

INTEGRITY, a journal published by an independent nonprofit corporation, is basically a ministry of reconciliation which utilizes the varied talents of a large community of believers who seek accurately to reveal God to both the church and the world so that all may become one as he is one.

# Integrity

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sang to them a stanza of that majestic hymn, "Be Still, My Soul," which reads:

"Be still my soul: the Lord is on thy side;  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly  
Friend  
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful  
end."

The occasion of our call and sharing with the Bilaks is the sudden and grievous death of their youngest son, Jamie, twenty-one years of age. To this beloved Christian missionary family, words are likewise totally inadequate to speak to their depth of hurt and sense of loss; but we have claimed the promise again and laid upon the Holy Spirit our desire and burden: "O precious Spirit, intercede for Steve (Epi) and Reba, for

Paul, Rebecca, Stephanie and for that young widow, Jamie's bride of two months, Catherine; take this burden to the throne of Grace, and intercede for them with sighs too deep for words." For this is indeed the work of the Spirit in the transformed life of the believer.

To Leroy and Ouida Garrett, to the entire Bilak family, the Board of Trustees of *Integrity* extend to you our deepest expressions of Christian love, and commend you to that Grace which is sufficient to meet all our needs, to that Spirit who will bear your broken and wounded hearts to the very presence of the God of all comfort, the Father of all mercy; and there you will find healing and the strength to face tomorrow.

Joseph F. Jones, Chairman  
Integrity Editorial Board

July-August, 1984

# Integrity

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### “With Sighs Too Deep For Words”

With the two previous issues of *Integrity* focusing on Biblical affirmations of the Holy Spirit, we turn in this issue to the Holy Spirit and the transformed life. What difference does it really make whether God's creative, powerful Spirit is present in the believer's life? The apostle Paul held this as the decisive characteristic of the believer's life, that “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” To have the Spirit of God dwelling in one's self is to belong, to enjoy a relationship with Christ; fail to have this Spirit and one is not of Christ!

Among the articles shared with our readers in this issue is a brief discussion by John Van Horn of the Spirit's role in our prayer life. Quoting the apostle in Romans 8, the writer refers to our limited ability to pray as we ought, and claims the promise that “the Spirit himself will intercede for us,” thus giving prayer an assured access to the throne of grace.

As the final pages of this issue were falling into place, news of two tragic events came to our attention, and we felt deeply moved to claim this function of the Spirit in the believer's life and in the Christian congregation: “the Spirit will intercede for you.” First came the news from Texas that the precious little three-year-old granddaughter of Leroy and Ouida Garrett, Christi, had drowned. This was shocking beyond words; but it is compounded when one realizes that the family was hardly over the shock and grief of two years ago when the little girl's father was drowned. We have tried rather inadequately to express by telephone and written form our sense of grief and loss at this news; but our most effective assurance comes in reminding the Garretts and ourselves that we don't know how to pray at such a time. . . We really don't; we are not being modest, we really don't know what or how to pray. But we believe with all our hearts that the Spirit of God does know what to pray. . .and we have claimed that promise for our beloved fellow Christians.

A few hours before these words were typed, I along with members of the Troy, Michigan congregation talked with Stephen and Reba Bilak in Lausanne, Switzerland. We then

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## Changed Lives

DIANE G. H. KILMER

Lansing, Michigan

“You are the salt of the earth,” said Jesus. But sometimes I feel like “salt that has lost its savor”. . .powerless to preserve the world. When I feel brokenness and see it in the lives around me, it is easy for me to feel like a failure. If you, too, have not felt much like “salt of the earth” lately, then reflect with me upon the following true stories of changed lives.

### Rejoined in Christ

John, brother of a Christian friend of mine, had hit rock bottom. He had become hateful, mean, so miserable not even his parents wanted to see him. A man just in his forties, John had behind him a divorce that had scarred the entire family, estrangement from his two sons, and now was unable to keep a job. A younger brother let John share an apartment with him and said John never got dressed in the mornings and would never change his sheets. Any Christians in the family were at a loss to know how to help John, except to pray for him. John seemed to deliberately place himself beyond human assistance. One day in January, John listened to a religious television show (yes, one of those!) which described his own life of desperation and which taught him to ask God to come into his life. John asked. And God did.

John did not know what to do with his new “religious experience” until he shyly related it to another brother who was a Christian, who then directed John to read the Bible. During prayer and study, John became convinced that God wanted him to ask for his ex-wife's forgiveness. In wrestling with this idea John honestly prayed,

“Lord, if you really want me to meet with my ex-wife, you'll have to change me in two ways: take away the love I feel for my mistress, and take away the hate I feel for my ex-wife.” Evidently, God took these problems on Himself, because John said his heart changed. And when John finally met with his ex-wife, he discovered that she, too, had become a Christian!

By now, family members who themselves were not Christians were “telling the tale” to everyone. . .declaring how the Lord had “granted my brother's prayer” and witnessing to anyone who would listen that their brother John was a new person!

In June the entire family gathered (including John's two happy teenaged sons) to joyfully and tearfully witness the remarriage of this man and his wife.

### Joy in Spiritual Growth

In the spring I received more good news of a changed life: Marilyn, an unhappy woman who had already gone through two divorces, and was beginning to experiment in drugs, had become a Christian! Marilyn had been a high school classmate of mine. Her father was very domineering and proud of his atheistic beliefs. Her mother was a non-practicing Catholic. Several years back these parents had disapproved of another daughter, Pat, becoming a Christian and had even “disowned” her for awhile. But Pat had persevered in keeping communication open with all members of her family. She never denied her Christianity, but instead, with the help of her Christian husband, Alan, continued to live her Christianity before them. Thus, when Marilyn



finally allowed Jesus into her life after studies with a Christian friend from work, she immediately telephoned Pat and Alan. Since then, the barrage of long-distance calls from Marilyn to Pat have continued, filled with questions and joyful reports on her spiritual growing!

### **Released Anger and Reconciliation**

The third story happened last summer. Our neighbors were getting a divorce. They are the best neighbors one could ever have, always sharing with us their tools and their snowblower, their swimming pool and their bounty of cherry tomatoes. But one drank too much and, in response, the other stored up so much anger and resentment that the two had spoken very little to each other during the last couple of years. My husband and I felt loss at the separation of our friends. Because talking to either of them seemed not to help, the only way we felt we could help our neighbors (in the vein of a 'Last ditch effort') was to pray for them; so we did. A lot. During a Sunday morning worship service, one spouse, quietly meditating, suddenly felt a complete draining of all the anger that has been stored up inside. This person then felt complete peace. The two began "dating," sharing thoughts and feelings as they never had before. Soon they forgave each other. The drinking problem receded; and they decided to reconcile rather than divorce. A few weeks later I was in their home, listening to them speak kindly to each other, watching their gladness in being together. I just had to say, "It sure is nice to see you two together again. I really prayed that this would happen." They smiled and answered that they credited God with having saved their marriage. They could not imagine how else it could have happened that they had not divorced.

### **"The Power At Work Within Us"**

These three stories remind me of one special truth: lives that look hopeless from my human viewpoint can be changed by the

power of God. And what is that power? The promised Holy Spirit. Jesus considered it an advantage for us to have the Holy Spirit living with us here on earth. (John 16:6,7) For the Holy Spirit has the ability to convict us of our sin, to teach and remind us of God's ways (John 14:25, 16:7-11). In Romans 8 we learn that the Holy Spirit can renew us, rejuvenate us, even pray with us when we do not know ourselves exactly what is needed. The Holy Spirit is judging and leading people to the way of God. He is entering every heart and mind that feels despair and that turns to God for healing. The Spirit is active. Busy. He is the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20). He is the Messenger who reveals the Father to His lonely children. We saw in the three stories that no one could make any long-lasting difference in each situation unless the matter was turned over to God in prayer. Then it is up to the Holy Spirit to change lives.

With this Power working so effectively all around us, what are you and I supposed to do? We, as "salt in the world," must first do whatever it takes to keep our own hearts and minds open to this Spirit. When we pray, study the Word, meditate, fellowship, and worship, we maintain our "saltiness." Then we will be ready, listening, prepared to obey the Spirit's promptings whenever He needs us. Sometimes we may be His mouthpiece. Words of encouragement or teaching will come into our mind to be expressed to the one in need (I. Cor. 2:12-13). Perhaps another time the Spirit will need us to perform a particular service. Remember, the Spirit knows all minds, including yours and the one in need. Consequently, you can be assured the Spirit's timing will be just right and the words most appropriate. It will be God working in us "to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philip. 2:13).

So, it is not even our place to feel failure for not having saved the impossible situations around us. Our purpose is to be salt, prepared to be used in the process of salva-

tion. And being sprinkled out in the world like salt, places us where we can see the victories of Jesus as we watch the work of God's precious gift to us on earth: The Holy Spirit.

Come learn with me to trust the words

Jesus said to all of us, knowing there would be times we would feel like helpless failures:

"In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

## **Praying in the Holy Spirit**

JOHN VAN HORN

Clawson, Michigan

Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Cohort, is said to have been a "devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God." (Acts 10:2) The prayer life of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10 speaks boldly to us today. His life is an example of devotion to God in prayer. His life of prayer had an effect on his family for it is recorded that all his household feared God. The angel of the Lord also gave a beautiful tribute to this man of prayer as recorded in Acts 10:4. He said, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." We may marvel at the example of a life such as Cornelius', a life given so completely to prayer. We may even view a life of prayer as an impossibility for ourselves. Yet it is important for us to note Cornelius' desire to seek God in order that we, too, may be inspired to develop a regular and constant communication with God.

An interesting aspect in the story of Cornelius is that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to him. However, his heart had been ready to receive all that God would give and teach him. We can only speculate about the mighty way God must have used Cornelius after he received the Holy Spirit!

The desire to seek God and to know Him should be the primary focus in a prayer life directed by the Holy Spirit. Our minds are

kindled with desire to have fellowship with the Almighty God. The Psalmist captures the thought of seeking God in this way:

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is.

(Psalm 63:1,2)

The Psalmist expresses clearly that real satisfaction and fulfillment in this life can only come from God. He cries, "My flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is." How true this statement becomes for us today, as we have tried living in our own strength, without the water of God flowing through our prayers. The need, then, is to become a devout person of prayer, to pray constantly, seeking God in order to know and have fellowship with Him. One benefit of such knowledge and fellowship is to gain new insights into His Word and a greater desire to become obedient to the direction the Word gives.

### **Repentance and Confession**

Another aspect of prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit is that of repentance and confession. I do not believe that man would ever repent of his sinful ways apart from God having touched his heart through the Holy Spirit. Man is often full of regret and disgust at his failure, but true repentance



and the resulting confession is beyond his own initiating. King David is a stirring example of repentance and confession of sin. When the reality of his sin and all of its consequences fell upon David, it is said that he prayed and fasted, seeking to restore the broken relationship between himself and God. Psalm 51 speaks with quiet beauty of a life of deep repentance and confession before God. One of the desires of David's heart was for cleansing, for he says in Psalm 51:10:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new spirit within me.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life will enable us to bring before God a humble and contrite heart ready to repent and confess the sin committed against Him. It is then that the relationship between God and man is restored.

### Intercedes For Us

Intercession is another aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in one's prayer life. In Romans 8:26-27 the apostle Paul states:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows

the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We find ourselves bound continually by human weakness when we pray for ourselves or for others who request our prayers. How often have we prayed earnestly over an extended period of time for a particular need only to cry out to God and say, "Lord, I have nothing more to say. I don't know how to pray. Your will be done"? At this point we may feel discouraged about our inability to communicate with God. Thank God! The apostle Paul reminds us of the unseen work of the Spirit carrying every thought we have in prayer perfectly to God. Also, the Spirit speaks beyond our mortal words to the desires of our heart. We need no longer be discouraged by our human limitations but rather should rejoice in God's gracious gift of the Spirit who makes known completely the desires of our heart so that God can meet them in His perfect will.

Let us earnestly seek God for the fellowship our souls desire. Let us with confidence come near to God and freely confess the sin which has broken our relationship with Him. May God strengthen our hearts with faith to pray in the Holy Spirit! (Jude 1:20)

## Have You Ever Behaved Like a Mule?

LAQUITA M. HIGGS

Dearborn, Michigan

Mules are known as stubborn creatures, always insisting on their own way, and the Psalmist humorously compared the mule with the ungodly who will not let themselves be led of God. Notice the promise given to us:

I will teach you, and guide you in the way you should go.  
I will keep you under my eye.

Do not behave like horse or mule,  
unreasoning creatures,  
whose course must be checked with  
bit and bridle.  
Many are the torments of the ungodly;  
but unfailing love enfolds him who  
trusts in the Lord.

— Psalm 32:8-10

The Psalmist also tells us that "those who

seek the Lord lack no good thing" (34:10). One of the good things that we can expect, if we seek the Lord and do not behave like the mule, is that we will be guided by the Lord and will be encircled by his tender love.

The Old Testament authors repeatedly commented on the matter of seeking the Lord, or as some translations say, seeking guidance of the Lord. Since we are perhaps more used to considering what the New Testament has to say on determining the Lord's will, let us try to get a fresh perspective on the question from the Old Testament. We shall look at this matter of seeking God, first by noting its primacy in one's relationship with God, then by looking at the attributes of the true seeker, and finally by examining just what this means for us today.

The first king, Saul, was a chosen man. At his inauguration, Samuel had said of him, "Look at the man whom the Lord has chosen; there is no one like him in this whole nation." But something went wrong. Saul and his three sons died in defeat and disgrace in battle with the Philistines, and the compiler of the Chronicles commented, "Thus Saul paid with his life for his unfaithfulness: he had disobeyed the word of the Lord and had resorted to ghosts for guidance. He had not sought guidance of the Lord, who therefore destroyed him and transferred the kingdom to David son of Jesse."\*

The necessity of seeking God was made clear to the Israelites. Uzzah died when he stretched out his hand to steady the falling Ark of the Covenant as it was being brought back to Jerusalem, and in that incident, King David learned an important lesson. He remembered the guidance in the Law for transporting the Ark, and he recruited the Levites to carry the Ark properly. As David told the Levites, "It was because you were not present the first time that the Lord our God broke out upon us.

\*I Sam. 10:24; I Chron. 10:13-14, from the N.E.B., as are all subsequent quotations.

For we had not sought his guidance as we should have done" (I Chron. 15:13).

King Asa was convinced of the necessity of seeking the Lord, and he "ordered Judah to seek guidance of the Lord the God of their fathers and to keep the law and the commandments" (II Chron. 14:4). The Lord gave Asa and the Kingdom of Judah victory over their enemies, and as they returned from battle, "the spirit of God came upon Azariah," who went out to meet them and gave them this word from the Lord: "The Lord is with you when you are with him; if you look for him, he will let himself be found; if you forsake him, he will forsake you" (II. Chron. 15:1-2). The choice was clear, as it is for us today, between seeking God or forsaking him. And what a promise he has given to us—the Lord of the Universe will let himself be found! Jesus put it like this: "Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened" (Matt. 7:7).

The promise to Asa resulted in firm action, for "when Asa heard these words, he resolutely suppressed the loathsome idols... and he repaired the altar of the Lord." He brought together all of the people, "and they entered into a covenant to seek guidance of the Lord the God of their fathers with all their heart and soul." This earnest seeking of the Lord was rewarded, "and there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign." Asa grew careless, however (a lesson for mature Christians, or mature churches), and when Judah was threatened with war, Asa sought an alliance with the Syrian king, which brought relief from the immediate threat of war, but had ugly long-term consequences. The prophet Hanani chastised Asa, "You have acted foolishly in this affair; you will have wars from now on." Again, the prophet's words brought action on the part of Asa, but Asa's heart was now bent in the wrong direction. Hearing the truth from God was the last thing that Asa wanted; "Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks," and "at the same time he treated some of the people with great



brutality.” Asa became gravely “affected with gangrene in his feet,” and not even this personal affliction turned him back to seek the Lord; “he did not seek guidance of the Lord but resorted to physicians.” A sad end for one who had begun so well.\*

What is this seeking of the Lord, then, which is so important in the eyes of God, and how do we go about it? As God patiently educated the Children of Israel to walk loyally in the right path, he gave examples of seekers and non-seekers, such as the many in the Books of Chronicles, and he also gave some “recipes” which are helpful. One of the best ones is that familiar passage in Proverbs 3:5-7.

Put all your trust in the Lord  
and do not rely on your own understanding.

Think of him in all your ways,  
and he will smooth your path.

Do not think how wise you are,  
but fear the Lord and turn from evil.

From this passage, we can glean some of the attributes of the true seeker of God:

—**Seeks with all his heart.** The seeker invests everything in God; he puts all his trust in the Lord. He comes with a pure intention, seeking God for Himself, and not just for the blessings which God can give.

—**Humble and Honest.** The seeker, unlike the mule, is teachable. He does not rely on his own understanding and places no stock in his own wisdom, but puts all his trust in the Lord and in his word. Great honesty before God is required, and there is no place for pride, for that ties us to our own perspective and blocks any understanding from the Lord. Isaiah chastised God’s people for saying that they delighted in knowing God, when their only real interest was in serving themselves (Is. 58:1-12).

—**Seeking is a top priority.** God is a first resort for the seeker, not a last resort. The seeker is persistent and constant: “think of him in all your ways.” Or as the Psalmist wrote, “Seek his presence always” (105:4).

\*11 Chron. 15:8, 12, 19; 16:1-3, 9-10, 12.

—**Willingness to trust and obey.** The mule would hardly go about his work singing “Trust and Obey.” When the seeker knows and acknowledges the sovereignty of God, he fears God and knows that he must be willing to obey God, even if it seems ridiculous or foolish. When Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah sought the Lord when threatened by enemy attack, the Lord proclaimed that he would win the battle for them, and the people were told to go out and face the enemy. They trusted God to fight the battle, and so they encountered the enemy in a most unorthodox fashion, with the armed troops being led by men singing praises to God (II Chron. 20:1-30). What a ridiculous way, in the eyes of the world, to begin a battle, but how glorious was their triumph!

—**Has “clean hands.”** The seeker is to “turn from evil.” The Psalmist declared that only those with clean hands and a pure heart could “go up the mountain of the Lord” and could “stand in his holy place” (24:3-6). Confession of sins is vital in the life of the seeker. Isaiah thundered against those who dealt unjustly with the poor and downtrodden, but he noted that their lives would be changed when they departed from their evil ways:

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and soon you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed;

your own righteousness shall be your vanguard and the glory of the Lord your rearguard.

Then, if you call, the Lord will answer;  
if you cry to him, he will say,  
“Here I am.”

—Isaiah 58:8-9

What applicability do these examples from the Old Testament have for us today? Are we to seek God as diligently as the Israelites were expected to do? Can we ever expect to receive direct guidance from God? Should we ever expect God to communicate with us as directly as he communicated with the Israelites? We have examples of God’s communicating to those chosen people

through the Law, through remembrance of their history, through prophets and leaders, and even through angels or more direct communication from God himself (such as in the burning bush).

The truth is that we have even more access to the will of God than did fleshly Israel, for we have had the ultimate in communication from God—Jesus, the living Word—and we can know him and live in him. Furthermore, we have the additional help of the Holy Spirit, who was sent from God to live in us, to teach us, and to bear witness to the truth of Jesus. But even if we agree that seeking the Lord’s will is as important now as it was formally, we often find ourselves on different paths as we get into the actual practice of seeking God. Those of us from a Church of Christ/Christian Church background have usually sought God principally through our reading of the Word and through our intellect, while, in contrast, those of a more charismatic persuasion are convinced that the seeking of God, and communication with him, can be more personal. Certainly, we should all desire to know God and to serve him to the fullest. Why, then, have we from the Restoration background been satisfied with so much less even than the Israelites had? We have robbed God of the power to work in our lives, and we have robbed ourselves of the possibilities to know him and receive guidance from him as we diligently seek him.

It is possible for God to speak to us today, if he so chooses, in all of the ways that he spoke to the Israelites, and we have the additional assurance that he speaks within our heart through his Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote in Galatians 5:25, “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course.” The Spirit-directed life will not fulfill the desires of the lower, fleshly nature, but will be free, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to produce a harvest of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. We desperately need the guidance

of the Spirit within to keep us on the path of God, to chastise us when we need it, and to direct us toward good deeds and words.

Here I would like to add some of my own experience and thinking which may be helpful to those whose background is similar to mine. I was searching for something more than the remote and semi-powerful God which I encountered in my youth in the Church of Christ. I was always willing to serve him, for that was my duty, but I did not know how to love him, and so my seeking was incomplete. As I grew older, there were times when it was hard to do my duty, and then I realized that I had not totally surrendered to God, and, as I honestly talked to God about it, I had to admit that I lacked the desire to give myself completely to him. A vital ingredient was missing. I did not love him enough. The immoral woman described in Luke 7 knew more than I did, for she knew how much she had been forgiven and therefore she knew great love. I had always done my duty, I was conversant with the Bible, and so I thought myself righteous. But there was dryness and a lack of desire for him—I did not know him, nor did I know myself in relationship to him.

Over the years, God gently and graciously drew me closer to him. I have much, much to learn yet, but I can testify that although I am nothing before him, yet he loves me with the tenderest of love. He is no longer remote and distant, and as I seek him and get to know him, he reveals himself to me, as far as I am able to understand. He wants to lead me and guide me, even more than I want to seek him, and he will eagerly respond as constantly and as frequently as I reach out to him. There is a lot of “me” left; I get off the right path, and he chastises me, but I know that he wants only the best for me. I love him, even as I fear him and stand in awe before him.

I believe, then, that we can have a close and deep relationship with God, and that we can expect his guidance in very specific ways in our life. I know that, as I submit



myself to him and seek his will, he in turn will, in his own time, make himself known to me. Often, his answer is not what I expect or want, but I must be willing to trust and obey. All of this may sound too subjective to many, and it does indeed start with a personal relationship with God, but we are told by John to "test the spirits, to see whether they are from God." We do that, first of all, by submitting our "guidance" to the scrutiny of the Word of God, for God's guidance will not contradict his Word. What we perceive to be direction from God will be confirmed in some way, either through his Word or sometimes through other people. We may be sure that it will not be destructive of others, and that it will serve to glorify God and not ourselves. Furthermore, when we are in God's will, we are in his peace.

What if we pray for direction and do not receive it? We must first scrutinize our lives to see if we have surrendered to him. Along with the additional possibilities of communication with God which we have because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we also have additional responsibility in our seeking of him, for our seeking must be in a context of total surrender. All of the above "recipe" from Proverbs applies to us—and even more, for ours must be a life completely sacrificed to God. As Romans 12:1 says, such a sacrifice is only a reasonable service in view of the fact that Jesus, the son of the Lord of Hosts, sacrificed himself for us. Our seeking of God and our prayers to him must never be an attempt to manipulate God or to obtain a dramatic experience to tell about, but our prayer must be that of the Psalmist: "Lead me and guide me for the honor of thy name" (31:3).

If we have surrendered to God so far as we are able, then we must be patient for God to show himself to us. At times we may be expected to use our good judgment and proceed, but our human reason is never the starting point. The starting point is our relationship with God and the seeking of God for guidance. We will make mistakes along

the way and assume that something is from God when it is not, but we can rest in the confidence that he will eventually make that clear to us. Even if we do look a bit foolish at times, it is important that we be willing to take risks for him.

After approaching God with confidence that he hears us and cares for us, then we must listen for his voice. "You shall know his power today if you will listen to his voice," the Psalmist wrote (95:7). Jesus said that his sheep would know his voice and would listen to it (John 10:14-16). Isaiah spoke of just such a time of blessing:

The Lord will show you favor and answer you when he hears your cry for help. The Lord may give you bread of adversity and water of affliction, but he who teaches you shall no longer be hidden out of sight, but with your own eyes you shall see him always. If you stray from the road to right or left you shall hear with your own ears a voice behind you saying, This is the way; follow it.

—Isaiah 30:19-21

The voice of guidance may be a strong prompting from within as it was for me one day when I had prayed, in a time when my teenaged daughter had become increasingly withdrawn from the family, that I could find just one way that day to show her that I loved her. Immediately, the thought popped into my head, "Take her to lunch." That may seem like a simple matter, but I had never taken my daughter to lunch, and besides it was a busy day, with a large group of dinner guests expected that evening. Nevertheless, I decided to obey that prompting, if my daughter would agree. Her first reaction to my invitation was, "Why?", but after consideration, she agreed to go with me. Our long lunch ended with real communication between us. That small incident did not solve all our problems, but it did make a noticeable difference in our relationship for the next few days. The Spirit within can help in little matters as surely as he helps, as Paul wrote, to explore

"everything, even the depths of God's own nature" (I Cor. 2:10).

Believe that God's Spirit within you can guide you in all ways, whether large or small, for to disbelieve is to be the mule. Believe with the Psalmist (95:7) that "you shall know his power today if you will listen to his voice." Then you can be like the seeker described in Psalm 105:3, who exults

## Spirit and the Life of Assurance

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Years ago on a Wednesday night before our service began, a very sincere Christian girl about fourteen years of age literally ran up to me with an urgent request. "Brother Jones," she urged, "I have been arguing all day with a student at school about salvation; and I need some Scriptures which will prove to her that we can't know we are saved until after death!" My heart ached and I prayed momentarily for the grace to know how best to respond to this very committed Christian young person reared in a tradition which is so void of assurance in salvation and eternal life.

From birth to death individuals need assurance. The baby needs assurance of the mother's presence and comforting love; the growing child needs assurance and affirmation of his worth and loveliness without which self esteem and healthy self image cannot develop. The difficult-to-understand and sometimes independent appearing adolescent may, in a highly veiled way, be demanding assurance to quiet his own inner insecurity and confusion. And the strong, successful, confident appearing business man may be hiding an inner fright and uncertainty typical of the man who recently said to the writer, "I've got a high level responsible job, making plenty of

in God's name and is "joyful in heart." You have reason for joy, for you have this promise from God:

If you invoke me and pray to me, I will listen to you: when you seek me, you shall find me; if you search with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord.

—Jeremiah 29:12-13

money, and responsible for five hundred men; I appear to many people as the essence of success, as one who has it all put together; but inside I'm a scared, insecure, frightened little boy!"

### Our Recognized Inadequacy

Now where there are demands upon us and goals to be realized, we may all feel at times our individual inadequacy. This can be very acute if there is unusual significance attached to these demands and goals as in living the Christian life. So for many Christian believers the experience of faithful living and service is fraught with anxieties and fears, uncertainties and apprehensions. It would be an awesome situation in which to be trapped to hear the demands of Jesus or His disciples upon us, such as, "You therefore shall be perfect. . .," or "Present your bodies a living sacrifice," or "Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin," while knowing that I am left on my own resources to meet such demands. Just here, however, God steps in with the promise of His Spirit as an ever-present assurance to the believer that he will be saved eternally! Thank God for His inexpressible gift and assurance.



It was Aurelius Augustine who in his *Confessions* wrote so incisively about this need for assurance, as he surrendered a difficult to control heart and body to the Lord. "Command what Thou wilt, O God; then give what Thou dost command!" And there the great bishop of Hippo perceived a truth about the Christian life that is still the source of great assurance. That the Christian faith establishes high moral and ethical demands upon us is without doubt a Biblical truth; that God's expectations of us are to live as His children, as children of the Kingdom, is again true. But that such living has to be done merely upon human strivings and sheer self discipline is not true; rather it is a myth from Satan. It is this misunderstanding that causes Christians either to give up in despair, or that saturates them with a legalistic spirit of works salvation. What then can be said about the Spirit and the Christian's need for assurance?

### Established and Commissioned

It is an affirmation beyond question that God not only saves us, but provides for our continued relationship with Him as saved; and this is done through the presence of the Holy Spirit which He has given. In the second Corinthian letter Paul has occasion to combat a charge of levity to which a change of plans had exposed him. His ministry, the apostle argues, is like the Gospel which he has preached, characterized, by definiteness, certainty, fixity of purpose and aim. Now he will fortify this claim of behavioral consistency by an appeal to what God has done for him and all believers in the conversion to Christ experience. (1) The position of believers in Christ is guaranteed or established (*ho bebaion*). "But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (II Cor. 1:21,22) The use of bebaios, to establish or confirm, according to Deissmann, is a legal word for the binding guarantee of a sale. In such a commercial city as Corinth the use of this

term would have been understood quite well. God has guaranteed us our relationship with Himself.

(2) Not only has God the Father guaranteed our relationship with Himself, but he has commissioned us (*chrisas humas*). The term for "commissioned" is literally the word for "anoint"; and both here and in I John 2:20, 27 it is affirmed that Christians are anointed. Since the believer is promised the Holy Spirit upon his baptism into Christ, I understand this to be that moment of anointing when God gives His Spirit and assures me that I am His, chosen, called and commissioned for ministry. What an assurance to the believer to know that he has joined the procession of those of old whom God chose and commissioned to serve Him, kings and prophets and priests! I am called to serve and commissioned with the power of Spirit to serve.

### His Seal Upon Us

The apostle continues in his affirmation of the believer's relationship to God through the Holy Spirit. "He has put his seal upon us," Paul claims. At the time of conversion believers are sealed with the Spirit for the day of redemption. In the Ephesian letter, we read that having "believed in him, [we] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit," (Eph. 1:13) Again in the same letter he both appealed and affirmed, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) Deissmann has shed much light on both the sealing (*sphragisámenos*) and guarantee (*arrabona*) which the apostle Paul employs to demonstrate God's security to His children, security which we so desperately need in an insecure world. Sealing is mentioned in the Old Testament as a security against secret opening, (Dan. 6:17) and also as a substitute for signature (I Kgs.21:8). But from Deissmann's studies in the papyri we have learned that sealing had a very extended use in the East especially for legal purposes, "to give validity to documents, to

guarantee the genuineness of articles, and that sacks and chests convey the specified amount." (Plummer, ICC, II Corinthians, p. 41) The use of this term by the apostle, then, in this context may be that in confirmation of His covenant, God has sealed us as His own (middle voice), and attested our value. It is the consensus of such scholars as Swete and Robinson that this sealing is accomplished in Christian baptism. This seems to be the New Testament thrust also, when it is affirmed that God has given the Holy Spirit to them that obey him (Acts 5:32).

What confidence this assurance of sealing gives to the Christian, to know Him to whom life has been committed, to know God as Father, and Jesus as Savior and Lord. It is such confidence that enables me to face today, tomorrow, and the future. While it is an old adage, the saying is still true and touches Biblical truth, that "We do not know what tomorrow holds, but we do know Him who holds tomorrow."

### His Spirit Our Guarantee

But the apostle is not through having affirmed that we are commissioned and sealed; yet another assurance is included, for God has "given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (II Cor. 1:22) The Spirit Himself, not some gift of the Spirit, is the possession of all believers, according to the apostle (cf. Rom. 8:11, 15, 16, 26). In this particular passage the Spirit is presented as our guarantee (*arrabona*), with the word having somewhat varying meanings in several passages. Here the Spirit is our pledge that God will fulfill His promise, His faithfulness is assured. In II Cor. 5:5 the apostle assures us that God has given His Spirit as a guarantee or pledge that we shall receive new spiritual bodies at His coming. And in the Ephesian letter the Holy Spirit is perceived as our guarantee of ultimate redemption as God's own possession (Eph. 1:14).

The Holy Spirit as arrabon, however, is more than just pledge; for the word actually

meant "an installment in like kind," that is, "a delivery of a small portion, whether of money or goods, as an earnest that the remainder would be delivered later." (ICC, II Corinthians, p. 41) The Spirit here is the earnest of eternal life, that initial experience of what life with God will ultimately be like, a genuine foretaste of that eternal fellowship with God, which we call heaven. The Spirit then is the anointing, the sealing, and the first installment of eternal life; what more, we might ask, can God be expected to give us by way of assurance and security? Yet the lives of many Christians seem so filled with doubt, so unsure of their status with God, and so indefinite about their destiny. The most compelling witness which the modern Christian can give to this emotionally troubled, nuclear scared age, might well be this: the Christian knows his identity, who he is; he knows his basic purpose in life, and he is assured of his direction and destiny. There was no uncertainty in the heart and voice of that man who said, "I know whom I have believed"; and while his physical future might have been quite limited when he wrote these words, with actual death facing him any day, Paul continued to live with the confidence that nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus. "For I am sure," he affirmed, "That neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38, 39)

### Claim Your Salvation

What a different perspective we have now demonstrated from the Sacred Word from that request made by the dear young girl I mentioned in my opening paragraph. "Give me some passages to prove we cannot know we're saved until death!" Let us not be fearful to affirm our status in Christ as saved: saved from past sins and guilt; living in the fullness of salvation now; and



assured of our ultimate redemption. It was such confidence which enabled those early Christians to brave prison cells, ravaging beasts, beheadings, and death at the fiery stake. It is such assurance and witness today

which will turn an aimless and drifting generation to the risen and living Lord Jesus Christ, for forgiveness, meaning, hope and life.

## Reflections From The 16th Century

“I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.” What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; even as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church he daily and richly forgives me and all believers all our sins, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant me and all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.

-Martin Luther, Small Catechism

The Holy Ghost is sent two manner of ways. In the primitive church he was sent in a manifest and visible appearance. So he came upon Christ, at Jordan, in the likeness of a dove, (Matt. 3:16) and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers (Acts 2:3). And this was the first sending of the Holy Ghost: which was necessary in the primitive church; for it was expedient that it should be established by many miracles, because of the unbelievers, as Paul witnesseth. “Strange tongues,” saith he, “be for a sign and a token, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not,” (I Cor. 14:23). But after that the church was gathered together, and confirmed with those miracles, it was not necessary that this

visible sending of the Holy Ghost should continue any longer.

Secondly, The Holy Ghost is sent by the word into the hearts of the believers, as here it is said, “God sent the spirit of his Son,” etc. This sending is without any visible appearance; to wit, when, by the hearing of the external word, we receive an inward fervency and light, whereby we are changed and become new creatures; whereby also we receive a new judgment, a new feeling, and a new moving. This change, and this new judgment, is no work of reason, or of the power of man, but is the gift and operation of the Holy Ghost, which cometh with the word preached, which purifieth our hearts by faith, and bringeth forth in us spiritual motions...

And although it appear not before the world, that we be renewed in spirit, and have the Holy Ghost, yet notwithstanding our judgment, our speech, and our confession do declare sufficiently, that the Holy Ghost with his gifts is in us. For before we could judge rightly of nothing. We spake not as now we do. We confessed not that all our works were sin and damnable, that Christ was our only merit, both before grace and after, as now we do, in the true knowledge and light of the gospel. Wherefore let this trouble us nothing at all, that the world (whose works we testify to be evil) judgeth us to be most pernicious heretics and seditious persons, destroyers of religion, and troublers of the common peace, possessed of the devil speaking in us, and governing all our actions. Against this perverse and wicked judgment of the world, let this testimony of our conscience be suffi-

cient, whereby we assuredly know that it is the gift of God, that we do not only believe in Jesus Christ, but that we also preach and confess him before the world. As we believe with our heart, so do we speak with our mouth, according to that saying of the Psalmist, “I believed, and therefore have I spoken.” (Ps. 16:10).

Moreover we exercise ourselves in the fear of God, and avoid sin as much as we may. If we sin, we sin not of purpose, but of ignorance, and we are sorry for it. We may slip, for the devil lieth in wait for us, both day and night. Also the remnants of sin cleave yet fast in our flesh: therefore, as touching the flesh, we are sinners, yea, after that we have received the Holy Ghost. And there is no great difference betwixt a Christian and a civil honest man. For the works of a Christian in outward shew are but base and simple. He doth his duty according to his vocation, he guideth his family, he tilleth the ground, he giveth counsel, he aideth and succoureth his neighbour. These works the carnal men doth not much esteem, but thinketh them to be common to all men, and such as the heathen may also do. For the world understandeth not the things which are of the spirit of God, and therefore it judgeth perversely of the works of the godly. But the monstrous superstition of hypocrites, and their will-works, they have in great admiration. They count them holy works, and spare no charges in maintaining the same. Contrariwise, the works of the faithful (which, although in outward appearance they seem to be but vile and nothing worth, yet are they good works indeed, and accepted of God, because they are done in faith, with a cheerful heart, and with obedience and thankfulness towards God), these works, I say, they do not only not acknowledge to be good works, but also they despise and condemn them as most wicked and abominable. The world, therefore, believeth nothing less than that we have the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding, in the time of tribulation or of the cross, and of the

confession of our faith, (which is the proper and principal work of those that believe) when we must either forsake wife, children, goods, and life or else deny Christ, then it appeareth that we make confession of our faith, that we confess Christ and his word, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We ought not, therefore, to doubt whether the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us or not; but to be assuredly persuaded that we “are the temple of the Holy Ghost,” as Paul saith, (I Cor. 3:16). For if any man feel in himself a love towards the word of God, and willingly heareth, talketh, writeth, and thinketh of Christ, let that man know, that this is not the work of man’s will or reason, but the gift of the Holy Ghost: for it is impossible that these things should be done without the Holy Ghost. Contrariwise, where hatred and contempt of the word is, there the devil, the god of this world, reigneth, “blinding men’s hearts, and holding them captive, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine unto them,” (II Cor. 4:4). Which thing we see at this day in the most part of the common people, which have no love to the word, but condemn it, as though it pertained nothing at all unto them. But whosoever do feel any love or desire to the word, let them acknowledge with thankfulness, that this affection is poured unto them by the Holy Ghost. For we bring not this affection and desire with us, neither can we be taught by any laws how we may obtain it; but this change is plainly and simply the work of the right hand of the Most High. Therefore, when we willingly and gladly hear the word preached, concerning Christ the Son of God, who for us was made man, and became subject to the law, to deliver us from the malediction of the law, hell, death, and damnation; then let us assure ourselves that God, by and with this preaching, sendeth the Holy Ghost into our hearts. Wherefore it is very expedient for the godly to know that they have the Holy Ghost.

-Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians