

MINISTERS OF THE SPIRIT

It is a beautiful thing **to be a man or woman of the Spirit**:

- To commend ourselves to others by the Spirit in our lives (2 Cor 6.6).
- To be an example in Spirit (1 Tim 4.12).
- To live and to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5.25).
- To be fervent and aglow with the Spirit (Ro 12.11).
- To be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5.18).

Beautiful though these experiences are, there is something even more beautiful, **to be able to minister that same Spirit to others**.

The Ministration of the Spirit

Receiving/Partaking of the Spirit

Modern Gospel preaching is often limited to *“repent and be baptised”* (Acts 2:38). But this is only half of the story. In his Pentecost appeal Peter **also** said:

“and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (2.38).

New Testament Gospel preaching was closely accompanied by both outpourings and distributions of the Spirit (cp Acts 8.14-17; 10.44-47).

“God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts” (Marg = distributions) *of the Holy Ghost.*” (Heb 2.4)

In fact, the experience of the Spirit is so normal in the New Testament, that one of the expressions used to characterise Christians is, *“partakers of the Holy Ghost”* (Heb 6.4).

Imparting/Ministering the Spirit

But there is more. To us it is given to experience not only the **infilling** but also the **outflowing** of the Spirit.

- On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus uttered a piercing cry **to receive**: *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink”* (Jn 7.37).
- But He not only invited to drink in of the Spirit. The initial **infilling** was to be but the preliminary to a subsequent **outflowing**: *“He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (Jn 7.38).

The ability consciously and repeatedly to **drink in** of the Spirit is something to be treasured. But the ability to **impart** this same Spirit to others is also to be coveted.

This is Biblical new covenant ministry.

In 2 Corinthians 3, speaking of this, Paul describes

- His ministry as, *“the ministration of the Spirit”* (v 8).
- He and his fellow-labourers as, *“ministers ... of the Spirit”* (v 6).

How blessed! To *“minister”* means literally to furnish or supply. So, to minister the Spirit is not simply to **preach about** Him but to **impart** or **make** Him **available**.

This is at the heart of the Gospel. It cannot be omitted without mutilating it. Full Gospel preaching and true Biblical new covenant ministry is to bring men,

- **Not only to receive** the Spirit.
- **But also to impart** Him.

How? A believer can be so full of the Spirit that his every act and word - even his face, eyes or mere presence - not only bring a conscious awareness of the presence of the Lord and of the anointing, but also impart that anointing to others.

This impartation is not limited to the gift or the gifts of the Spirit. It is a ministration of any of the manifold operations and attributes of the Spirit, according as He will.

- For one it could be the healing power of the Spirit flowing into them;
- to another an imparting of *"the spirit of wisdom and revelation"*;
- to another *"peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"*;
- to another *"the spirit of ... power, and of love and of a sound mind"*;
- to another *"the spirit of gentleness"*;
- to another *"the spirit of faith"*; and so on.

The *"ministration of the Spirit"* is something greatly to be coveted.

It is not limited to ordained men. It is the ministry of those who have learned the secret of imparting to others the indwelling Spirit.

The very presence of such people brings a refreshing breath of Spiritual life.

Let us look at some specific examples of how this ministration may be effected.

The laying on of hands

The laying on of hands is a first principle of the doctrine of Christ (Heb 6.1-2). Hands can minister many things.

Healing

Concerning the healing ministry of the Lord, the people said with astonishment, *"From whence hath this man these things? ... that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands* (Mk 6.2)?" There was no formal ceremony of laying on of hands. The anointing on Him was imparted to others by a simple touch. Healing was ministered by one hand or two, or simply with His fingers.

- With Peter's sick mother-in-law, He simply *"took her by the hand"* (Mk 1:31).
- With the leper He *"put forth his hand and touched him"* (Matt 8:3).
- With the blind, with some He laid His hands upon them (Mk 8.23); with others He simply touched them (Mt 9.27; 20.34).
- With the deaf-mute, He *"put his fingers into his ears ... and touched his tongue"* (Mk 7.33).
- A severed ear was healed by a touch (Lk 22.51).
- Even the last enemy, death, could not stand before His touch. Concerning his mortally ill child, Jairus besought Him, *"lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live"* (Mt 9.18). As for the widow of Nain's only son, He *"touched the bier ... and he said, Young man, I say unto thee. Arise."* (Lk 7.14).

On other occasions, physical contact was not needed.

- Simply pointing a finger imparted an anointing and authority sufficient to expel unclean spirits: *“if I with the finger of God cast out devils”* (Lk 11.20).

(The healing power in Him even flowed out when the needy touched Him rather than Him touching them (e.g. Mt 14.36; Mk 3.10; Lk 6.19; 8.46).)

Imparting the healing power of the Spirit through hands was not for Jesus only. It was given to believers also.

- *“these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name ... they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover”* (Mk 16.17-18).
- *“by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought”* (Acts 5.12).
- *“the Lord ... granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands”* (Acts 14.3).
- *“God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul”* (Acts 19.11).
- *“Paul ... laid his hands on (the father of Publius) and healed him”* (Acts 28.8).

The Gift of the Spirit

The hands of believers not only minister healing. They may also impart the gift of the Spirit (Acts 8:17-18; 9.17; 19:6).

In addition to the Scriptures, there are countless examples of this in Church history.

- An early Pentecostal pioneer, Frank Bartleman, shook hands with a sister. The effect was electrifying. She was baptised with the Spirit there and then. When in the Spirit, the commonplace is liable to be invaded by the supernatural.
- Before distributing his booklets, another pioneer, John Lake, asked those in close touch with the Lord to lay hands upon them so that the very paper, as well as the words, would be filled with the Spirit. One woman was so mightily anointed as she picked up a copy, she was powerfully baptised in the Spirit even before she was able to read it!

Gifts & Endowments of the Spirit

Hands may also minister the gifts and other endowments of the Spirit. For example,

- *“Joshua was full of the Spirit of wisdom; **for** Moses had laid his hands upon him”* (Dt 34:9).
- *“the gift of God which is in thee **by** the putting on of my hands”* (2 Tim 1.6).
- *“the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, **with** the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”* (1 Tim 4.14)

(Perhaps this was how Paul hoped to fulfil his desires towards the Roman believers: *“I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift”* (Ro 1.11).)

To sum up

The foregoing does not exhaust the possibilities. Just as with Jesus, all manner of Spiritual blessings may be imparted through believers' touch and hands. For example, Jesus not only drove away sickness, demons and death,

- His touch **banished** the disciples' **fear** (Mt 17.7).
- The laying on of His hands **brought blessing** to small children (Mk 10.13).

- Even simply raising His hands, without any physical contact, was sufficient to **impart blessing** to His disciples (Lk 24.50; cp Lev 9.22).

Because the laying on of hands is so familiar today, I emphasise that I am not speaking of mere official ceremonies. It is not the outward copying of certain Biblical practices that matters, but whether those involved actually *do* impart the Spirit.

The laying on of hands is not simply a graphic way of praying. A man's hands may be so charged with the anointing that his very touch transmits the Spirit. Whether by one hand or two, or even by a simple touch or the authoritative pointing of a finger, he may minister the Spirit. This is not because he is a man of office, but a man of the Spirit. His hands are so full of the Spirit that everything he touches is blessed.

- He is like the Lord Himself, whose "*paths drop fatness*" (Ps 65.11).
- "*Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*" (Ps 1.3).

The Tongue

As well as the hands, the Spirit can also be imparted by our words.

It is well known that **the Spirit may impart words** (e.g. Acts 2.4; 1 Cor 12.3). It is less well known that **words may impart the Spirit**. The Spirit may not only inspire words which are spoken, but also issue forth *in* those words.

This was concisely expressed by Jesus,

- "*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit*" (Jn 6.63).

Consider, for example, the effect of the divine words spoken to Ezekiel and Daniel when drained of strength after their remarkable visions. The Spirit-inspired words of command imparted the Spirit which enabled those words to be obeyed.

- "...I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice... Son of man, stand upon thy feet... And **the Spirit entered into me when he spake and set me upon my feet...**" (Ezk 1.28-2.2).
- "... be strong, yea, be strong. And **when he had spoken to me, I was strengthened** ..." (Dan 10.19).

But it is not only **divine** words which carry and impart the spirit of the speaker. So can **human** words. In the latter case, it can be the speaker's own spirit, or whatever spirit the speaker is influenced by at that time, whether holy or unholy.

Let us illustrate from the book of Job.

Weighed down by the unjustified accusations of his friends, Job cried out, "*To whom hast thou uttered words? And whose spirit came from thee?*" (Job 26.4). This is very instructive. One's spirit is released by uttering words. (In this case, the words of his friends were actually transmitting the spirit of the Accuser, the one who was influencing their judgement.)

This same truth, that uttering words gives vent to our spirit, is expressed later by Elihu, but this time without the undermining spirit of the Accuser.

- "*I am full of matter* (literally, words), *the spirit within me* (literally, the spirit of my

belly) *constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles* (i.e. wineskins). ***I will speak that I may be refreshed*** (literally, ***release my spirit***, breathe)” (Job 32.18-20).

These truths are repeated elsewhere.

- Jesus described the Holy Spirit welling up out of a man’s belly as rivers of living water (Jn 7.38).
- Solomon shows how that Spirit may be imparted to others by words: *“the mouth of the righteous is a well* (i.e. a fountain, spring) *of life”* (Pro 10.11).

Let us see how the words of a man may impart different attributes and effects of the Lord and of His Spirit to the listeners.

Peace

An attribute of the Spirit is peace, *“the kingdom of God is ... peace ... in the Holy Ghost”* (Ro 14.17). When Jesus sent out the 70, they carried that peace with them. Furthermore, they were to impart it to others. How? By their words.

- *“into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it”* (Lk 10.5-6).

The 70 did not simply ***speak of peace***, they ***spoke peace***. Their very words imparted the peace of the Holy Ghost which they carried.

Soothing & Healing

Oil is a symbol of the Spirit. Natural oil is used to soothe and heal. The Samaritan poured oil into the wounds of the man who fell among thieves (Lk 10.34). The oil of the Spirit on the tongue has the same soothing and healing effect as natural oil:

- *“The tongue of the wise is health* (literally, healing)” (Pro 12.18).
- *“Pleasant words are ... health* (literally, healing) *to the bones”* (Pro 16.24).

Quickening & Refreshing

The words and presence of the Lord quicken and refresh. Anointed human words can produce the same effect as the words and presence of the Lord.

- The words of Jesus, *“are spirit and ... life”* (Jn 6.63; cp 2 Cor 3.6). Likewise with the words of men, *“life (is) in the power of the tongue”* (Pro 18.21).
- Just as the presence of the Lord is likened to the reviving effect of the coming of showers and the latter rain on the dry earth (Ps 72.6; Ho 6.3), so the words of righteous Job were awaited as for the rain and the latter rain (Job 29.22-23).
- Just as the presence of the Lord is as *“the dew unto Israel”* (Ho 14.5) in the long hot summer, so is the refreshing effect of the anointed words of Moses, *“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass”* (Dt 32.2).

To sum up

To minister Christ is not simply to preach about Christ. It is to be so in the Spirit that ***our words create His presence***, charging the very atmosphere with His Spirit.

To speak by the Spirit can dramatically change the atmosphere. It is as though the Lord Himself had come. His very presence is imparted by words spoken in the Spirit.

Some carry such a measure of the Spirit that the mere sound of their voice lifts heaviness and quickens spiritual expectancy. They create a heavenly atmosphere by simply uttering a few words. It is not so much the words themselves that create this effect as the Spirit those words carry. They do not just speak *of* or *by* or *in* the Spirit; they speak the Spirit. Their words are not only **given by inspiration**, they **give inspiration**. They are more than inspired terminology; they impart the divine breath. Their effects are identical to those of the Spirit Himself.

How great a privilege to sit before one whose tongue is an imparter of the Spirit. We are fed, warmed, refreshed and strengthened. His words carry light, life, peace and the joyous consciousness of the nearness of the Lord. Even if solemn or corrective, his words still edify and do not bring down.

The Countenance

Let us now consider how the face can impart the Spirit.

We know that the face of the Lord shines (Mt 17.2; Rev 1.16). The face of a believer also may shine. Just as natural oil gives the face a natural shine (Ps 104:15), the oil of the Spirit gives a spiritual shine. For example,

- Job spoke of, *“the light of my countenance”* (Job 29.24).
- Of Moses we read, *“the glory of his countenance”* (2 Cor 3.7).
- Solomon said, *“a man’s wisdom maketh his face to shine”* (Eccl 8.1).
- Stephen had this wisdom. It was from the Spirit. Full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, his face shone like an angel (Acts 6.3,10,15).

There are many examples of such men in Church history. Of George Fox, one man once cried out, “Oh, he shines, he glisters.” Other examples are Evan Roberts, George Jeffreys and William Branham.

The effect of such a shining face, both of God and of man, can be very powerful, imparting many blessings.

The glistening, glowing countenance of the Lord, for example, can transmit,

- **Deep joy** (*“thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance”*, Ps 21.6).
- **Peace** (*“The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace”*, Nu 6.25-26).
- A sense of **overcoming and victory**, swallowing up fears, worries and unwholesome emotions (*“the health of thy countenance”*, Ps 42.5).
- **Light**, banishing dark thoughts. (*“They looked unto him and were lightened (literally, became bright, radiant)”* (Ps 34.5).

Likewise, light on the face of a believer can impart blessing, bringing light and strength.

- On one occasion, the aged and blind Jonathan Goforth, a veteran missionary to China, was present at a family reunion. Such was the radiant glow upon his face that an unconverted relative was brought to salvation simply by its appearance. Goforth not only partook of the Spirit in such measure as to cause his very countenance to shine. The glory of his face radiated that unction to others.

The Eyes

The eyes also can be very powerful vehicles and transmitters of the Spirit.

The eyes of the Lord are like a flame of fire (Rev 1.14). This is not because they are blazing with anger. The fire is a purifying fire, trying the hearts (Ps 11.4; 1 Cor 3.13). It pierces into the depths, uncovering the secret things (e.g. Lk 6.7-10; 20.17; 22.61; Jn 1.42).

The true believer also has a light in his eyes.

- “*the light of mine eyes*” (Ps 38.10).

That light is the indwelling Spirit.

As with the eyes of the Lord, such eyes see right into the heart (e.g. 2 K 8.11; Acts 3.4; 13.9; 14.9). This is why a religious critic of George Fox once cried out, “Keep your eyes off me, for they pierce me.”

The light in such eyes not only **reveals** the indwelling Spirit, it can also **impart** It. Spiritual blessing may be ministered, quickening, reviving, refreshing, strengthening and imparting healing balm. Their light can be transmitted to the onlooker.

- “*The light of the eyes rejoiceth* (literally, brings light to, brightens) *the heart*” (Pro 15:30).

A deep God-consciousness can be imparted to those who look into them.

- One teenage girl, for example, testified how she fell to her knees crying out for holiness after looking into the eyes of William Branham.

Further Examples

The illustrations above do not exhaust the varied ways in which the Spirit may be ministered by those who walk in the Spirit. Some other examples are

- The woman with a blood issue simply touched Jesus’ **garment** and healing virtue went out of Him (Mk 5.27-30; Cp Mt 14.36). Similarly with Paul: “*from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them*” (Acts 19.12).
- So richly was Elisha endowed with the Spirit of Elijah that even his **corpse** retained sufficient anointing to drive death out of another! “*And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet*” (2 K 13.21).
- With Peter, it was nothing physical, just his **shadow**, “*they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them*” (Acts 5.15).
- Even the very **breath** of Jesus was sufficient to impart the Holy Ghost to the disciples (Jn 20.22).

The Physical Presence: A Sweet Savour of Christ

Finally, and perhaps most beautiful of all, even without any physical contact, the mere

presence of a true believer can carry and impart the Spirit and presence of God. It is joyous to walk **into** the presence of God; it is more joyous to walk **in** that presence. It is blessed to enter a building filled with God; it is more blessed to carry God into that building.

Consider Paul. In himself, his presence was unassuming (2 Cor 10.1,10). But how different when in Christ! *“God, which... maketh manifest the savour of His (i.e. Christ’s) knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ...”* (2 Cor 2.14-16). Note,

- Paul not only **taught** the knowledge of Christ; he **brought** it.
- Not only did **his preaching** bring a sweet aroma of Christ; but **his presence**.

How satisfying to carry the very presence of Christ so that both saved and unsaved are made deeply conscious of Him by our simply being there. Here are some examples.

- Of **Evan Roberts**, it was said that even his bearing seemed to be inspired.
- **Smith Wigglesworth** was once sitting in a railway carriage, quietly meditating. Suddenly his fellow-passengers fell to their knees, crying out that he convicted them of sin. Even without speech, his mere presence was sufficient to convict.
- **John Lake** told of the remarkable effect of a friend when he walked into the office of the president of South Africa. He fell from his chair, under his desk.
- When **Stephen Jeffreys** entered a certain church, the presence that accompanied him was such that the congregation fell upon their faces. And that was before he had spoken a word or laid hands on a single person!

Conclusion

How remarkable and far-reaching is *“the ministration of the Spirit.”*

The more this beautiful subject is examined, the more we see that every facet of the life of the godly is capable of imparting some aspect of the Spirit: a simple touch, the light of the eyes, the glow on the face, the speaking of a few words, even the mere bodily presence. As it is written, *“whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”* (Ps 1.3).

We are to be so governed by the Spirit that we become *“a sweet savour of Christ.”* By the outflow of anointing from our every word and deed, others may be brought into vital contact with that glorious realm in which the Spirit reigns supreme.

- The ungodly are made acutely aware of their need of Christ.
- The godly receive ministration that strengthens their inner man.

May the Lord enable us to truly become *“ministers of the Spirit”*.

- Not just to **preach** the Spirit, but to **impart** Him.
- To be able to say with Paul, *“Thanks be unto God, which maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place”* (2 Cor 2.14).
- To be so saturated with the Spirit that we are like the Lord Himself, whose paths drop fatness (Ps 65.11).
- To be like the Rock in the wilderness, gushing out in every direction streams of living water from the great deep.

Oh, to be in very deed a true *“minister of the Spirit”*!