



Do We Have the Purpose of the Holy Spirit Backwards?

Galatians 5:16: (NASB) *But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*



The call of Christianity is unique. It is a call to sacrifice and humility, a call to the subduing of one's own will in favor of God's will. While there are many noble purposes in this world and many humble and dedicated people, a Christian is called to the ultimate purpose of eventually reconciling the world back to God. Even more compelling than that, Christians are called to become a *new creation*, based on the indwelling of the holy spirit. This is a grace-based privilege, and it is something in which we need to have a clear understanding, as

well as the deepest respect. Why does the spirit of God dwell within His chosen ones? What does it do for us, and more importantly, what does it NOT do for us?



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE ME AS A TOOL TO EXPRESS MY VISION OF WHAT CAN BE?

There is a popular phrase among Christians - "decree and declare." Do I have the power to "decree and declare" positive things for my life? Job's friend Eliphaz the Temanite sure thought so. He told Job in Job 22:28: (Amplified Bible) *You will also decide and decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and the light (of God's favor) will shine upon your ways. Is this how the holy spirit works in our lives?*

Sometimes things are not the way we think they are.

Job 22:38 was spoken by one of Job's "friends," Eliphaz the Temanite. He lied about telling Job that God was punishing him for his sins and that Job was secretly wicked. His advice was that in order to get back on track, Job needed to (Amplified Bible) *delight in the Almighty, lift up thy face unto God, make thy prayer unto Him* and then anything Job decreed, *it shall be established unto him.*

God challenges Job in Job 38. Job sees the greatness of God and repents - not of evil living, but of his doubts in Job 42:1-6.

Job 42:7: (NASB) *It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is trustworthy, as My servant Job has.*

God was angry! The text some use to say we should "declare and decree," (Job 22:38) was an example of what NOT to do.

Let's start with a quick overview of God's spirit in the Old Testament.



God’s spirit first appears in Scripture as the moving force of creation:

Genesis 1:1-3: (NASB) ¹*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²*The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **spirit <7307>** of God was moving over the surface of the waters.* ³*Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light.*

Spirit: Strongs #7307 *ruach*; wind; by resemblance breath, i.e., a sensible (or even violent) exhalation

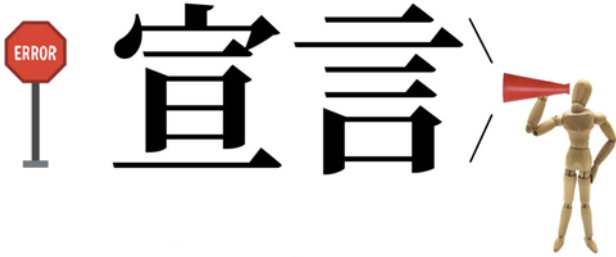
The spirit is God’s unseen power.

We know from Genesis 1:27 that man was made in the image of God. As we read, God spoke things into existence. Those Christians who believe in the “decree and declare” movement say, we who have faith should be able to do the same.

TO DECLARE IS TO STATE A FACT OUT LOUD.

TO DECREE IS TO ISSUE AN AUTHORITATIVE COMMAND.

SOME WILL SAY, RATHER THAN PETITIONING GOD FOR SOMETHING, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE POWER TO DECREE IT WILL HAPPEN.



Some will say that rather than petitioning God for something, we have been given the power to decree it will happen such as, “I declare and decree my child will be born healthy.” “I declare and decree I will get that job.”

That perspective has some very specific issues misrepresenting our role in relation to God. Yes, we were made in God's image, but we were not made to have God's power. We are not made with His foresight, nor do we

fully know His plan. We will develop this further as we go. Let's look at some instances where the holy spirit shows itself in the Old Testament.

Joseph was spoken of by Pharaoh as having God’s spirit within him:

Genesis 41:38-40: (KJV) ³⁸*And Pharaoh said unto his servants, can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is?* ³⁹*And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:* ⁴⁰*Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.*

Because Joseph interpreted a dream that he had not even heard, Pharaoh sees Joseph in a different light. He says the spirit of God is in him. That is an incredible observation for the Pharaoh of Egypt, but it gives us a sense that God’s power was working within Joseph. Let’s go little a bit further in the next book of the Bible.

God specifically sent His spirit to work in a particular craftsman regarding the Tabernacle:

Exodus 31:1-5: (NASB) ¹*Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* ²*See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.* ³*I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,* ⁴*to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,* ⁵*and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.*



At this stage, the operation of the holy spirit is primarily mechanical. Certain people were given the supernatural ability to help move God's plan along, like Bezalel knowing how to be a craftsman. The prophets, for example, did not always did have an understanding of their message according to 1 Peter 1:10-12 and 2 Peter 1:21, *but were moved to speak through the influence of the holy spirit.*

It is very mechanical-like. It is like a lending of the spirit of God, the lending of His power. We put the battery in, and it makes it go. We take the battery out and the machine stops working.



It is a wonderful thing to see God's spirit, His power, working within Bezalel to make artistic designs for the Tabernacle.

The Old Testament prophets had God's spirit working in them as evidenced by what they said, what they wrote and what they did.

The last of these prophets was John the Baptist. Here is what the angel Gabriel told John's father as he prophesied his birth:

Luke 1:15-17: (NASB) ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the holy spirit while yet in his mother's womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷It is he who will go as a forerunner before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Gabriel said John would be filled with the holy spirit while still in his mother's womb. From his development he was being prepared to make ready the way for Jesus. This is a remarkable use of the holy spirit, but it is not the same as it was with Jesus, as we will see.

In the New Testament the phrase "holy ghost" or "holy spirit" is ALWAYS derived from the following two words:

Holy: Strongs #40 *hagios*; sacred (physically, pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated)

Spirit: Strongs #4151 *pneuma*; a current of air, i.e., breath (blast) or a breeze

God's holy spirit is His sacred and unseen power and influence. This is an important factor to understand, as seen in the example of creation.



We know that it was God's power, His spirit, that overshadowed Mary for the miraculous conception of Jesus:

Luke 1:34-35: (NASB) ³⁴Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I am a virgin? ³⁵The angel answered and said to her, The holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child shall be called the son of God.

We see the power of God's influence, God's power putting the conception in place with Mary. *For that reason, the holy child (Jesus) shall be called the son of God.* God's power made that happen. It was unequivocally a miracle, unequivocally unnatural. God can do that when He sees fit.



One more example - we know that Elizabeth spoke to Mary before the birth of Jesus with help from the holy spirit:

Luke 1:41-42: (NASB) ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the holy spirit. ⁴²And she cried out with a loud voice and said, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!



Elizabeth speaks, filled with the spirit. That is an important aspect of this lesson. We are seeing God's holy spirit work in very specific ways before Jesus. We have now gone from creation all the way up to the birth of Jesus to illustrate the functions of the holy spirit.



The holy spirit's function BEFORE JESUS - what do we know?

- God's power put creation in place.
- God's power drove the accomplishment of physical creations to glorify Him.
- God's power dictated specific messages for His people through specific individuals.
 - God's power surrounded the coming of Jesus with understanding for those involved.
 - God's power gave Jesus his human life and thoroughly guided Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist.

We see God's power working through individuals and putting things in place. The holy spirit was used in creation, within human beings, guiding of miracles in the Old Testament, the miraculous conception of Jesus and speaking in tongues in order to be understood in all languages.

Let's return to our earlier question:



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE ME AS A TOOL TO EXPRESS MY VISION OF WHAT CAN BE?

Should I "decree and declare" like Job's friend Eliphaz the Temanite said to do? Job 22:28: (Amplified Bible) *You will also decide and decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and the light of God's favor will shine upon your ways.*



No, God's power is always used exclusively to bring God's vision and plan to fruition.

In our previous scriptural examples, declaring something is all about God's will, words and actions. But in the current day popular thinking, declaring something says you want something to happen for personal reasons. That seems selfish and self-willed, which is outside of God's will.

Please see [Bonus Material](#) for more.

It is easy to see how the spirit of God has been an ever-present power in all of what we know regarding life.



Once Jesus was on the scene to preach the gospel, what changed with the way the holy spirit worked?

It is important to realize that as God’s master plan of redemption progresses, it does so in stages. God adapts the operation of His spirit to fit what is needed at any specific stage. Jesus coming as THE man who would provide salvation was the first to experience a monumental change in how God’s spirit would work; it was significantly different.



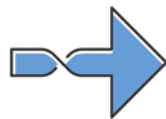
DOES GOD’S POWER EVER SERVE ME AS A TOOL TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION I HAVE SET FOR MYSELF?

Another popular phrase among some Christians is “name it and claim it.” Jesus is speaking in the following examples:

John 15:7: (NASB) *If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

Mark 11:22-23: (NASB) ²²*Have faith in God.* ²³*...Whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted to him.*

This mountain exemplifies any obstacle in our lives. Some today say we must speak to that mountain by boldly naming what we want, and the power of God will make it happen - but we must actively claim this bold and open-ended promise for it to come true.



“Name it and claim it” is a twist on the power of positive thinking. It is an unfortunate twist on the power of God’s word as well. How many millions and millions of Christians have done this and been disappointed.

James 4:3: (NASB) *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend what you request on your pleasures.*

We cannot attempt to use God’s spirit to “name it and claim it” or “decree and declare” anything from a self-serving perspective.

Let’s look at how the spirit worked for Jesus:



Jesus was outwardly identified as having God’s spirit when he began his ministry:

Matthew 3:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶*After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him,* ¹⁷*and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, This is My beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased.*

This was an outward manifestation of God's spirit coming to Jesus right after his baptism.

Jesus immediately and always followed the spirit's leading:

Mark 1:12-13: (NASB) ¹²Immediately the spirit impelled him to go out into the wilderness. ¹³And he was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to him.

Jesus was driven by the spirit, and he listened. That is the key. The spirit did not take over his legs and make him run someplace he did not want to go. He listened to what God's power was driving him to do and the first thing he did was *to go out into the wilderness* to fast and pray for 40 days. He continued to listen with the same intensity throughout his three-and-a-half-year ministry.

Jesus relied upon the power of God's spirit to show the people the message of the gospel:

Luke 5:17: (NASB) *One day he was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for him to perform healing.*

Luke 6:19: (NASB) *And all the people were trying to touch him, for power was coming from him and healing them all.*

This was Jesus using, following and administering the spirit the way God directed. Remember when he raised Lazarus? He looked up and prayed just so the people could see the power was not coming from him; the power was coming from above. He said: I know you always hear me, I am just saying this out loud, so they know that what is going to happen comes from You (John 11:41-42). He took direction from God. He did not have the audacity to try to give God direction and that is where a lot of Christians get this backwards. They have the audacity to decree and declare something. This is not scriptural!

In the upper room the night before his crucifixion, Jesus hinted to Peter about a dramatic change that would soon take place:

Luke 22:31-32: (KJV) ³¹And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: ³²But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

There is something mysterious here because a change was coming to Peter. That is what Jesus was alluding to. He was saying: Something is going to happen, and the strength that you have is now going to be immaterial compared to the strength that God will give you.

Later, on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus explained that his followers would also be given the privilege and power of God's spirit:

John 14:16-17: (American Conservative Version) ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, so that he may dwell with you into the age, ¹⁷the spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive, because it does not see nor know it. But ye know it, because it dwells with you, and will be in you.

The spirit of truth - also described as the spirit of liberty, the spirit of a sound mind, the holy spirit of promise, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of glory, the spirit of grace, the spirit of prophecy - these titles repeat many times and are



used interchangeably to describe this same holy spirit. These are contrasted with the spirit exemplified by Satan, like *the spirit of fear, the spirit of bondage and the spirit of the world.*

The spirit is never described as the spirit of decreeing and declaring.

➔ **Jesus before his crucifixion unequivocally told his followers to wait for (not demand) the spirit:**

John 16:5-7: (NASB) ⁵*But now I am going to Him who sent me; and none of you asks me, where are you going?* ⁶*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.* ⁷*But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him (it) to you.*

Jesus is very specific that this helper - the holy spirit he already described - is the same holy spirit that Jesus had within him throughout his ministry. He is saying: I am going to send it to you. The same influence that I used will be sent to you. It is important for us to see the holy spirit's function in and through Jesus.



The holy spirit's function IN AND THROUGH JESUS - what do we know?

- **God's power visibly and publicly rested upon and begat him at his baptism.**
- **God's power drove Jesus to go, do and say what the Father wanted revealed.**
- **God's power gave Jesus gifts of insight, foresight, wisdom and healing to spread the gospel to others.**
- **God's power was invested into others by way of physical healing and raising from the dead.**



God's power worked through Jesus. Jesus was the conduit. He let the spirit direct him.

At Pentecost, the begetting of the spirit upon the apostles was a publicly-witnessed event:

Acts 2:2-4: (NASB) ²*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.* ³*And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.* ⁴*And they were all filled with the holy spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit was giving them utterance.*

For the first time (besides Jesus) the spirit would now dwell within human beings. It gave them miraculous ability to use God's power the way He directed.



What the Holy Spirit is really about.

After Pentecost, the apostles lived the gospel. They taught, prophesied, healed and suffered.



One of the examples of healing:

Acts 3:2-4, 6-8: (NASB) ²And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along... in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John he began asking to receive alms. ⁴But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, look at us! ⁶Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene walk! ⁷And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. ⁸With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

This happened because the spirit of God moved within Peter to bring attention to Jesus Christ.

The holy spirit's function **IN AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES** - what do we know?



- God's power worked through them as it did through Jesus, **except to a lesser degree.**
- **God's power visibly and publicly rested upon and begat them at Pentecost.**
- God's power guided them to go, do and say what was necessary to preach the gospel.
- **God's power gave the apostles gifts of insight, foresight, wisdom, tongues and healing to spread the gospel to others.**
- God's power was invested into non-believers by way of physical healing, raising from the dead and imparting spiritual gifts.

The Scriptures say that Jesus received the full measure of the holy spirit and everyone since then only gets a measure of it. The apostles were spirit begotten to a new life in Christ. God's power worked through them but to a lesser degree than Jesus.



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE ME AS A TOOL TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION I HAVE SET FOR MYSELF?

Can I "name it and claim it"? What about Romans 4:17 that says I can call into being things that do not exist? This is used by some to prove we can make things happen.

Romans 4:17: (NASB) (speaking of Abraham) *as it is written: I have made you a father of many nations" in the presence of Him whom he believed, that is, God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that do not exist.*



No, God's power is always used in us exclusively to accomplish God's mission for us.

We must read the context of the verse because the one who *calls into being things that did not exist* is God, not us! We need to stop using the Bible as a tool for dramatics. We need to let the Bible teach us what it is meant to teach.



The apostles - the twelve representatives of Jesus - are the foundation of the church. How can we learn from them and realize the authority they had been given is different than those disciples who came later?

They had a different kind of authority than we do. And Jesus had a different kind of authority than them. The holy spirit was different in each of these circumstances. We cannot just pick and choose words from different Scriptures. We must be sure we check the context.



Check out our CQ Kids videos:
**HOW DO CHRISTIANS RECEIVE
 THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

christianquestions.com/youtube

The way the spirit of God was put to work through Jesus and the apostles is awe-inspiring and breathtaking.

Did all disciples of Jesus immediately receive the same degree of might and power from God's spirit?

As we follow through with the unfolding of the gospel message, we will see a direct correlation between the *need* for dramatic outward miracles to establish Christianity as credible and the *reducing* of those miracles as the gospel took hold. God's power always provides what is needed. He does not always provide what is dramatic or what we would like - He provides what is needed for the sake of His plan.



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE AS A TOOL TO FULFILL MY PREFERENCES IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS MISSION FOR ME?

In other words, does God's power give me special powers if I am doing what I *think* He wants done?

For example, can I get the power of faith healing, such as when people are "slain in the spirit?" This is when the power of the holy spirit is so great that a person falls over as their own body energy fades away as it is replaced by the spirit. After all, Isaiah 66:16 says in the King James Version: *For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.* The Bible has examples of people suddenly falling down, including Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28 and 3:23), Daniel (Daniel 10:5-18), three disciples (Matthew 17:6) and the Apostle John (Revelation 1:10-18 and 4:10). Should we expect this when we are begotten of the holy spirit?



No, In Isaiah, the people were dead, literally slain! If people are falling down out of fear, or in reverence or to worship, this is not the idea of passing out because the spirit overcame them; it is a human response to great awe. We cannot twist the Scriptures into some dramatic story they do not support! The modern idea of being "slain in the spirit" is not a scriptural concept.



There are some very dramatic things that go on after Pentecost as the holy spirit works through the apostles:

John 14:12: (NASB) *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.*

Some take this to mean we should be doing more magnificent works than Jesus, but we see the meaning here as being larger, more along the lines of bigger and broader in scope. How do we know this? The early church was spreading the gospel to a much larger area than Jesus. Jesus was only one man and could only be in one place at a time. The twelve apostles could be twelve places at a time and their converts were many workers, spreading the Word. The breadth of the teaching dispersing is much bigger than Jesus was able to do on his own. That is how the gospel church's works are greater than the works of Jesus.

The early church demonstrated this broader scope:

1 Corinthians 12:4, 7-11: (NASB) *⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same spirit; ⁹to another faith by the same spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one spirit, ¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But one and the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He (it) wills.*

God did give these incredible gifts of the spirit to the early Christians that were beyond the individual's physical or mental capacity. Many Christians today look at this list and seek to find their role in utilizing these gifts wondering which of these gifts are for them.



- Are these gifts "automatic" for all spirit begotten ones?
- Should we have a reasonable expectation of receiving them?

No, we should not! Why? What about the attitude we see today of entitlement due to having the spirit? *I have the spirit so I should be able to do this!* This attitude is dangerous. We get into trouble when we try to apply something that does not belong.

It would be nice to claim these abilities that we see some in the early church had. However, we must ask why does God give us this spirit? What is its purpose? How did it get there? This is all about God's grace - not about what we can do, or would like to do, or something cool to do that we think would be a great witness. We must remember it is about God's plan, God's providence and His grace. Nothing more than that and nothing less!

Carefully consider the pattern of gifts, beginning right after Pentecost.

What happened to the 3,000 new spirit begotten converts regarding gifts and miracles?

Acts 2:37-38, 41-43: (NASB) *³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸Peter said to them, repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy spirit. ⁴¹So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. ⁴²They were continually*



devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

Notice the *wonders and signs* were only taking place through the apostles. The 3,000 converts were *breaking bread and praying*. It was not a case of being spirit begotten and automatically receiving these miraculous gifts of the spirit. 3,000 converts proved this! There is no evidence of any gifts of the spirit being given to any followers except the apostles at this point.

How then did any disciples other than the apostles receive these gifts?

Acts 19:1-7: (NASB) ¹...Paul... came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. ²He said to them, Did you receive the holy spirit when you believed? And they said to him, No, we have not even heard whether there is a holy spirit. ³And he said, into what then were you baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. ⁴Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus. ⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the holy spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. ⁷There were in all about twelve men.

The gifts did not appear as a function of the baptism, but of Paul laying his hands on them!

(Source: Biblically commentary by J. Vernon McGee) (In speaking of Ephesus) There were many languages spoken there, just as there had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. East and West met all along that coast. It was a great city of that day. These men were now able to give the good news of Christ to the entire city.

Ephesus was a multi-cultural city where they could witness to those from around the Mediterranean world. Gifts of the spirit were given out of a need for the gospel to spread. They were not a toy or an attention getter. There was a need to communicate the gospel to the people around who did not speak the local language. The reason for the gifts given to these 12 men was to teach the gospel to this cosmopolitan city - those hearing it would then go to the far corners of the known world.

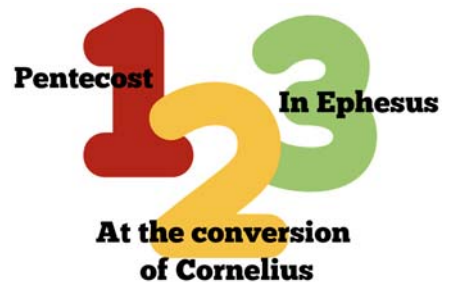


Gifts of the spirit were given out of a need for the gospel to spread.

Here are a few facts:

There are only three events of speaking in tongues in the New Testament:

All three had an apostle present. Only apostles could transfer the gifts to other individuals. And the people listening all heard their native languages spoken because the gift was used solely for the purpose of communicating. The gospel had to get out wide and fast. This was not the indecipherable utterances people speak today.





Biblical meaning and application of the gift of tongues

Are these gifts relevant manifestations of the spirit now:

1 Corinthians 13:8-11: (NASB) ⁸*Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*



The gifts existed at that time, but *they will be done away*. Why?

These miraculous gifts were just there for a time. What was this “perfect” thing to come? We believe it is the *complete* word of God. Why? All of God’s plan is revealed in the Bible. It was completed by the Apostle John writing Revelation around 96CE. The gifts would have faded. There would no longer be a need for miracles to help establish the early church when all of the New Testament was written and had been spread to many nations and languages. Now the complete written word could take over spreading the word of God, not the gifts of the spirit.

We just read the list of the gifts which were to *be done away* with: prophecy, tongues and knowledge. This does not mean that there would no longer be understanding or increasing depth of knowledge among the early and later churches. It meant that the mechanical “gift” of instantaneous knowledge of what to say and how to say it to get out the gospel message would cease. The knowledge we receive now comes through prayer, study and fellowship. It requires effort on our part to obtain knowledge through the word of God. Knowledge now indicates a maturity in the Christian rather than a gift which was given without effort on the person’s part. True Christianity since the time of the apostles is not about the gifts; it is about the growth.

Going back to “decree and declare:”

It is said that a person who makes a decree must be in a position of power and authority:

Luke 10:1: (NASB 1995) *Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where he himself was going to come.*

Jesus then says to these 70:

Luke 10:19: (NASB) *Behold, I have given you authority to walk on snakes and scorpions, and authority over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.*

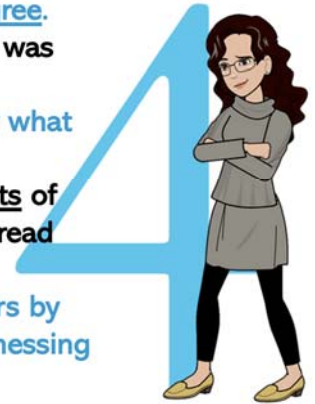
Editor’s note: Some translations say there were 72 people instead of 70.



As followers of Jesus, can we claim the power and protection Jesus gave to these 70 people? No, we cannot. They were given a specific mission for a specific time. It was before the day of Pentecost, which is when the indwelling of the spirit was given. In this incident, the spirit was given to them "on loan" and it had an expiration date. When they finished the mission, it was done. This was just like the prophets and everyone else before who manifested God's holy spirit. We cannot appropriate for ourselves what they were given at that time. God's holy spirit works in different ways at different time periods of His plan. We will address this more in the next part of this episode.

The holy spirit's function IN AND THROUGH the disciples in the days of the apostles - what do we know?

- God's power worked through them as it did through the apostles, except to a lesser degree.
- God's power rested on and begat them and was primarily manifested from the inside out.
- God's power guided them to go, do and say what was necessary to preach the gospel.
- God's power gave certain disciples some gifts of insight, foresight, wisdom and healing to spread the gospel to others.
- God's power was manifested to non-believers by way of spiritual gifts for the purpose of witnessing to the power of God through Jesus Christ.



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE AS A TOOL TO FULFILL MY PREFERENCES IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS MISSION FOR ME?



No, God's power is always used in us exclusively to fulfill God's mission for us according to His way!

When we talk about "decree and declare," let's look at Eliphaz (Job's "comforter") and Job again. Eliphaz told Job that Job had been disobedient. This was not true! He told Job he had to get back into God's good graces, but this was also a lie, as Job had never left God's good graces. God was mad at Eliphaz for this misrepresentation to the point that Job had to later pray for Eliphaz afterwards. Chapters later, God told Job that he should declare God's power and then God told him what to declare. We must not take things out of context! We will see soon that the important thing for the Christian is growth and maturity to become Christlike; it is not about gifts which would fade away after the establishment of the early church.

God's wisdom is evident in how he altered the administering of His spirit through the ages. He has a purpose.



**What about us? Has God’s spirit diminished over these last centuries?
Are we disadvantaged?**

Actually, it is completely opposite. Living now in these end times gives us the advantage of having the Bible, commentaries and concordances to feed our understanding through the spirit. We have the advantage of looking back through history and seeing prophecies fulfilled. Now, the spirit’s primary work is its only work.



DOES GOD’S POWER EVER SERVE AS A TOOL TO GRANT MY DESIRES ALONG MY CHRISTIAN WAY?

We have yet another common Christian phrase: “Confess it and possess it!” What if my desires are good? For example, some teach the following are acceptable:

- I decree that before the end of this year, every eligible single person I know shall receive a marriage proposal in the name of Jesus.
- I decree that enough is enough of sickness, disease, failure and disappointment in my life today.
- I decree that the God I serve shall crown me with all-around favor this year in the name of Jesus.

These are actual decrees from a Christian minister. What is the difference between petitioning God in prayer and forcing Him to act by making a declaration by the power given to us, seemingly, by certain Scriptures?

The difference is asking God and telling Him what I want done. If I decree something to God Almighty, who is acting as God in this situation? This is not an act of faith; it is an act of pride, it is an act of ego, it is an act of unscriptural application. When Job was told this by Eliphaz, it was wrong, and it is never reversed anywhere in Scripture. Our declarations cannot cause something to be, despite being couched “in the name of Jesus.” It must be God’s power that does this.

No wonder people in the world look down on Christianity when it is misrepresented like this. Think about something like the Crusades where the killing of countless thousands was done “in the name of Jesus.” Just because someone uses the name of Jesus does not mean they are on the side of Jesus.



Why are we given the spirit? It all comes down to where we are now on the stream of time. If we take away all of the distractions of the gifts of the spirit, we see this development process going on.

What is the primary work of God’s power and influence dwelling in us?



The reworking of our minds to become spiritual:

Romans 12:2: (NASB) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The transformation of our very being to one that will have a spiritual birth:

2 Corinthians 5:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* ¹⁸*Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

We talked before about the holy spirit being more mechanical in the Old Testament. Here, there is a change in its operation - it is more explanatory and sympathetic. **Ephesians 3:16-19** says in part that we are strengthened with power through God's spirit so that you...may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.

There is no "decreeing and declaring" here. It is learning and maturing, growing and working together. It is an internal thing that has an expression in the crystallization of our characters. The value of God's spirit and His grace far surpasses the theatrics of these phrases like "decree and declare."



What does this transformation require?

It requires the fruitage of our lives to change. God's spirit is key to this development:

Galatians 5:16, 19-23, 25: (NASB) ¹⁶*But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh* ¹⁹*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,* ²⁰*idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,* ²¹*envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.* ²²*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* ²⁵*If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit.*

As opposed to the miraculous gifts of the spirit, we are to cultivate *the fruit of the spirit*. We get these in proportion as we come into harmony and obedience of thought and word and deed with the spirit of God. Instead of receiving these miraculously, we are supposed to develop our abilities in and for the service of the Lord and His people. These personally-developed gifts are more valuable than those miraculously bestowed even though they are less outwardly dramatic. They happen within - the development of the individual is gradual and often not seen until it has progressed to quite a degree. This inward transformation brings about outward manifestations, such as the fruit of the spirit. Inward transformation brings us to heaven. Outward dramatic gives a good show.

It requires us to bring our burdens humbly and haltingly before God with the help of His spirit:

Romans 8:26-28: (NASB) ²⁶*In the same way the spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the spirit himself (itself) intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;* ²⁷*and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the spirit is, because He (it) intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* ²⁸*And we know that God*



causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

The spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words - There is no experience that is too deep to bring before God. Even when we are speechless, not knowing how to approach Him, His spirit can help us present it before God. His influence can make sure these concerns are communicated if our hearts are in the right place, wanting to serve God. This is a beautiful example of the depth at which God's spirit works on the inside of an individual. There are no theatrics here; no one else sees it. This is a personal conversation between God and us through Christ. God's spirit can help us with that conversation.

It is not possible without hope, which God's spirit provides:

Romans 5:1,3-5: (Youngs Literal Translation) ¹Having been declared righteous, then, by faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ³And not only so, but we also boast in the tribulations, knowing that the tribulation doth work endurance; ⁴and the endurance, experience; and the experience, hope; ⁵and the hope doth not make ashamed, because the love of God hath been poured forth in our hearts through the holy spirit that hath been given to us.

We have hope because God's love has been given us through His spirit. God's spirit crystallizes the hope so we can get that endurance.

It requires a continuous desire to be wise and uplifting in God's eyes by the power of His spirit:

Ephesians 5:17-21: (NASB) ¹⁷So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

This is about the fellowship of the saints - the growing together, upbuilding one another and sharing with one another. When we each have God's spirit developing us and we share that growth, co-laboring in the Lord's service, wonderful things happen.

It is about daily becoming more selfless and embracing God's power which dwells within us:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: (KJV) ¹⁹What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy ghost (spirit) which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The holy spirit's function
IN AND THROUGH THE DISCIPLES AFTER THE DAYS OF THE APOSTLES
- what do we know?



- God's power works through us as it did through the apostles, except to a lesser degree.
- God's power rests on and begets us and is primarily manifested from the inside out.
- God's power guides us to go, do and say what was necessary to preach the gospel.
- God's power is manifested to us through providence, character development and spiritual maturity.
- God's power is manifested to non-believers by way of our witness in thought, word and deed.



DOES GOD'S POWER EVER SERVE AS A TOOL TO GRANT MY DESIRES ALONG MY CHRISTIAN WAY?



No, God's power is always used in us exclusively to transform into faithful disciples. Doesn't God want me to be blessed? Yes, does not mean we get to dictate to God how that happens.



We have taken a detailed look at how the holy spirit is meant to work in our lives. To find that out, we traced the manifestation of the holy spirit through the entire Bible and watched how the function of God's spirit changed over time. Now, at the end of the age, we are at the time that God's spirit is developing those last few who are part of the true church to be in heaven, working at the reconciling of the world of mankind. It is an internal transformation of our characters. We have God's spirit working within us to, by God's grace, share God's plan with the rest of the world once the resurrection starts.

This is the beauty of God's spirit and how it is working in our age - we cannot misrepresent it! Look at the Scriptures, see them in context, then follow God's will and His way.

*So, do we have the purpose of the holy spirit backwards?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on August 2, 2021
Ep. 1189: What's My Battle Plan to Defend
Against Satan's Attacks?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

A noble purpose inspires sacrifice, stimulates innovation and encourages perseverance. — Gary Hamel

More context on Bezalel regarding his role in the building of the Tabernacle fixtures:

Exodus 31:1-11: (NASB) ¹Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, ⁴to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. ⁶And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan;



and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent, ⁸the table also and its utensils, and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand, ¹⁰the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood; ¹¹the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you.

The risen Lord Jesus appearing to his disciples and focusing them on the coming begetting of the spirit:

Luke 24:47-49: (KJV) *⁴⁷And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸And ye are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

The risen Lord's eleventh and final appearance:

Acts 1:4-5: (NRSV) *⁴While staying with them he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. This, he said, is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the holy spirit not many days from now.*

We worship God in His spirit:

Philippians 3:1-3: (NASB) *¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. ²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.*

Here is an appropriate spirit-driven attitude towards earthly gain:

James 4:13-17: (NASB) *¹³Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that. ¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

A little more on keeping the gift of tongues in an appropriate spiritual perspective:

1 Corinthians 14:1-5: (NASB) *¹Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ⁴One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.*

It makes perfect sense to interpret this reference to similarly speaking in a foreign language. Without someone to interpret, it is just noise:

1 Corinthians 14:22-23: (NASB) *²²So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe. ²³Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?*



More about the power of God's spirit to reveal things not previously understood:

1 Corinthians 2:6-16: (NASB) ⁶Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ⁹but just as it is written, things which eye has not and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. ¹⁰For to us God revealed them through the spirit; for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. ¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. ¹⁶For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.



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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1188: Do We Have the Purpose of the Holy Spirit Backwards?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1188-holy-spirit/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. How does the Old Testament describe God's spirit? What role did it play in: creation, the life of Joseph, the life of Bezalel, and in the births and lives of Jesus and John the Baptist? In what ways did God's power work before Jesus' ministry? (See Genesis 1:1-5, 41:38-40, Exodus 31:1-11, Luke 1:15-17,34-35,41-42, 2 Peter 1:21)
2. Can we use the holy spirit to "declare and decree" things for ourselves? What does this phrase mean? Was Eliphaz correct in telling Job to do this? (See Job 22:28, 42:7)
3. How did the spirit work for Jesus? How did Jesus work for the spirit? How did Jesus "declare and decree" the things he did using God's power? Did it have the same connotation as this phrase does now? (See Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 5:17, 6:19, 22:31-32, John 14:16-17, 16:5-7)
4. How did the holy spirit function in and through the apostles? Is this different from the way the holy spirit works in us? (See Acts 2:2-4, 3:2-8)
5. How do we reconcile Jesus' words in John 15:7, Mark 11:22-23, and Paul's words in Romans 4:17 with James 4:3? Have we been promised the right to "name and claim" or "decree and declare"? In Romans 4:17, who "calls into being things that did not exist"?
6. What work was the early church tasked with doing? How did the power of God's spirit aid them in this work? How did they do greater works than Jesus? Are we charged with doing greater works? (See John 14:12, 1 Corinthians 12:4,7-11)
7. Why were the apostles given gifts in addition to receiving the holy spirit at Pentecost? Did all the disciples who were baptized receive these gifts in the early church? Should we expect to receive such gifts? (See Acts 2:37-43, 19:1-7, 1 Corinthians 12:4,7-11,13:8-11)
8. What is the purpose of God's power and influence dwelling in us? How is this different from the way it worked in the Old Testament? (See Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, Ephesians 3:16-19)
9. What are our responsibilities once receiving the holy spirit? How is this different from what happened with the early church? How does the power of God's spirit within us help us beyond our abilities? (See Romans 5:1-5, 8:26-28, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Galatians 5:16-25, Ephesians 5:17-21)
10. Do you feel the impact of God's power on your life? If so, what impact has it had?