Bible studies, morning devotions, hymn singing and the question study, held as usual on the last morning of the conference. The weekend was an enjoyable break from the normal routine for those who attended, and there were plenty of opportunities for informal fellowship and discussion outside the scheduled sessions. We thank our heavenly Father for this opportunity to worship Him and spend some time together with fellow believers.

We have booked the same venue for next year, from Saturday 6th to Monday 8th April, 2019.

Correspondence

It has been remarked that the internet, in conjunction with customary mail, has opened the way to spreading God's word in many countries overseas. The interest which this correspondence has promoted has resulted in biblical questions being sent to us, the answers to some of which have been reproduced in this newsletter. We have also received requests for the more recent books and booklets which are available without charge.

THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the New Covenant Fellowship. The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of all of the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words:
"Prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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