

# Gordon D Fee: Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God

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Notes by Alison Morgan May 2004

This is an extremely helpful look at the ministry of the Holy Spirit and its place in the church. It's a reduction of his tome *God's empowering presence*. He's a Pentecostal theologian, and this book is a thorough look at the role of the HS in scripture. It offers a basis for re-examining what we mean by renewal and what it means to live in the power of the Holy Spirit as individuals, but more particularly as churches. It is not particularly reader-friendly; the chapters are helpfully short but the style not easy.

Preface – note that Paul never intended *pneumatikos* to refer either to the human spirit or to some vague idea like 'spiritual'; always he is referring to the HS.

## Overture – an invitation to read Paul anew

*One reads Paul poorly who does not recognize that for him the presence of the Spirit, as an experienced and living reality, was the crucial matter for Christian life, from beginning to end.*

Reason for concern – 'in an increasingly secular, individualistic, and relativistic world – dubbed 'post-Christian' in the 1960s and now called 'postmodern' – the church is regularly viewed as irrelevant at best and Neanderthal at worst. Frankly, much of the fault lies with the church, especially those of us in the church who pride ourselves in being orthodox with regard to the historic faith, for all too often our orthodoxy has been either diluted by an unholy alliance with a given political agenda, or diminished by legalistic or relativistic ethics quite unrelated to the character of God, or rendered ineffective by a pervasive rationalism in an increasingly nonrationalistic world.'

Reason for hope – contemporary postmodernism looks much like the culture of the Greco-Roman world into which the gospel first appeared some 2000 years ago. The secret of the success of the early believers was their 'good news' centred in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; but also with their experienced life of the Spirit who made the work of Christ an effective reality in their lives, thus making them a radical alternative within their culture.

Not so with us – the Spirit has been largely marginalized both in the halls of learning and in the life of the church as a community of faith. It isn't that he's not present – he is, or we are not of Christ at all. But our emphasis has been on his quiescence – the still small voice rather than the wind, earthquake or fire; the fruits of the spirit rather than the gifts of the Spirit, which we have suggested were for the apostolic period only.

This common 'missing out' on the Spirit as an experienced, empowering reality has frequently been corrected historically through a variety of Spirit movements – most recently in the pentecostal and charismatic movements, where emphasis has been placed more on the wind earthquake and fire, and the main texts are Acts and 1 Cor 12-14. These movts have tended to emphasize individualistic spirituality, so that the reality of the Spirit is sometimes merely experienced in the experience; and have betrayed inadequate theological reflection.

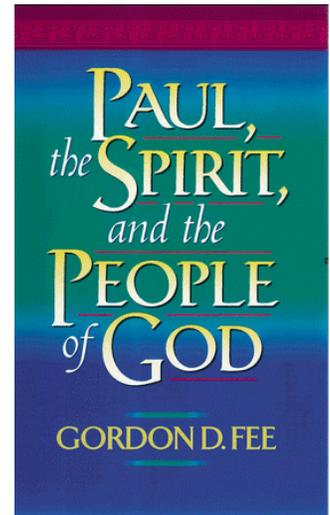
The result has been a truncated view of the Spirit on both sides. For Paul, life in the Spirit meant both fruits and gifts – 'life in the radical middle'. The Spirit as an empowering, experienced reality was the key to all Christian life. We tend to miss out 2 other dimensions too : Spirit as person, the promised personal return of God's presence with his people; and Spirit as eschatological fulfilment, who reconstitutes God's people and enables us to live the life of the future in our inbetween-times existence.

*If the church is going to be effective in our postmodern world, we need to stop paying mere lip service to the Spirit and to recapture Paul's perspective: the Spirit as the experienced, empowering return of God's own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation. All the rest, including fruit and gifts (that is, ethical life and charismatic utterances in worship), serve to that end. xv*

## 1: A 'theology' of the Spirit? The Spirit in Pauline theology

*our theology and experience of the Spirit must be more interwoven if our experienced life of the Spirit is to be more effective*

Everyone has a theology – even if unrecognised. A theology is a view of God and the world. Q is not do you have one, but do you have a good one!



The health of the contemporary church necessitates that its *theology* and its *experience* of the Spirit correspond much more closely than they have in much of the past.

Paul's theology is not the reflective theology of the scholar or classroom; his is a task theology, which takes place in the marketplace, where belief and the experience of God run into the thought systems, religions and everyday life of the people out there in the world. We are dealing with early Christian *experience* – Paul's understanding of the Spirit is a matter of lived-out faith. It was through the Spirit that the early believers received the salvation that Christ brought, and how they understood themselves as living at the beginning of the end times.

### **Continuity and discontinuity with the past**

Old covenant (God's word, communicated by prophet and poet) vs new covenant (God's word, communicated by apostles and teachers). Paul's perspective both continues and modifies the tradition in which he was reared. He sees himself and his churches as being in a direct line with the people of God in the OT (1 Cor 10, Gal 4), but he also sees the people of God as newly formed (Rom 7-8, Gal 5)

There are 4 essential elements of Paul's theology, all of which form around the stable core of what he calls 'the gospel' (it can't be reduced to a single theme, eg justification by faith):

- ✧ Foundation: a gracious, merciful and loving God
- ✧ Framework: the fulfilment of God's promises as already begun but not completed
- ✧ Focus: Jesus the Son of God who brought salvation
- ✧ Fruit: the church as an eschatological community

The Spirit is an essential ingredient to all these.

## **2. God revisits his people – the Spirit as the renewed presence of God**

*the outpouring of the Spirit meant for Paul that God had fulfilled his promise to dwell once again in and among his people*

'Presence' is a delicious word. Nothing can take its place. What do we miss when a loved one dies? Presence. When we are ill, what do we need? Presence. What makes shared life so pleasurable? Presence. Not gifts, phone calls, words – just presence. God has made us this way because he is a relational being. The problem with the Fall is that we lost not just our vision of God but our relationship with God. For Paul the coming of Christ and the Spirit changed that. **The Holy Spirit marked the promised return of the lost presence of God**, the arrival of the new covenant (Deut 30.6 circumcision of the heart, Jer 31 new covenant written on their hearts, Ez 36 write it on their hearts). It included the renewal of the prophetic word (Joel 2.28-30; 1 Th 5.19-22; 1 Cor 11.4-5; 12-14; Rom 12.6, 1 Tim 4.14). Here is continuity (the promised renewal of God's presence with his people) and discontinuity (the radically new way God has revisited them, indwelling them individually as well as corporately by his Spirit).

### **The presence of God in the OT**

From Gen 2-3 and God walking in the garden, to Revn 21-22 with God in the city, the people of Israel have understood themselves to be the people of the Presence, the people among whom the eternal God had chosen to dwell on earth.

- ✧ Tabernacle – Ex 25-31, so that God could dwell among the people. Crisis in desert; God threatens absence; Moses pleads for his presence 33.15-16. Tabernacle is built and the journey undertaken, led by the presence of God in the pillars of cloud and of fire
- ✧ Temple – 1 Kings 8, God fulfils promise of a dwelling place given in Deut 12.11, and temple becomes the focal point of Israel's existence in the Promised land, the place of prayer and of knowing God's presence was with them. Temple destroyed and God's presence forfeited with fall of Jerusalem and exile. Ez 10 God departs from the temple.
- ✧ Promised return of God's presence : Ez 37.27, Mal 3.1. Tied to the promise of a restored temple, Ez 40-48; Is 2.2-3 (inc inclusion of Gentiles). The rebuilt temple fails to satisfy this promise, Haggai 2.3.
- ✧ The presence of God is equated with the Spirit of God. Is 63.9-14.

### **The Spirit as the renewed presence in Paul**

Paul understands the Spirit's coming as fulfilling 3 related expectations:

- ✧ New covenant – 1 Cor 11.25, the death of Christ institutes God's new covenant with his people. The promise has 3 dimensions:
  - A new heart (Jer 31.31-33) and a new spirit (Ez 36.26); 2 Cor 3.1-6.
  - This new spirit is God's spirit, who will enable God's people to follow his decrees (Ez 36.27); Rom 8.3-4, Gal 5.16-25
  - God's spirit means the presence of God himself (Ez 37.14); 2 Cor 3.5-6. The spirit gives life – the one essential reality about God. Any rejection of holiness is rejection of the Holy Spirit and thus of God himself – 1 Thess 4.8.

- ✧ Indwelling presence – the Spirit is spoken of as being in you/us (1 Th 4.8; 1 Cor 6.19; 14.24-25; Eph 5.18). The location is the heart (2 Cor 1.22; 3.3; Gal 4.6; Rom 2.29; 5.5). This becomes the lang of ‘dwelling in’ (1 Cor 3.16; 2 Cor 6.16; Rom 8.9-11; Eph 2.22). In 1 Cor 14.24-25 and 2 Cor 6.16 Paul cites OT texts which speak of God’s dwelling in the midst of his people.
- ✧ Temple – Paul designates the Spirit as the renewed presence of God among his people with temple imagery (1 Cor 3.16-17; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.22; 1 Cor 6.19-20). The local church is God’s temple in the community where it is placed; and it is so by the presence of the Spirit alone, by whom God has now revisited his people.

By fulfilling both the new covenant and the renewed temple motifs, the Spirit becomes the way God himself is now present on planet earth.

### **The individual believer as God’s temple**

In 1 Cor 6.19-20 Paul transfers this imagery from the church to the individual believer. God not only dwells in the midst of his people by the Spirit, but has taken up residence in the lives of his people individually by the same life-giving Spirit.

So: for Paul the Spirit is not merely an impersonal force or power. The Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise that God himself would once again be present with his people. The Spirit is God’s personal presence in our lives and in our midst; he leads us into paths of righteousness, is grieved when his people do not reflect his character and thus reveal his glory, and is present in our worship. It is for us to grasp these realities by *experiencing* them. Perhaps we should downplay the impersonal images of wind, fire, etc, and retool our thinking in Paul’s terms, where we understand and experience the Spirit as the personal presence of the eternal God.

## **3. The Holy Who? The Spirit as Person**

*as fulfillment of the renewed presence of God with his people, the Spirit was understood by Paul in personal terms*

We tend to think of the Spirit in impersonal images – dove, wind, fire, water, oil – and thus find him hard to relate to. ‘We believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and we believe in Jesus Christ his Son; but we are not so sure about the Holy Spirit’. We need to recognise the Spirit as the personal presence of God, not just theoretically but really and experientially.

### **The Holy Spirit as person**

Spirit is an agent, and mostly personhood is presupposed – eg conversion is by the Spirit, revelation comes through the Spirit, preaching is accompanied by the power of the Spirit; prophecy, tongues result from speaking by the Spirit; by the Spirit we are to put to death sinful practices; we are strengthened, we serve, we love, we are saved, we walk and live and are saved by the Spirit (refs p26). The impersonal refs (pouring out, washing) are imagery.

The Spirit, as a person, is the subject of lots of verbs – he searches, knows, teaches, dwells, accomplishes, gives life, cries out, bears witness, leads, helps, intercedes, strengthens etc. The fruits of his indwelling are the personal attributes of God (Gal 5).

### **The Spirit and the Godhead**

Paul uses *pneuma* – Spirit – 140+ times

Holy Spirit 17 times

Spirit of God/ his Spirit 16 times

Spirit of Christ/ equiv 3 times

- ✧ Holy Spirit – occurs twice in OT (Ps 51.11, Is 63.10); came to be understood as the Spirit’s full name.
- ✧ Spirit of God – God is always the subject when Paul speaks of a person receiving the Spirit
- ✧ Spirit of Christ – Gal 4.6, Rom 8.9, Phil 1.9

## **4. God in 3 persons – the Spirit and the Trinity**

JWs succeed because people have been let down by the Church, which treats the Spirit as a matter of creed and doctrine, but not as a vital experienced reality in people’s lives. Spirit is often understood not as person but as divine influence and power – but then we cease to be trinitarian. And Paul did have a trinitarian faith. Explicitly trinitarian passages:

- ✧ 2 Cor 13.14 – the grace
- ✧ 1 Cor 12.4-6 – diversity reflects the nature of God and is thus evidence of God in their midst
- ✧ Eph 4.4-6 – credal formulation

Other texts which presuppose a trinitarian faith:

- |                 |                 |               |               |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| ✧ Rom 5.1-8     | ✧ 1 Cor 2.12    | ✧ Rom 8.3-4   | ✧ Eph 2.20-22 |
| ✧ 1 Thess 1.4-5 | ✧ 1 Cor 6.11    | ✧ Rom 8.15-17 | ✧ Phil 3.3    |
| ✧ 2 Thess 2.13  | ✧ 1 Cor 6.19-20 | ✧ Col 3.16    |               |
| ✧ 1 Cor 1.4-7   | ✧ 2 Cor 1.21-22 | ✧ Eph 1.17    |               |
| ✧ 1 Cor 2.4-5   | ✧ Gal 3.1-5     | ✧ Eph 2.18    |               |

We must take the Spirit seriously as the way the eternal God is ever present with his people; he has never been excluded from our creeds/liturgies, but has been from the experienced life of the church.

God as Trinity, inc HS, is the ground of both our unity and diversity within the believing community. The agent of our unity is the HS – Eph 2-3. But 1 Cor 12 shows he is also the ground for affirming our diversity within our unity.

The triune nature of God makes it clear that God is a relational being.

## 5. The beginning of the end – the Spirit as evidence of the presence of the future

*the visitation of God through the Spirit establishes believers as a thoroughly eschatological people, who live the life of the future in the present as they await the consummation.*

Every local body of believers must recapture the NT church's understanding of itself as an eschatological community. OT characterised by the expectation that God would, through his Messiah, bring an end to the present age; and that it would be followed by the coming age, signalled by resurrection of the dead and the gift of the promised HS. The earliest Christians modified this: they believed that they were now living in between; the present age had indeed ended, and they were at the beginning of the coming age, begun but not yet fully realised. This would occur with the Second Coming. So the future had begun, but not yet been fulfilled.

This perspective determines Paul's whole outlook. It means he sees the church as an end-time community, whose members live in the present as those stamped with eternity. Empowered by the Spirit, we now live the life of the future in the present age. For Paul, the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit meant that the messianic age had already arrived. The Spirit is both evidence and guarantee of the future:

- ✧ Spirit as down-payment : 2 Cor 1.21-22; 5.5; Eph 1.14 (Gk word for 1<sup>st</sup> instalment of a total amount due)
- ✧ Spirit as first-fruits : Rom 8.23
- ✧ Spirit as seal : 2 Cor 1.21-22; Eph 1.13; 4.30 (a stamped impression in wax/clay, signalling ownership & authenticity)

1 Cor interesting. For the Corinthians, life in the Spirit meant present ecstasy, life above and beyond bodily weakness, evidence of being released from the body altogether. For Paul it meant empowering for life in the midst of present bodily weaknesses, in a body obviously in the process of decay. Paul was not tinged by Gk body/spirit dualism. Our decaying bodies are stamped with eternity, destined for resurrection and hence transformation into the likeness of Christ's glorified body. But the Corinthian view insinuates itself into Christian theology, eg when we want to save souls but care little for material needs (and when we expect instant and universal healing?).

It is the Spirit who includes the Gentiles in the end-time people of God. Romans 15; Gal 3.14, Eph 1.13-14.

By the Spirit's presence believers have tasted of the life to come and are now oriented towards its consummation.

## 6. A people for his name – the Spirit and the people of God

*based on the work of Christ, the Spirit calls forth a newly constituted people and makes them 'a people for his name'*

Can someone become a Christian in front of the TV? Salvation apart from membership of the church is outside the NT frame of reference. Our culture emphasizes individualism; subservience of individual rights to the common good is rejected at all costs. The individual is good. N American church in particular has bought into this. Cyprian said there is no salvation outside the church, because God is saving *a people* for his name, not a miscellaneous, unconnected set of individuals. The primary goal of salvation for us is to be an eschatological people, who together live the life of the future in the present age as they await the final consummation. For Paul the NT church is the successor of the OT people of God. In 1 Cor 5 and 6 Paul deals with individual sinners by addressing the church on its failure to deal with them – what is at stake is the church, and its role as God's redeemed and redemptive alternative to Corinth.

Created *by* the Spirit, the early communities became a fellowship *of* the Spirit. The most remarkable thing about this for Paul is the inclusion of Gentiles (Eph 1.13-14). He offers 3 major images for the church:

- ✧ Family – Eph 2.19, 1 Tim 3.15 – with the Spirit responsible for, and evidence of, believers becoming members

- ✧ Temple – see ch 2 – still used for the community of believers; derives from the OT sanctuary, the earthly dwelling of the living God
- ✧ Body – unity and diversity – Eph 4, 1 Cor 12. The church is a radically new eschatological fellowship that transcends both race and socioeconomic status.

For Paul, to be saved means to become part of the people of God, who by the Spirit are born into God's family and therefore joined to one another as one body, whose gatherings in the Spirit form them into God's temple.

## 7. Conversion: getting in – the Spirit and the hearing of the gospel

*although the goal of salvation in Christ is a people for God's name, people enter this community one at a time. Almost every aspect of getting in is the work of the Spirit, beginning with the proclamation and revelation of the gospel.*

Charlemagne became a Christian and had the whole Frankish nation baptised en masse. Were they all Christians – not as NT understands it, because it is not baptism that identifies a believer in Christ but the presence of the HS in one's life. The goal of salvation is a people for God's name – continuity with old covenant. But there is discontinuity too – about how the people is constituted (through the death/resurrection of Christ and the work of the HS; and by entering individually, from every tribe and nation).

Salvation includes both getting in and staying in – trusting in Christ, who by the HS continually transforms us into the likeness of Christ. It is made up of several components:

- ✧ Hearing the gospel
- ✧ Faith
- ✧ Images of conversion
- ✧ Gift of the Spirit
- ✧ Baptism in water (which is a human response to the divine activity)

## 8. Conversion : getting in – the Spirit at the entry point

*'getting in' begins with hearing the gospel, is appropriated by faith and includes an experience of 'receiving' the HS*

We teach people to rely on the facts of what Christ has done for them, not on feelings – but Paul would never have said that. Gal 3.1-5 he appeals not to the truth of the gospel but to their experience of the Spirit. For Paul, conversion has both an objective and a subjective dimension. Objectively, Christ's death and resurrection have secured eternal salvation for all who believe (images: redemption, reconciliation, washing, propitiation, justification, adoption, birth). Subjectively, there is a personally experienced dimension that results in some radical changes for the believer, and the Spirit is the indispensable element for this dimension.

- ✧ Gal 3.2-3
- ✧ 1 Cor 12.13
- ✧ Eph 1.13-14
- ✧ Titus 3.5-7

Paul often describes people's turning to Christ in terms of what has happened to them: gave his Spirit (Rom 5.5); anointed them with his Spirit (2 Cor 1.21), poured out his Spirit (Titus 3.6), sealed them with the Spirit (Eph 1.13, 4.30). They have received the Spirit (1 Cor 2.21, 2 Cor 11.4), been saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit (2 Thess 2.13, Rom 15.16), been circumcised in their hearts by the Spirit (Rom 2.29), been joined to Christ so as to become one Spirit with him (1 Cor 6.17). Titus 3.4-7 describes conversion in a way that sounds like a creed, and gives the Spirit a central role. So for Paul the role of the Spirit is crucial at conversion; and it is the Spirit alone who identifies God's people in the present eschatological age.

Paul also describes believers from nonbelievers in terms of believers having the Spirit (1 Cor 2.6-16, 12.3, Rom 8.9). No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit (1 Cor 12.3). If they do not have the Spirit they do not belong to Christ (Rom 8.9).

Images for salvation: some are not connected with the Spirit (redemption, propitiation, reconciliation) – these emphasize the objective aspect. Others are – the ones which mention the believer's subjective experience of salvation:

- ✧ Adoption – Gal 4.5-6
- ✧ Washing, rebirth, giving life – 1 Cor 6.11, Titus 3.5, 2 Cor 3.6. New life is pictured as a renewal (Rom 12.2, Col 3.10). By the Spirit God cleanses us from past sins and transforms us into his people, reborn and renewed to reflect his likeness in our lives.
- ✧ Sanctification – usually a fig of speech for conversion, not sth which happens afterwards – 2 Thess 2.13; Rom 15.16.

The wide variety of images used for the work of the Spirit shows that no single one will do.

Lastly – we may not get an 'experience' – doesn't mean we fall short of biblical faith; more likely that we don't expect one, or that we are second generation Christians.

## 9. Conversion: staying in – the Spirit & Pauline ethics

*the Spirit, in constituting a new people for God's name, fulfils the purpose of the law and stands over against the 'flesh' by enabling righteous living.*

Salvation is about getting and staying in – to be joined to the people of God by the Spirit, and to live the life of the saved person. We are brought to life by the Spirit to as to live the life of heaven on earth, also by the Spirit.

For many, Christian behaviour means reading Paul's commands as a new form of law and trying their best to live by them, giving each the same value. This is too individualistic; and too hard – we are meant to do it together. Christian ethics is not primarily an individualistic one-on-one-with-God brand of personal holiness; it is to do with living the life of the Spirit in the Christian community and in the world. It's not a disguised continuation of life under the law.

The failure of the old covenant was that it was not accompanied by the empowering Spirit. It was written on stone tablets, and had become a covenant of letter, leading to death (Rom 2.29; 7.6; 2 Cor 3.5-6). The new covenant, on the other hand, is life-giving, because it is administered by the Spirit, through whom we are being transformed into the glory of the Lord (2 Cor 3.4-18). It is the fulfilment of the promises of Jer 31.31-34 and Ez 36.26-37.14: a righteousness written not on stone but on the heart.

The gift of the Spirit brings an end to Torah observance; it can do what Torah couldn't – enable us to live in such a way as to express the original intent of Torah, to make us a people of God, who bear his likeness and demonstrate it in our behaviour. Spirit people not only want to please God but are empowered to do so. Spirit ethics begins with a renewed mind (Rom 12.1-2), because that's the only way to determine what God's will is and thus please him. The mind renewed by the Spirit leads us to understand that love must rule over all; and the Spirit teaches us how to love. Paul tells Colossians and Ephesians to live by the Spirit, not by rules.

Galatians 5.13-6.10. The Spirit is the key to ethical life and Paul expects Spirit people to exhibit changed behaviour. His basic command is that we walk by the Spirit. Life in the Spirit is ethical realism – live lived in the already/not yet by the power of the Spirit. It is experienced in the life of both believers and the community.

## 10. Staying in – the fruit of the Spirit

*the goal of individual conversion is for us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, that is, to be transformed into God's own likeness, the likeness of Christ*

When we receive the Spirit, at conversion, divine perfection does not set in – but divine infection does! Paul calls it the fruit of the Spirit. The list he gives is a mirror image of Christ himself.

We are not passive as far as the fruits are concerned – we have to walk in the Spirit, and he produces the fruit.

The essential nature of the fruit is the reproduction of the life of Christ in the believer.

The list is not exhaustive but representative.

The fruits cover a broad range. They are not rules but pointers – this is what a person being conformed into Christ's image will look like.

Most are to do with the corporate life of the community, not the life of the individual.

They represent Torah being etched on the heart.

Phil 1.27 – citizens of heaven. If people are to see what heaven is to be like, they should see it now in the way the heavenly citizens live their life together.

## 11. The ongoing warfare – the Spirit against the flesh

*the Spirit-flesh conflict in Paul has to do not with an internal conflict in one's soul, but with the people of God living the life of the future in a world where the flesh is still very active.*

Romans 7 describes not the life of a Christian, but the life of a person living under law without the Spirit's help. The conflict between flesh and Spirit is one which affects those living in the inbetween times. 'Flesh' for Paul means fallen humanity, not just humanity. It describes believers only before they came to be in Christ, before they put off the old self and put on the new (Eph 4.22-24). 2 Cor 5.14-17, new creation. He is describing 2 kinds of existence, and their incompatibility.

Life in the Spirit is not passive, nor obedience automatic. We continue to live in the real world; but we live in it as different people.

Gal 5.17 – they are living as they used to, by the flesh.

Realism means we will still fail; but restoration is gentle (Gal. 6.1). We can regularly experience forgiveness.

## 12. Power in weakness – the Spirit, present weakness, and prayer

*present eschatological existence is lived in the radical middle, in the midst of all kinds of present weaknesses knowing the power of the Spirit, who especially comes to our aid in prayer.*

Life *in the flesh* is not the same as life *according to the flesh*. Paul doesn't include an inner Spirit-flesh conflict in his concept of being empowered in weakness (eg Rom 8.26), because he speaks positively of living in weakness. The Corinthians, and their many present day followers, can't cope with this.

Rom 8.17-27 and 2 Cor 12.9 indicate that the Spirit is seen as the source of empowering in the midst of affliction or weakness. Knowing Christ means both knowing the power of his resurrection and participating in his sufferings (Phil 3.9-10). All this reflects Paul's eschatological understanding of Christian existence as already/not yet. It's a tension we need to keep together. The Spirit is with us as we live in the radical middle. This is most so in prayer. All pietistic movements (ones concerned with individual spirituality) come into being as a reaction to a tendency for the individual's relationship with God to get lost in some form of churchiness.

Few studies deal with Paul's life of prayer. But it's key (1 Thess 5.16-18). In his churches, spontaneous prayer by the Spirit is the norm. Rom 8.28 (sighs to deep for words) probably means tongues.

*A prayerless life is one of practical atheism.*

## 13. To the praise of his glory – the Spirit and worship

*the Spirit gathers the newly constituted people of God in worship for corporate praise of God and sharing of gifts to build up the community of faith*

Paul knows nothing of the either/or pattern developed in the later church between fruit and gifts, ethics and Spirit-inspired worship. Col. 3.16 and Eph 5.19 urge them to teach and admonish one another through song, as one of the ways of keeping filled with the Spirit. Several of the gifts of the Spirit also belong to a worship context. Both men and women share equally in praying and prophesying (1 Cor 11.4-5) – problem is women's appearance, not role – new role, not new appearance.

Early church was characterised by its singing; in every generation where there is renewal by the Spirit a new hymnody breaks forth. Gk word 'hymn' was used of songs sung to deities/heroes. 'Psalms' probably indicates songs of praise. 'Songs' could be of any kind, which is why he qualifies it as 'spiritual songs'. (Col 3.16). The sense is of 2 dimensional worship – songs addressed to God and to one another – as in OT psalter.

## 14. Those controversial gifts? The Spirit and the charismata

*because the Spirit was present with his people, for Paul his giftings were as normal as breathing and were intended for the building of the people in the present as they await the consummation.*

There is a fad for finding your spiritual gift – but the gifts are to be exercised in community worship. The texts which discuss them are not instructional but corrective; aimed at particular problems in particular churches. None of the lists is intended to be complete. The point in 1 Cor 12 is the community's need for diversity. Attempts to categorise, especially if Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 are included, are tentative. The best grouping is that hinted at in 1 Cor 12.4-6: sercies, miracles, inspired utterance.

Whether one believes in the miracles depends on one's worldview. Moderns decided Paul and his churches believed them because of their primitive world view, contrasting with ours as scientific and mature. Many evangelicals adopted their own brand of rationalism to explain the absence of such phenomena in their own circles by limiting this kind of Spirit activity to the apostolic age.

But Paul's statements are matter of fact discussions of phenomena anyone could have investigated had they wanted to. He is not trying to prove anything.

Prophecy is the most often mentioned gift in Paul's letters:

- |                             |                       |                    |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ✧ 1 Thess 5.20              | ✧ Rom 12.6            | ✧ 1 Tim 1.18; 4.14 |
| ✧ 1 Cor 11.4-5; 12.10-14.40 | ✧ Eph 2.20; 3.5; 4.11 | ✧ Gal 2.2          |

Implies wide currency.

Prophecy was widespread in the Greek world, but Paul's understanding is shaped by Judaism – the prophet spoke to God's people under the inspiration of the Spirit. Such utterances were spontaneous, subject to discernment by the community.

## 15. Where to from here? The Spirit for today and tomorrow

*if we are going to count for much in the post-modern world in which we now live, the Spirit must remain the key to the church's existence*

Why is it not for us as it was in Paul's churches? Suggestion: **Historically, the most important ingredient of true reformation and renewal is for the church to become more intentionally biblical in its thought and actions.**

#### Paul's understanding of the Spirit – a summary

1. The key to Christian experience; he empowers all genuinely Christian life and experience
2. God breaking into our lives – the dynamic, experiential way the Spirit comes into the life of the individual and into the ongoing life of the community is key to everything.
3. End-time evidence and guarantee of glory – Paul experienced and understood the Spirit in an eschatological framework.
4. God dwelling in among us. The experience of the Spirit meant the return of God's personal presence to dwell in and among his people.
5. God very God – Paul understands the one God in a trinitarian way
6. Salvation made effective
7. A people called forth
8. Righteousness made possible – the Spirit empowers ethical life in all its dimensions: individually, within the community, and to the world.
9. The key to Christian worship.

The church has generally lived below this picture of life in the Spirit. Perhaps it is hard for second generation Christians to experience in the same fresh way. But history of the church has largely been of the institution, not of the life of the Spirit in the community of faith.

#### **A way forward:**

- ✧ We need the Spirit to bring life into our present institutions, theologies and liturgies (rather than tearing them down and building different ones). We will not be miraculously unified in terms of visible structures, liturgies, and theologies; but the Spirit can and has given people a sense of being one across confessional lines
- ✧ We must not isolate the Spirit in such a way that spiritual gifts and phenomena take pride of place in the church, resulting in churches that are, or are not, charismatic. We must focus on Christ crucified and risen.
- ✧ A genuine recapturing of the dynamic life of the Spirit will result in more effective evangelism in a lost, isolated, individualistic world.

#### How?

1. Teach this stuff, biblically – the crucial role the Spirit plays in Paul's view of things.
2. Lead them into a more biblical understanding of what it means for us to be God's eschatological people in a world gone mad.
3. Provide a setting and atmosphere in which people can practice worship, be built up in ministry within and to the world; let them function as a whole priesthood.

## **Appendix: Spirit baptism and water baptism in Paul**

The Spirit does not come, for Paul, through water baptism. Paul understood the Spirit as being received at conversion, not later at baptism. Water baptism is the believer's response to the Spirit's prior presence and activity.