

## The Spirit Empowers the Means of Grace

### I. Public worship by the Spirit

- We are one with the Spirit, who enables us to worship.
  - Phil 3:3: “For we are the circumcision, *who worship by the Spirit of God* and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh”
  - Rev 1:10: The apostle John “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” This is something that happens *every* Lord’s day, as the Spirit exalts the church to heaven to have fellowship with the risen Christ (Heb 12:22–24).
  - Jesus is the chief worshiper / worship leader, and we enter into his praise. Heb 2:12 (Jesus speaking): “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”
  - Through our Spirit-wrought union with Christ, we enter into God’s own adoration of God!
- The Spirit ensures that our worship is acceptable.
  - Rom 15:16: Our worship is sanctified by the Spirit (cf. 1 Pet 2:5).
  - Eph 2:8: “For through [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.”
- The Spirit gives us the joy of fellowship with God. Horton: “Through the Spirit’s operation, all three persons come near to us and bring us into their fellowship.”

### II. Preaching by the Spirit

- The Spirit is what makes preaching *powerful*, convicting sinners and creating faith and repentance.
  - 1 Thess 1:5: “[Our] gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”
- Powerful preaching sometimes seems weak on the surface.
  - Acts 4:13 “Now when [the Jewish leaders] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.”
  - 1 Cor 2:4–5: “my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”
- Preaching the word of God demolishes strongholds of Satan:
  - Eph 6:17 “the sword of the Spirit ... *is* the word of God.”
  - 2 Corinthians 10:4 “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”
- The Spirit empowers other kinds of word ministry too: counseling, personal and group Bible study, evangelism, the ministry of friendship and encouragement.

### III. Sacraments by the Spirit

- Baptism pictures our receiving the Spirit (Luke 3:16; John 3:5; Titus 3:5–6).
  - The prophets foretold that God would pour out his Spirit on the dry ground to produce a paradise in the wilderness (Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 39:29; 47:1–12)
  - We are the dry ground! John 7:38–39 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit ...”

- Yet being baptized doesn't mean you automatically receive the Spirit, as the Catholics and Lutherans teach.
- The Spirit makes the sacraments to be powerful and transformative, but he cannot be tamed by human rites (John 3:8).
  - 1 Corinthians 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- Who does the sacraments?
  - Outwardly, the authorized representative: the minister who represents Jesus.
  - But actually, it is Jesus: "Only that sacrament is true that is administered by God himself." The key action is the hidden action of Christ, "who inwardly confers grace in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit" (Bavinck).
  - In baptism, Jesus marks his own; in the supper, he is the host.

#### IV. Praying in the Spirit

- When Christians pray, we enter into the Spirit's own prayer. We pray *in the Spirit* (Jude 20; Eph 6:18)
- The Spirit's prayers are always good and acceptable. He perfects our prayers.
  - Rom 8:26–27: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."
- It is not wrong to pray to Son or Spirit (they are God!), but they are our avenue to the Father, so it is normal to address him (Matt 6:9; Eph 3:14).
- The evidence that we have the Spirit of sonship is that we cry out to our Father.
  - Ferguson: "Although we may be broken and bruised, tossed about with fears and doubts, the child of God nevertheless in his need cries out, 'Father!' as instinctively as a child who has fallen and been hurt."

Summary by Herman Ridderbos: "Christ 'dwells' in the hearts of his own through faith (Eph. 3:17); God 'sends' the Spirit of his Son into their hearts (Gal. 4:6) as the earnest and seal of their complete redemption (2 Cor. 1:22). He 'pours' his love into their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; cf. Tit. 3:5); he 'writes' his will in their hearts by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3); he 'illumines' their hearts with the knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6); he enlightens 'the eyes of their heart' through the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation (Eph. 1:18). The peace that has been accomplished by Christ 'speaks the last word' in their hearts as an arbitrator again and again (Col. 3:15; cf. 1 Thess. 3:13), 'guards' their hearts against wandering and temptation (Phil 4:7), and directs their hearts in the right pathway in order that they may show love and be patient (2 Thess. 3:5). All this includes the outworking of the hidden work of the Spirit, who as the Spirit of the adoption of sons (and not—as that of the law—as the spirit of bondage) is also the Spirit of prayer and of boldness in speaking to God (Rom 8:15; cf. 2 Tim. 1:7). Indeed, the Spirit is sometimes represented as himself in the hearts of believers praying to God (Rom. 8:26, 27; Gal 4:6). He unites himself with their prayer, so that their prayer becomes his prayer, and that which they cannot utter is judged by God, who searches the hearts, according to the intention of his Spirit (Rom. 8:27)."