

The Spirit Witnesses... to What?

In previous articles,¹ I have shown that in conversion the Holy Spirit brings the sinner to Christ, and immediately begins to witness to him, assuring him that he truly is a child of God. Moreover, as I have also shown, this witness is not a one-off experience: the Spirit continues to witness with, and to, the believer, granting him assurance throughout his Christian life. Let me remind you of some of the relevant scriptures:

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry: ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:14-17).

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our [your] hearts, the Spirit who calls out: ‘Abba, Father’. So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir (Gal. 4:6-7).

You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:13-14).

You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth... As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him (1 John 2:20-27).

It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth... We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is

¹ ‘The Spirit’s Work in Conversion’ and ‘The Spirit’s Continual Witness to the Believer’ (Edocs link: David H J Gay Ministry sermonaudio.com). The primary source is my *Assurance in The New Covenant* pp23-50.

the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 John 5:6,9-11).

In this article,² I want to take this further by answering the question: What does the Holy Spirit witness to believers about? Now, as I will show, a large part of the answer to that question lies in the fact that it is not ‘What’ but...

What, especially, does the Holy Spirit witness to us about?

It’s not a ‘what’! It’s a ‘whom!’ Christ! As he himself told us, the supreme work of the Spirit is to take of the things of the Lord Jesus and make them known to believers, and so to glorify the Saviour. In other words, by making Christ known to believers, and doing so more and more, the Spirit confirms and assures them of their standing in Christ. He does this by witnessing to them about the person and the name of Christ, his love for sinners, his work for sinners, his blood shed for sinners. But not only that! It gets far more personal, praise God! The Spirit speaks to *us* about the person and the name of Christ, his love for *us*, his work for *us*, his blood shed for *us*. Above all, every believer can say the Spirit witnesses to *me*, and tells *me* of the person and the name of Christ, his love for *me*, his work for *me*, his blood shed for *me*.

By way of example, consider Galatians 2:20, in which Paul shows how he appropriated Christ by the Spirit: ‘The Son of God... loved me and gave himself for me’ (Gal. 2:20). Now for some further testimonies. Consider the following scriptures:

Jesus our Lord... was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:24-25).

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have

² For this article, I have lightly edited my *Assurance* pp50-59.

gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God... And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-5,8-11).

God, who said: 'Let light shine out of darkness', made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

The Spirit takes those scriptures – and all like them – and underscores the personal – to *me*:

Jesus *my* Lord... was delivered over to death for *my* sins and was raised to life for *my* justification (Rom. 4:24-25).

Therefore, since *I* have been justified through faith, *I* have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *I* have gained access by faith into this grace in which *I* now stand. And *I* rejoice in the hope of the glory of God... And hope does not disappoint *me*, because God has poured out his love into *my* heart by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given *me*... God demonstrates his own love for *me* in this: While *I* was still a sinner, Christ died for *me*. Since *I* have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall *I* be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when *I* was one of God's enemies, *I* was reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall *I* be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but *I* also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *I* have now received reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-5,8-11).

God, who said: 'Let light shine out of darkness', made his light shine in *my* heart to give *me* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for *my* sake he became poor, so that *I* through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

And so on. And it is this witness of the Spirit, enabling us to speak in such personal terms, that gives us assurance.

The glory of Christ, the uniqueness of Christ, the fact that Christ is all – is the constant refrain of the New Testament (John 13:31-32; 17:1-5,24; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; Col. 1:27; 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 13:21; 2 Pet. 3:18, and so on). Right at the start of his public ministry, as Jesus was baptised, God announced: ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ (Matt. 3:17). The Greeks demanded to see Jesus (John 12:21) – and the Spirit makes sure believers do see him! By the Spirit (John 15:26; 16:13-15), Peter, James and John never forgot the lesson they learned at Jesus’ transfiguration. Peter might think of equating Christ with Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets), but the Father let him know how mistaken he was, and in no uncertain terms: the cloud immediately descended, blotting everything out. When they could see again, Moses and Elijah had been removed, leaving Christ to stand alone. And then God spoke: ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’ So: ‘When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus’ (Matt. 17:5-8). As I say, Peter never forgot it:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying: ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Pet. 1:16-19).³

³ In his second letter, how many times did Peter mention the Spirit? How many times did he refer to the written word of God (not forgetting allusions)? How many times did he refer to Christ? The answer to the first is once; the second and third, I gave up counting! Notice how Peter brought his letter to a close: ‘Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience

All this speaks volumes. The Spirit's work is to magnify Christ; to magnify Christ, I stress. There's no cult of the Spirit here. We are talking about 'the Spirit of Christ' (Rom. 8:9). There are only two places in all Scripture where the Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of Christ': here and 1 Peter 1:11.⁴ Is it not significant that Paul used the phrase – uniquely for him – when leading up to the witness of the Spirit to the child of God? Notice also the parallel expression in the corresponding passage in Galatians: 'Because you are sons, God sent *the Spirit of his Son into our [your] hearts*, the Spirit who calls out: "Abba, Father"' (Gal. 4:6). Nothing could be clearer. The Spirit of Christ bears witness to the believer, and bears witness by pointing him to Christ, and glorifying Christ to him. And this is the believer's assurance, just as the Spirit himself is the believer's seal (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14). 'To [those] who believe, [the Lord Jesus Christ] is precious' (1 Pet. 2:7).⁵

James Dunn:

It is fundamental to this role of the Spirit as the Spirit of sonship that the Spirit is also the Spirit of the Son. Indeed, the Spirit is the Spirit of sonship precisely because [he] is the Spirit of the Son. That is to say, the Spirit for Paul links the believer directly to Jesus; the Spirit defines the person as [a] Christian precisely by establishing this link. And [he] makes this plain by reproducing the prayer relation of Jesus himself with God in believers: like Jesus, believers cry 'Abba, Father'. and thus attest that they are children of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:16-17)... Notable is the interaction of divine Spirit and human spirit. Divine voice and human voice: the Spirit 'by

means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also *wrote* you with the wisdom that God gave him. He *writes* the same way in all his *letters*, speaking in them of these matters. His *letters* contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other *scriptures*, to their own destruction. Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of *our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen' (2 Pet. 3:15-18). No emphasis on the Spirit, please note.

⁴ But see also 1 Cor. 12:3; 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19.

⁵ I will return to this scripture.

whom we cry “Abba, Father” [and thereby]⁶ the same Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children’ (Rom. 8:15-16); ‘having the firstfruits of the Spirit we ourselves groan within ourselves (Rom. 8:23); ‘the Spirit [himself] intercedes on our behalf with inarticulate groans, and he who searches the hearts knows that is the Spirit’s way of thinking’ (Rom. 8:26-27). In the intensity of prayer and abandonment to God in what would otherwise be total human despair, Spirit speech and heart language become as one.⁷

And 1 Peter 1:10-11 has something to say in this regard:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Peter uses the phrase ‘the Spirit of Christ’ when he wants to speak of the Spirit’s work in directing the prophets to... to what? To Christ and his work of salvation. The parallel is unmistakable.

In short: Christ, not the Spirit, is the focus of attention. And this is at the heart of the new covenant. In what follows, do not miss the link between the Spirit and Christ, but, equally, do not miss where the emphasis lies; namely, Christ:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what that flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do

⁶ Brackets original.

⁷ James D.G.Dunn: ‘Spirit Speech: Reflections on Romans 8:12-17’ in Sven K.Soderlund & N.T.Wright (eds.): *Romans & The People of God...*, William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1999, pp84,91.

so. Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry: ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom. 8:1-17).⁸

Again, consider the exchange between Jesus and his disciples as he approached the cross. He told them: ‘I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come’ (John 7:33-34). As his sufferings drew ever nearer, Christ told the crowds: ‘You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light’ (John 12:35-36). He reminded his disciples of the sad news that he was leaving them: ‘My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come’ (John 13:31). On learning of this, the disciples were afraid and sorrowful (John 14:1,27; 16:6,22). But Jesus reassured them. To their amazement (I am sure), his departure would make things even better for them: ‘I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you’ (John 13:31; 14:18). ‘It is for your good

⁸ It’s not just here. We see the same throughout Romans. Nothing must get in the way of Christ. Not even talk of the Spirit. See Rom. 6:1-12; 12:1 – 15:13. And it’s not just Romans!

[advantage, NASB] that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you' (John 16:7). And the Spirit, once he had come, would never leave them: 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth' (John 14:16-17).

There's a depth of meaning in all this. The disciples knew that Christ was the Son of God and spoke the words of eternal life, Peter's confession being poignant in the extreme: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' (John 6:68-69). What would they do, how would they manage, without Jesus with them to counsel and teach them? And yet the Lord said it would be better for them after he had gone! The Spirit would come! Whatever could he mean?

Now, whatever a counsellor and companion does, he talks, doesn't he? Have you ever been in a room with somebody who will not speak? I stress the 'will not'. The gentle silence of companionship is precious; the wilful silence of barely disguised enmity or separation is grim. Such silence is not reassuring. It is oppressive, sullen, hurtful. The Spirit does not reside with his people to be silent! And he's more than *with* his people! He is *in* them! As Jesus said: 'He lives with you and will be in you' (John 14:17). And a vital part of his ministry is to bear witness to the believer, to talk to him and with him, giving him the words of eternal life. When Christ said: 'The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life' (John 6:63), coupled with: 'The Spirit of truth... he will testify about me... He will guide you into all truth... He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you' (John 15:26; 16:13-14), he surely meant that the Spirit would continue Jesus' ministry within believers, even when the Lord was no longer with them in person.

When the two disciples on the Emmaus road were depressed, Jesus joined them and took away their sadness. How? By speaking to them, speaking to them about himself, about his sufferings and his glory, and doing so out of the Scriptures (Luke 24:13-35). This is precisely the way in which the Spirit witnesses to us and with us as believers, and gives us assurance: he shows

us Christ, Christ in his sufferings, and present and future glory – and the Spirit makes us know that it is all for us.

Thus the Spirit goes on assuring us, leading us to Christ. It is as we *continue* to see more of Christ, the more the Spirit *makes* us continue to feel and enjoy our interest in the Redeemer, even increasing our joy and sense of glory and enabling us to live more Christ-like in this fallen world: ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit’ (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Thus we fulfil Peter’s command: ‘Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen’ (2 Pet. 3:18). This is the Spirit’s great work in the believer, day by day.

Anticipating what is to come, relying on evidences, works, progressive sanctification⁹ for assurance is to rely on shifting sand. Christ is the believer’s assurance! ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever’ (Heb. 13:8). ‘All may change, but Jesus never’. The Spirit bears witness to Christ, and he bears witness to us about Christ. The weight of the Spirit’s witness falls not on the gift – the Spirit – but on the giver – Christ. And herein lies the root of our assurance: Christ! He is the very substance and centre of it all. Of it all, I say.¹⁰ Christ is all!¹¹

⁹ By ‘progressive sanctification’, I mean the believer’s imperfect (in this life) outworking of the perfect positional-sanctification he has in Christ by virtue of his union with Christ at his conversion. The sinner, on coming to faith, is united to Christ and is justified and positionally sanctified. Thus, in God’s sight, in Christ he is accounted or made righteous, free of sin and condemnation, and perfectly separated unto God. (See, for instance, 1 Cor. 1:2,30; 6:11; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 10:10-18; 13:12). In his Christian life, he has to work out his perfection in Christ, and he will be moved to do so by the Spirit under the direction of Scripture; this is his progressive sanctification or holiness of life. But this, alas, is imperfect. The believer will only be absolutely sanctified in the eternal state. I will set out in my arguments on all this in my forthcoming book on sanctification.

¹⁰ Take progressive sanctification. Consider the last three chapters of Ephesians, and see how often the apostle links his commands for

As we listen to Paul's prayers for believers, we can surely see the part played by the Spirit in his witness to the children of God:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe... I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Eph. 1:17-19; 3:16-21).

This is New Testament assurance.

A.M.Stibbs and J.I.Packer will bring this article to a close:

Throughout the New Testament it is taken for granted that Christians are joyfully certain of their standing in God's grace, their sonship in

godliness to the person and work of Christ. See my series: 'Thoughts On Ephesians' (David H J Gay Ministry sermonaudio.com).

¹¹ 'Oh, that's verging on antinomianism!' That's how some dismiss what I have set before you, reader: 'Antinomianism!' Let them! Believer, in Christ you *are* sinless in Christ – not in yourself, but in Christ. You *are* marked in Christ. It is because of Christ, and through Christ, and with Christ, that you are marked with a seal. God stamps you with his mark: 'This is mine! This man, this woman, is mine. This believer is my son, my daughter, my child, my adopted child. He has my Son's righteousness clothing him. I see him as righteous as Jesus. I love him immeasurably – as I love my Son. I love him without end. And this child of mine, this sealed and adopted child of mine, shall be brought to everlasting glory'. And it's the work of the Spirit to bear witness of all this to you, believer, and to confirm and assure you of all that you have in the Lord Jesus. He does this by making Jesus more and more precious to you (1 Pet. 2:7).

his family, and their hope of his glory – all the good things, in fact, which are spelled out in sequence as belonging to ‘us’ – Paul and all his Christian readers – in chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans. Whence came this certainty? From the ministry – that is, from the attitudes, convictions and habits which he implanted. It was the Spirit who gave those first Christians confidence and liberty, and made it their deepest instinct to call on God as ‘Father’; and, writes Paul: ‘When we cry: “Abba, Father”... it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God’ (Rom. 8:15f; see also Gal. 4:6)... Earlier in Romans he had written that the love of God, as shown forth at the cross, ‘has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ (Rom. 5:5)... ‘By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit he gave us’... ‘By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit’ (1 John 3:24; 4:13)...

Moreover, the gift of the indwelling Spirit, of which Christians become aware in the manner described by discovering the change that the Spirit has wrought in them, is intended to assure Christians of their future resurrection and glory with Christ, no less than their present standing in grace through Christ... (2 Cor. 5:1-5)... (Eph. 1:13f).

Finally, a most important observation made by Stibbs and Packer:

It appears that so far from the present enjoyment of assurance indicating that one is presumptuous, conceited, and self-deceived, the non-enjoyment of it proclaims an unhealthy and sub-normal spiritual condition. It appears, too, that those who oppose the teaching and decry the experience of assurance are themselves guilty of presumption and conceit, in their audacious preference for anti-scriptural doctrine.¹²

Conclusion

Let me make two points to bring this article to a close, the first by way of a question.

First, why is it, in light of all that we have seen about the believer and the Spirit, so many of today’s believers are languishing with

¹² A.M.Stibbs and J.I.Packer: *The Spirit Within You: The Church’s Neglected Possession*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1967, pp87-89. For comments from other writers in support of what I have set out, see my *Assurance* pp119-136.

a very poor level of assurance? Why are they engaged in a life-long quest for assurance, which, they are led to believe, is almost certain to prove beyond them? Answering that would extend this article beyond its proper limit, of course, but the issue is so pressing, the case so heart-rending, anyone who wants to see how I would respond to those questions should read my *Assurance* pp61-113.

Secondly, to end this article on a positive note – as it should! – the hall-mark of the new covenant, the distinguishing mark of the new covenant, is the Spirit of Christ’s indwelling of the believer (Matt. 22:43; John 14:23; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 12:3; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:14; 1 John 4:2-6,13).¹³ So much so, Paul could speak in this way when taking the Galatians back to their conversion:

O foolish Galatians!... This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?... He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:1-5).

Notice the way the apostle put it. Referring to the Galatians’ conversion, he raised these questions: ‘Did you receive the Spirit by...?’ ‘Having begun in the Spirit...?’ ‘He who supplies the Spirit to you...?’ Clearly, Paul regarded the reception of the Spirit as a hall-mark of conversion, a *sine qua non*. So much so, in his reasoned discourse he could appeal to their reception of the Spirit.

Now, this mighty operation of the Spirit, this staggering condensation of the Spirit – to dwell within men – had been clearly signalled in the prophecies of the new covenant (Isa. 44:3; 55:1; 58:11; Ezek. 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-32). These promises were all accomplished by Christ when he fulfilled the shadows and abolished the old covenant (Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 8:1-4; 10:4-5; 2 Cor. 3:1 – 4:6; Gal. 3:1 – 4:7; 4:21 – 5:1; Heb. 7:11 – 8:13; 10:1-

¹³ For more on this vital matter, see Gary Shogren: ‘Life in the New Covenant’ (christmycovenant.com).

18), and thus established the new (John 1:33; 4:10; 20:22; Acts 1:4-5; 2:4,16-21,33,38; 8:17; 10:45-47; 11:15-18; 19:2).¹⁴

Peter put it plainly:

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things which angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Can anybody doubt that the indwelling of every believer by the Spirit is one of ‘the glories that would follow’ the sufferings of Christ? May we not make it more personal and say that the Spirit’s indwelling *is* one of the glories of the new covenant today, and for every believer?

And what does the Spirit do when he takes up residence in a man? Many things. He regenerates, he convicts of sin, he brings to faith and repentance, he sets the sinner free from the law of sin and death, he pours out the love of God in the heart of the child of God, he enables him to worship God in spirit and truth, and so on (John 3:3-8; 4:23-24; 6:44-45,65;¹⁵ 7:38-39; 12:32;¹⁶ 16:5-15; Rom. 5:5; 8:1-4; Phil. 1:19).

Now, an integral part of the work of the Spirit within the believer is to bear witness to him, taking away his fear, giving him a sense of sonship and adoption, granting him an immediate and lasting assurance (Rom. 8:9,11,14-17,23; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Gal. 4:6-7; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 John 2:20-27; 3:24; 4:13; 5:6,9-11).

Do not miss the fact that the witness of the Spirit is all to do with Christ! Take the Galatian passage I just referred to. Notice how Paul opens his questions to his readers: ‘O foolish Galatians!

¹⁴ For my understanding of the link between baptism and the Spirit in some of these verses, see my *Baptist Sacramentalism: A Warning to Baptists* pp155-244.

¹⁵ Isa. 54:13.

¹⁶ Jer. 31:3; Hos. 11:4.

Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?’ (Gal. 3:1). You see, it is Christ! Even as the apostle is speaking of the reception of the Spirit, he turns his readers’ eyes onto Christ, onto Christ portrayed as crucified before them, and among them.

This is at the heart of the new covenant: God the Spirit drawing sinners to Christ, uniting them to him, bringing them into everlasting salvation, and assuring them of it. God the Father decreeing the work; Christ, the Son of God, accomplishing it; the Spirit of God applying it; and all of it heading up in the Lord Christ. ‘Christ is all’ – all in justification, sanctification, glorification. Not least, Christ is all in assurance.

For every believer, therefore, there can be only one conclusion to all this:

If [since] then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Christ Jesus... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God... Consider him (Heb. 3:1; 12:2-3).

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen (2 Pet. 3:18).