

Christian Faith & Practice through.....the Spirit

For he will come like a pent-up stream, impelled by the Spirit of Adonai. "Then a Redeemer will come to Tziyon (Zion), to those in Ya'akov (Jacob) who turn from rebellion." So says Adonai. "And as for me," says Adonai, "this is my covenant with them: my Spirit, who rests on you, and my words which I put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or from the mouth of your children, or from the mouth of your children's children, now or ever," says Adonai. (Isaiah 59:19b-21)

Then he answered me, "This is the word of Adonai to Z'rubavel (Zerubbabel): 'Not by force, and not by power, but by my Spirit,'" says Adonai-Tzva'ot (Lord of armies or hosts). (Zechariah 4:6 CJB)

At first, this might seem like an odd subject for an article on adding to our faith and practice by implementing Torah. After all, there are no direct instructions in the Torah regarding the Spirit, either for seeking, or filling, or being led. Most Christians probably know already (or think they do) exactly who the Spirit is, what He's good for, and how to obtain His benefits. He is identified by many as a "person," in the context of a "trinity," a concept that is a little difficult considering that the Spirit is said to consist of at least seven spirits (Rev. 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6). This article is not about the validity of those doctrines, but an attempt to set forth some of my personal discoveries from the Word on the power of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Spigot as Rowan Atkinson says in the movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral," a comparison that is not entirely inept). And I think you will quickly see how this subject relates to a Torah submissive lifestyle as you continue.

Some might argue that the Spirit wasn't around (or "indwelling") until the first Pentecost (Shavuot) after the resurrection of the Messiah, but a cursory examination of the Word proves this to be a false assumption. The list of people in the Tanakh (OT) directly said to be filled and/or led by the Spirit is long and distinguished: **Bezalel** (Ex. 31:3 and 35:31); **Moses** and the **70 Elders** (Num. 11:17, 25, 26, 29); **Balaam** (Num. 24:2); **Joshua** (Num. 27:18 and Deut. 34:9); **Othniel** son of Joshua (Judges 3:10); **Gideon** (Judges 6:34); **Jephthah** (pronounced Yeftah - Judges 11:29); **Samson** (Judges 13:25, 14:6&19, 15:14); **King Saul** (I Sam. 10:6, 10, 11:6); **King David** (I Sam. 16:13); **messengers of Saul** (I Sam. 19:20); **Amasai**, chief of the 30 (I Chron. 12:18); **Azariah** son of Obed (2 Chron. 15:1); **Jahaziel** (2 Chron. 20:14); **The Branch** (Isa. 11:2); **My Servant** (Isa. 42:1); **the Anointed** (Isa. 61:1); **the people of Israel** (Isa. 63:11); **Ezekiel** (Eze. 2:2, 3:12,14, 24, 11:5); **Micah** (Micah 3:8); **Zerubbabel**, **Joshua**, and **the people of the land** (Hag. 2:5); and **the former prophets** (Zech. 7:12). This list does not include the people, or situations, where the Holy Spirit is working by implication.

I hear a lot about being "led" by the Spirit, as if He was some sort of stable hand taking an unwilling horse to the vet. Apparently the Spirit pulls a lead rope and keeps pulling

until the person follows. This is not entirely inaccurate, because the Spirit will in fact lead if given a chance. Jesus tells us in John 16:13-15 (NASB)

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. “All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

And further defines what the truth is in John 17:17 (NASB)

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

However, many of those who are being led thusly seem to be “not led” to destinations clearly revealed in the Word of God. “I don’t feel led,” has become a popular refrain from people who try to explain a lack of obedience to the Word. In other words, the “leading” they have frequently leads away from the plain teaching of the Bible. I have witnessed people who feel “led” to commit adultery, “led” to steal, “led” to gossip, and generally “led” to ignore parts of the Word that interfere with their “leading.” The problem is the Holy Spirit never leads away, or apart from, the revealed Word of God. I have no doubt these people are in fact being led, but one has to wonder just what spirit is doing the leading. And where they are really being led to.

Another term I hear used a lot is “filling.” Some teach that a Christian who is supposed to be “Spirit filled” is, apparently, nothing more than a really nice guy (or girl). Others teach that an unknown “tongue” is spoken after being filled or “baptized.” There are claims of miraculous healing powers as well as so-called miracles such as “bleeding” (from the same places Jesus bled); laughing and rolling in the aisles (giving rise to the term “holy rollers”); and alleged casting out of demons. But many who claim these events are Spirit-filled miracles also teach blatant falsehoods supposedly from the Bible, and their listeners blithely take it all in without even a questioning look. The problem with the sign gifts is that every one of them can be counterfeited by the Deceiver. I mean, think about it – who causes ill health in the first place? Of course he can heal it, Lucifer caused it!

This is not to say that there aren’t people who are genuinely “led,” “filled,” “anointed,” “empowered,” and/or “baptized” by or in the Spirit. I have heard of at least a handful of instances where someone legitimately appeared to exercise the gift of tongues. And I think at least a double handful of legitimate healings have been experienced also. But how does one arrive at a filled state, or how is the power of the Spirit bestowed? And, when someone claims a Spirit-induced miracle, how can we double check that claim?

One thing I have observed from the Word is that every biblical record of a person exercising the power of the Spirit was a mature believer, who had been in the Word and

discipleship for a long time. It seems plain to me from these testimonies that the power of the Spirit comes on the heels of an intimate relationship with the Father fostered by a deep study of, and obedience to, the Word of God. One possible exception is Balaam's donkey, but she wasn't a person and I think this just demonstrates that the Father can use any vessel He chooses. And don't get me started on the puns I can make from this. Ass me no questions and I'll tell you no lies. Another possible exception might be Cornelius in Acts 10, but it is clear from the context that he has been at it a long time. It doesn't appear to me from the Word that "rookies" had a great deal to do with relaying the power of God.

In Hebrew, the words for Holy Spirit are *Ruach haKodesh* (roo-akh ha-koe-desh), meaning literally "wind" or "breath" of the Holy One. And the Word is said to be "inspired" by the Father (2 Tim. 3:16), which means "God-breathed." The words used to describe both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are the same. Jesus is also called the Word of God (John 1). So it would seem to me that if we want to be filled with the Spirit we must be filled with the Word. If we take in and act on His written Word, we are taking in the Messiah, and at the same time we are becoming "Spirit-filled."

Most of us know the story of Elijah and the 450 prophets of Ba'al, and how he kicked their collective butts on Mt. Carmel. By his own account he did this because of God's word, in order to turn the hearts of the people back to the Father.

By now, the water was flowing around the altar, and it had filled the trench. Then, when it came time for offering the evening offering, Eliyahu (Elijah) the prophet approached and said, "Adonai, God of Avraham, Yitz'chak and Isra'el, let it be known today that you are God in Isra'el, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Hear me, Adonai, hear me, so that this people may know that you, Adonai, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back to you." (I Kings 18:35-37 CJB)

Elijah was able to exercise this power because of God's Word. God's Word and God's power are intimately connected, but even though God can exert awesome force He chooses to communicate to us in a quiet, subdued voice. After the famous butt-kicking, Elijah has an encounter with God on His mountain, and His power is very quiet.

He said, "Go outside, and stand on the mountain before Adonai;" and right then and there, Adonai went past. A mighty blast of wind tore the mountains apart and broke the rocks in pieces before Adonai, but Adonai was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but Adonai was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, fire broke out; but Adonai was not in the fire. And after the fire came a quiet, subdued voice. When Eliyahu (Elijah) heard it, he covered his face with his cloak, stepped out and stood at the entrance to the cave. Then a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Eliyahu?" (I Kings 19:11-13 CJB)

By the Spirit of God Zechariah chastises people for not following the Words of God.

Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20)

Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, "Thus God has said, 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.' "

Nehemiah connects the Ruach haKodesh directly to the commandments of God, and makes them the same. Neh. 9:20

"You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.

The Ruach worked through the prophets for the express purpose of turning people back to His Law according to Neh. 9:29,30.

*...and admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances, by which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen. "However, You bore with them for many years, and admonished them by **Your Spirit** through Your prophets, yet they would not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.*

Zechariah makes the Torah and the messages from the prophets equivalent to justice, mercy and compassion, and further states that the Father will not listen to those who ignore Him. Zechariah 7:8-13 CJB

Then this message from Adonai came to Z'kharyah (Zechariah): "In the past Adonai-Tzva'ot (Lord of hosts) said, 'Administer true justice. Let everyone show mercy and compassion to his brother. Don't oppress widows, orphans, foreigners or poor people. Don't plot evil against each other.' But they wouldn't listen, they stubbornly turned their shoulder away and stopped up their ears, so that they wouldn't have to hear it. Yes, they made their hearts as hard as a diamond, so that they wouldn't hear the Torah and the messages that Adonai-Tzva'ot had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. This is why great anger came from Adonai-Tzva'ot; and it came about that just as they hadn't listened when he called, so Adonai-Tzva'ot said, 'I won't listen when they call;...'"

Jesus helps us with a way to tell what teaching is from God and what is not. If it glorifies God, it is from God. If it glorifies the speaker, it is not from God.

So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (John 7:16-18 NASB)

In the creation actions, we can see the power of the Father, Spirit and the Son. The Father speaks Words, the Word is the Son, and the Spirit acts to bring the Words to the world. As we walk with the Father, the Spirit brings to mind the Word, and that Word is Jesus. There are many other demonstrations of God's power, such as bringing Israel out of Egypt and all the supernatural (the word means "above" or outside of the natural) works associated with it (including the giving of His instructions from Mt. Sinai); the protection of Daniel in the lion's den and the three from the furnace; the confusion of languages at Bav'el (Babel); the translation of Enoch; and the flood.

If I were to rank all of God's revealed works according to power, I would place the work accomplished by the sacrifice of the Messiah at the top. All of these mighty works to choose from, and the greatest is the humble, obedient death of a man on a tree. Creation is said to be the "finger-work" of God (Ps. 8:3), redemption or salvation to be with an "arm" (Deut. 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 9:29; I Kings 8:41,42; II Kings 17:36-39; 2 Chron. 6:32,33; Ps. 44:3, 98:1; Is. 51:5, 52:10, 53:1, 59:16, 63:5; Eze. 20:33, 34). (There are two verses that also say creation was by His arm – Jer. 27:5 and 32:17, but I think the illustration still applies.) The conversion of a lost soul from the kingdom of darkness and death to the Kingdom of Light and Life is the greatest act of power imaginable, making all the "signs" pale into insignificance.

What did Jesus mean when He said we would do "greater works than these?" (John 14:12.) I think at least one possible meaning is that we participate with God in the conversion of people from darkness to Light by taking in His Word and acting on it. There is tremendous power in the act of obedience to YHVH. It seems almost too simple – just read the Word and do it. But our testimony when we do this releases God's power in such a mighty way that other people who are involved with us are given the encouragement to plunge in too. As we implement His Word we testify that It Works, and He provides blessing upon blessing.

His Spirit is the one that leads us into all truth, and God's Word is truth. This truth contains all the power we need to convert our own lives to His Will, and by doing so facilitate the creation of other new beings in the Kingdom. Jesus tells Nicodemus in John chapter three verse 12 "if you don't understand the earthly (or natural) things, how will you believe the heavenly?" I think there are at least two applications here. The first is that if we do not understand the written Words, how will we understand any Spiritual Words? And second, if we do not understand the Word made Flesh, how will we understand YHVH?

My attitude about the written Word will influence my attitude (and understanding) of the Word made flesh. The written Word is God's revelation of Himself. Everything we need to know about Him right now is in there. For a book that covers so many centuries and reveals an infinite God, it sure is thin. So I assume that every word has meaning, each letter is important, and none can be set aside or ignored. We shouldn't call some "old"

(outdated) and some “new” (updated), or set some aside or relegate them to a “fulfilled” rubbish heap. Labels like “ceremonial” and “moral” really have nothing to do with the validity of the Words. If some appear to be different, we have to ask ourselves why and how, not just dismiss them because they don’t seem, in our infinite wisdom, not to apply. If God put them there, far be it from me to remove them. I just don’t have the brass to tell Him that He messed up by putting some Words in the Bible that don’t count. Over and over we are told not to “add to or take away from” His Words (and this is an obedience test also), because over and over again attempts are made to do just that. To the extent we downgrade the importance of the Word we will cause ourselves extensive misunderstandings and confusion about God Himself. As we take in and obey His Words we learn how to distinguish the earthly from the heavenly voices.

So if you really want to be led, filled, empowered, baptized, or anointed by the Spirit, read the Word and Do the Word. The “signs” will follow on the heels of your obedience, if that’s what God chooses to do. Do all of the Word, including what you think of as The Law. Don’t baffle with bull, dazzle with obedience. If you want to be filled by the Spirit then fill yourself with the Word and fill your actions with obedience. Need power? Hear and obey. Refuse to listen to somebody tell you that some of His Words are antiquated, or only applied to the Jews, or were eliminated by the death of the Messiah. Turn a deaf ear to them no matter how many initials they have after their name on a business card. YHVH guarantee’s us that we will be absolutely amazed at the power that is released by being led to fill our understanding with His Word and fill our actions with obedience to that Word.

“To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.” (Deut. 4:35,36)

“Word Up”
Bruce Bertram