

**THE MYSTERY OF GOD
SHALL BE FINISHED**

**THE
LAODICEA
CHURCH AGE**

THE POWER OF GODLINESS

A STUDY IN THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

THE POWER OF GODLINESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The mystery of God shall be finished

As explained in the previous study, "The Mystery of Godliness through the Ages", the mystery of godliness was God's plan to redeem and restore to man the lost image and glory of God.

The first stage of that plan was achieved in Christ, the express image of the invisible God, the fulness of the Godhead bodily. But there was more to come. Christ was the firstborn of a new creation of God-men, the sons of God. This new creation, the Body of Christ, was to be the fulness of Christ, and thus filled with all the fulness of God.

Sadly, the original divine blueprint for the Church was seemingly frustrated very early on by a demonic invasion by the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of error and a flood of seducing spirits inspiring a whole army of false apostles, false prophets, false teachers and false brethren.

But the original purpose of God was not to be frustrated. The tide was turned and there came a progressive return to the original plan.

Now that restoration process cannot go on indefinitely. There has to come a time when it comes to a conclusion.

That time is now!

This is the hour when the process of progressive transformation back to the divine image will come to its climax, to perfection, bringing the Church to a fully mature man, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Jesus Christ Himself.

That is the prophetic word for this day, the present truth. The mystery of God shall be finished. Just as Christ was the full revelation of God in flesh, so there shall be a Church which is the full revelation of Christ in flesh.

But how? What is the power to effect a complete full attainment of the mystery of godliness?

By the power of godliness

The answer is very simple. The Bible not only speaks of the ***mystery*** of godliness. It also speaks of the ***power*** of godliness, a power to effect the mystery.

2 Tim 3.5 having a form of ***godliness***, but denying ***the power thereof***
2 P 1.3-4 ***his divine power*** hath given unto us all things that pertain unto...
godliness... that... ye might be partakers of the divine nature

What is that power?

The Holy Ghost. It is He Who makes real in us the ***mystery*** of godliness.

Throughout the Church Ages, the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of the Spirit has been at work within the Church corporate, strengthening her and progressively imparting the divine nature.

And now, at the end of the Church Ages, that same mighty power of the Spirit will complete the work. Nothing will prevent it reaching its God-appointed destination.

The mystery of God **shall** be finished.

Just as the prayers of our great High Priest shall be answered, so also shall the earnest prayers of the apostle Paul interceding in the Spirit according to the will of God.

*making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; **that ye may know... what is the exceeding greatness of the power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him...*** (Eph 1.16-23)

*I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... **that he would grant you... to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith... that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*** (Eph 3.14-19)

The mighty power that Paul speaks of is the power of godliness, the very same power that raised Christ from the dead.

And that power is at work now within the believer, advancing inexorably towards the ultimate divine objective, the fulfilling of God's original purpose.

That objective shall be accomplished in our day. No demonic power will thwart it. The Church shall be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let us now look in detail at the extent and effects of the mighty power at work within us.

- Firstly, by a general overview of **the Holy Ghost as the power of godliness** to fulfil in us the mystery of godliness.
- Then, by looking in detail at some blessed effects of that Holy Ghost power within us, in particular at how,
 - **The Spirit of Christ** reproduces in us the attributes and character of Christ;
 - **The Holy Ghost, the heavenly gift**, reproduces in us the attributes of heaven; &
 - **The renewing of the Holy Ghost** progressively restores us to the original image and glory of God.
- Finally, a brief conclusion puts this study into its prophetic context, in particular our final glorious end time expectation. (This will be more fully expounded in a later study, "The Mystery of God is Finished".)

2. THE HOLY GHOST, THE POWER OF GODLINESS

The gospel is the power of God

Christianity is an experience of power from start to finish. It not merely ***contains*** the supernatural; it ***is*** supernatural.

Ro 1.16 The Gospel is the ***power*** of God
1 Cor 4.20 The kingdom of God is not in word but in ***power***

Paul desired to manifest this power.

2 Cor 6.4-7 in all things approving ourselves... by the ***power*** of God
1 Th 1.5 our Gospel came not... in word only, but also in ***power***

He desired that the faith of his converts be established on this power from the very start.

1 Cor 2.5 That your faith should...stand... in the ***power*** of God

It is an Indwelling power, at work within all believers

Now this power was not just for the apostles but for all believers generally.

Not only Gal 2.8 he that wrought effectually ***in Peter***... the same was mighty ***in me***
But also 1 Th 2.13 which effectually worketh also ***in you who believe***

It is not only ***towards*** believers, it is actively at work ***within*** them.

Not only Eph 1.19 the exceeding greatness of his power ***to usward***
But also Eph 3.16,20 strengthened with might... ***in the inner man***...
according to the power ***that worketh in us***...

Let us look more closely at the remarkable nature of this indwelling power to live out the Christian life.

The exceeding greatness of that power

The scope of this blessed indwelling power is absolutely amazing.

- It is mighty, strong and powerful (Eph 1.19; 6.10).
- It is so powerful there is nothing it cannot subdue (Phil 3.21).
- In fact, it is beyond great; it is exceedingly, surpassingly, "excellingly" great; excelling all ability to measure it (2 Cor 4.7; Eph 1.19).
- It is beyond our wildest imagination (Eph 3.20).
- It "***effectually works***" (Eph 3.7). (In the NT, this expression always refers to ***supernatural*** working.)
- In fact, it is out-of-this-world, beyond all earthly power. In fact, it is divine (2 P 1.3).

Paul described it as "***glorious power***" (literally, "the power of His glory") (Col 1.11). Why? Because that was the very self-same power that resurrected Christ. He was "***raised by the glory of the Father***" (Ro 6.4).

And that self-same mighty resurrection power that wrought in Christ two thousand years ago is the very same power at work in us. Now!

The Spirit of revelation is needed to grasp its magnitude

To grasp the immensity of the power at work within, faith is needed

Col 2.12 ye are risen with him ***through*** the ***faith of the operation of God***
1 Th 2.13 the word of God... ***effectually worketh*** also ***in you who believe***

How do we get such faith? By revelation. We need faith-begetting Holy Ghost revelation to be able to take in the awesome extent of the indwelling power at work within us.

That is why Paul prayed for the spirit of wisdom and revelation for the Ephesians.

Eph 1.17-20 That... God... may give unto you ***the spirit of wisdom and revelation***
... the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may
know... what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who
believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought
in Christ, when he raised him from the dead

The source of the power

What is the source of that astonishing, out-of-this-world, power?

The Holy Ghost, the power of godliness.

Eph 3.16 strengthened with might ***by his Spirit*** in the inner man

This indwelling mighty power is in operation in every area of the Christian life.

- ***Power to save***
The Spirit is the power that brings to salvation. It is He Who gives the power to testify and power to the testimony. He pleads with and convicts the unbeliever, revealing grace to the convicted and giving new life and the inner assurance of salvation.
- ***Power to overcome the flesh and to sanctify***
Every aspect of Christian character is to be the fruit of the life of the indwelling Spirit. He is the power that sanctifies, freeing from the power of sin in the flesh warring against the desire to serve God. Through the ongoing working of the power of godliness, He renews and brings us to perfection, reproducing in us the divine nature, the very holiness of God Himself.
- ***Power in Every Area of the Christian Life***
In fact, the indwelling power of the Spirit is at work within all through life, and in every area of the Christian life, whether strength for the spiritual warfare, understanding the word, preaching, guidance, wisdom in practical matters, fellowship, prayer or praise and worship. He is the power of the whole Christian life. In fact, the Spirit ***is*** the Christian life.

(Fuller details of the Spirit at work in these different areas of the Christian life are found in the Appendix, "The Spirit of Power".)

The objective of the power

What is the ultimate objective of this indwelling, divine power?

To fulfil in us the mystery of godliness (2 P 1.3).

- It gives us both to will and to do His good pleasure, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight (Phil 2.13; Heb 13.21).
- It gives all the inner strength needed to live this supernatural life (Eph 3.16; 6.10; Col 1.11).

- It is able to overcome and subdue all things unto Himself so as to bring His purpose to pass (Phil 3.21)
- The power which has raised up us with Him to walk in newness of life is the very self-same power that resurrected Christ Himself (Ro 6.4; Eph 1.19-20, 2.1).

Through that mighty power working within him, Paul strove to present his converts perfect in Christ.

Col 1.28-29 ***that we may present every man perfect***, whereunto I labour, striving ***according to his working which worketh in me mightily***.

To achieve that goal, he prayed that the same power at work in him would be at work within them also.

Heb 13.20-21 ***the God of peace make you perfect*** in every good work to do his will, ***working in you*** that which is well pleasing in his sight

The ultimate result of that inworking power is unspeakable.

Eph 4.13-16 ***Till we all come... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ***: that we... may grow up into him in all things... from whom the whole body... according to the effectual working (*NB this word refers only to superhuman power.*) ... of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Eph 3.16-19 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory (*i.e. the same glory that raised Christ from the dead (Ro 6.4)*), to be strengthened with might... in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith... ***that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God***.

Truly, to fully experience this power is to experience the great mystery, the mystery of godliness.

That power will prepare the end time bride for presentation to the Bridegroom

Throughout the Church Ages the indwelling power of the Spirit has been continually at work to bring the Church ever closer to the ultimate goal of the mystery of godliness, God fully manifest in His Church.

That goal will be realised in this final Church Age. The end time bride will be made ready for presentation to her soon coming Bridegroom (Rev 19.7; 21.2).

How? In the same way as the Jewish bride at the end of the Jewish age. As the latter was prepared by the prophetic word of John delivered in the power of the Spirit, so the Church bride at the end of the Gentile age will be prepared by the equally clear, piercing, prophetic voice of the angel-messenger to Laodicea restoring those who heed the last voice of the Spirit to the churches to the original faith.

She will be,

- ***washed and made clean*** by the Water of the Spirit-anointed Word (1 Cor 6.11; Eph 5.26);
- ***sanctified*** by the Spirit-anointed Word (Jn 17.17; 2 Th 2.13; 1 P 1.2);
- ***purified*** by obeying the Word through the Spirit (1 P 1.22).

She will overcome the great end time deception and apostasy against the Word in the same way the early Church overcomer won the victory over the wicked one, the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of error, and the flood of invading false prophets and unclean spirits. By the indwelling Spirit and the Word (1 Jn 2.14; 4.4)

In short, the bride will come to her end time perfection by the same means as she attains every earlier stage of her walk. By the Spirit and the Spirit-anointed Word.

Gal 3.3 having begun *in the Spirit*, are ye now *made perfect* by the flesh?
2 Tim 3.16-17 All scripture is given by *inspiration (i.e. the Breath/Spirit)* of God...
 that the man of God may be *perfect*

Through the Spirit, the power of godliness, the mystery of godliness shall be finished. God shall be fully manifest in the flesh of His bride.

We have now completed the overview of the Holy Ghost as the power of godliness, the divine power to fulfil in us the mystery of godliness.

Let us now look in depth at some of the glorious effects of that exceeding great Holy Ghost power at work within us.

- The distinctive characteristics and attributes of Christ imparted to us and reproduced in us *through the supply of the Spirit of Christ*;
- The distinctive characteristics and attributes of heaven tasted by us and reproduced in us *through the outpoured heavenly gift, the Holy Ghost: &*
- The original image and glory of God progressively restored us to by *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, a process which comes to its grand final climax in our own day, bringing the end time believer to a perfect man, unto the fulness of Christ, where Christ is all and in all.

3. THE HOLY GHOST, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

The mystery of godliness is the plan of God to reveal the divine nature in flesh. The first phase was to reveal Himself in the flesh of Christ. The second was to reveal Christ in our flesh, so that every aspect of our lives is a revelation of Him.

How can such a thing be possible? By the Spirit.

Christ revealed in us by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

The Spirit is the mighty indwelling power Who channels into us the very same Spirit that was in Christ. The outpoured Holy Ghost is Christ Himself poured into us, the nature of Christ in us.

To have the Spirit is to **have** and **live by** the Spirit of Christ.

- Ro 8.2 The law of **the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** hath made me free
Ro 8.9 ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell
 in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his.
Phil 1.19 through the supply of **the Spirit of Jesus Christ**

If the Spirit of Christ is in you, it makes you a new man (cp 1 Sam 10.6). Everything He is is in us. In everything He lives through you. That Spirit will operate in you in the same way it did in Christ. You live like Christ, you bear the life that Christ bore, you do the works of Christ; Christ speaks through your lips, looks through your eyes, acts through your temperament.

The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ

Since the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ are one, the fruit of our lives which in one place is said to come from the Spirit is said in another to come from Christ.

- Gal 5.22 **the fruit of the Spirit**
Jn 15.2, 4-5 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.... **He that abideth in me**, and I in him, **the same bringeth forth much fruit:** for without me ye can do nothing.
Phil 1.11 Being filled with **the fruits** of righteousness, **which are by Jesus Christ**

We find this same principle with each of the fruits of the Spirit. In one place it is said to be from the Spirit, in another from Christ.

Love

- Ro 15.30 for the love **of the Spirit**
Col 1.8 Who also declared unto us your love **in the Spirit**.
1 Cor 16.24 My love be with you all **in Christ Jesus**.
2 Tim 1.13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love **which is in Christ Jesus**.

Joy

- Ro 14.17 joy **in the Holy Ghost**

1 Th 1.6 With joy **of the Holy Ghost**
Jn 17.13 That they might have **My** joy fulfilled in themselves

Peace

Ro 14.17 peace **in the Holy Ghost**
Jn 14.27 **My** peace I give unto you
Jn 16.33 These things I have spoken unto you, that **in me** ye might have peace.

Faith

2 Cor 4.13 having the same **spirit** of faith
Gal 5.22 the fruit **of the Spirit** is... faith
Gal 2.20 I live by the faith **of the Son of God**

Meekness

Gal 6.1 ye which are spiritual, restore such a one **in the spirit of** meekness
1 Cor 4.21 shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in **the spirit of** meekness?
2 Cor 10.1 I beseech you by the meekness... **of Christ**

Gentleness

Gal 5.22 the fruit of **the Spirit** is... gentleness
2 Cor 10.1 I beseech you by the... gentleness **of Christ**

In fact, in every area to be in the Spirit is to be in Christ

This same principle applies right across the whole Christian life. To be in the Spirit is to be in Christ, to reflect Christ.

To live & walk in the Spirit is to live & walk in Christ

Gal 5.16 **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
Gal 5.25 If we **live in the Spirit**, let us also **walk in the Spirit**.
1 Cor 4.17 Timotheus... shall bring you into remembrance of **my ways which be in Christ**
Gal 2.20 I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by the faith of the Son of God**
Phil 1 21 to me **to live is Christ**
Col 2.6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk ye in him**

In one place Paul explicitly links being in Christ with walking in the Spirit.

Ro 8.1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them **which are in Christ Jesus**, who **walk** not after the flesh, but **after the Spirit**.

To be clothed with the Spirit is to be clothed with Christ

Lk 24.49 endued (*literally, clothed*) with power from on high (*i.e. the Holy Ghost, Acts 1.8*)
Ro 13.14 Put ye on **the Lord Jesus Christ**

To speak in the Spirit is to speak in Christ

Acts 6.10 they were not able to resist ... **the Spirit** by which he spake
2 Cor 2.17 in the sight of God speak we **in Christ**.
2 Cor 12.19 we speak before God **in Christ**

2 Cor 13.3 Since ye seek a proof of **Christ** speaking in me

To speak boldly by the Spirit is to speak boldly in Christ

Acts 4.31 they were all filled with **the Holy Ghost**, and they spake the word of God with boldness

Acts 14.3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly **in the Lord**
Phile 8 though I might be much bold **in Christ** to enjoy thee

To be strengthened by the Spirit is to be strong in Christ

Eph 3.16 Strengthened with might **by His Spirit**

Eph 6.10 be strong **in the Lord**, and in the power of his might.

To have the mind of the Spirit is to have the mind of Christ

Ro 8.6 To be spiritually minded (*literally = the mind of the Spirit*)

Phil 2.5 Let this mind be in you, which was also **in Christ Jesus**

1 Cor 2.16 We have the mind **of Christ**

To be sanctified by the Spirit is to be sanctified in Christ

1 P 1.2 elect unto sanctification **of the Spirit**

1 Cor 1.2 to them that are sanctified **in Christ Jesus**

To be perfected by the Spirit is to be perfect in Christ

Gal 3.3 having begun **in the Spirit**, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Col 1.28 that we may present every man perfect **in Christ Jesus**

We have now seen how the Holy Ghost reproduces in the believer every facet of the life of Christ through the supply of the Spirit of Christ. Let us now see in particular how, through Christ the heavenly Man, the distinctive characteristics and attributes of heaven are reproduced in us by the outpoured heavenly gift, the Holy Ghost.

4. THE HOLY GHOST, THE HEAVENLY GIFT

The Holy Ghost brings heaven down to earth, so that we may experience and taste heaven on earth. Even better, since Christ is the heavenly Man, when He reproduces Christ in us, He also reproduces heaven in us.

Let us see how.

Heaven brought nigh

Normal communication between heaven and earth ended with the Fall. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and cherubim and a flaming sword placed at its entrance to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

Jesus came to restore the way back to the Tree and to re-establish the lost contact between heaven and earth. He was the antitype, the fulfilling, of the ladder in Jacob's dream. It signifying communication between heaven and earth (Gen 28.12; Jn 1.51).

In the ministry of Jesus

Jesus not only taught to pray for the coming of the kingdom of heaven down to earth (Mt 6.9-10). He also proclaimed that it was potentially ***near in time*** (Mk 1.15), and brought it ***near in space***.

He not only ***proclaimed***, but ***manifested*** to Israel the atmosphere and attributes of heaven. He was not simply ***endued*** with power from on high. He ***embodied*** the powers of the kingdom of heaven.

Lk 17.20-21 when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he... said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, ***the Kingdom of God is within you.***

What was Jesus saying? Though the time certainly would come when the heavenly kingdom of God would come visibly, that time, however, was not yet. But the powers of heaven which would be openly manifested in that future world, could still be experienced there and then.

How? "Within you".

What did Jesus mean? Two different interpretations have been suggested.

- Some say the phrase should be translated "among you" or "in the midst of you". In other words, that Jesus was saying that the kingdom of heaven was standing right there in their midst, embodied in Himself.
- Others say the meaning is wider. Not only Jesus but believers generally could embody heaven within them, there and then.

Which one is correct? Both. Let us look firstly at the ministry of Jesus.

Wherever He was, the attributes of heaven were. He embodied in the present the powers of heaven to be revealed on earth in the future when the rule of heaven is established here.

This is wonderfully illustrated in John 11.20-25.

Jesus was encouraging Martha that her freshly deceased brother, Lazarus, would rise again. When she expressed her faith in the resurrection at the last day, Jesus' reply was highly instructive. He said, "I **am** the resurrection and the life." What did He mean? In effect, that the powers to be manifest in the future resurrection on that last day were standing there in the present embodied in Himself.

Let us now look briefly at this same principle manifested in His disciples in the Gospels, and then, in more detail, in the Church.

In the ministry of the disciples in the Gospels

When He sent out His disciples, Jesus empowered them to bring heaven nigh. They were to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand not only in **time** but also in **space** (Mt 10.7).

How?

- By healing the sick, proclaiming the kingdom of God had come nigh (Lk 10.9).
- By commanding their peace upon the homes which received them (Mt 10.11-13). If rejected, they were to shake the dust off their feet, declaring, "*be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you*" (Lk 10.10-11).

In other words, when they healed the sick or commanded their peace, they were carrying and imparting the very health and peace of the kingdom.

So, in the ministry of the disciples as well as of Jesus, the future powers of the coming kingdom of heaven were manifested on earth in the present.

How? Through the Spirit

How was heaven brought down to earth in the Gospels? By the Holy Ghost.

Mt 12.28 If I cast out devils **by the Spirit**, then **the kingdom of God** is come unto you

But that ministry was not limited to the Gospels. It is also for the Church. The indwelling Holy Ghost is the power to bring heaven to earth, both **for** us and **in** us.

Heaven Outpoured

The Holy Ghost, the heavenly gift

Jesus' ministry did not end when He was taken up to heaven. In fact, it had only just begun.

Acts 1.1 all that Jesus **began** both to do and teach
Mk 1.1 the **beginning** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

In what way did Jesus continue His ministry? Through the Church.

After His ascension He sent back upon His mystical Body the same Spirit which was upon His earthly body. Through the Holy Ghost she was empowered to continue His ministry of bringing the powers of future the kingdom of heaven down to earth in the present.

Paul speaks of the Spirit in a very illuminating way.

Heb 6.4-5 who... have **tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost**, and have tasted... the powers of the world to come

Now, the word “heavenly” means heavenly *in nature* as well as *in origin*. So, the Spirit is not just the gift *from heaven* but the gift which *is heaven*. He was not only *sent down from heaven* (1 P 1.12), He was *heaven sent down*. He not only *comes from heaven*; He is *heaven come down*.

In short, when the Holy Ghost was poured out at Pentecost, heaven was poured out.

Let me explain further.

Just before the day of Pentecost, the disciples asked Jesus if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. He replied that it was not for them to know at that time, but that they would receive the power of the Spirit to bear witness to Him (Acts 1.6-8).

How did His reply answer the question about the kingdom? Because Jesus said, in effect, that although they would not yet see the kingdom outwardly restored to Israel, in receiving the power of the Spirit they were going to receive inwardly the powers of that future kingdom there and then.

When the Spirit was outpoured, Peter gave an example of those powers in operation. Explaining the speaking with tongues, he quoted Joel 2.28-32. But how could this apply to Pentecost? Although it referred to an outpouring of the Spirit, Joel explicitly related it to the last days, just before the day of the Lord, when the sun would be darkened and the moon turned to blood. This did not happen at Pentecost. The explanation is blessed. Although not yet the full fulfilment of Joel 2, Peter was saying that the tongues of Pentecost were a foretaste of the events to come when the Spirit would be outpoured in the last days.

So, the powers to be in operation on earth in the last days and in the world to come, and already in operation now in the kingdom of heaven, were poured out at Pentecost. How? Through the Holy Ghost, the heavenly gift.

And those powers may be tasted here and now, in the present, before that future day.

Heaven tasted

The earnest of the Spirit

The Bible says we have the earnest of the Spirit.

2 Cor 1.22 (God) hath... given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts

What is an “earnest”? It means a pledge, a promise; the first instalment, an advance payment as a guarantee of a future full payment. So, the Spirit is the guarantee of our future redeemed body and heavenly inheritance.

2 Cor 5.4-5 we... do groan... that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now... God... hath given unto us ***the earnest of the Spirit***

Eph 1.13-14 ***the Holy Spirit*** of promise, ***which is the earnest*** of our inheritance

But we are not just *heirs* of the kingdom of heaven (Jas 2.5). The Spirit is more than a guarantee of our future full inheritance there. He is a *foretaste*.

The firstfruits of the Spirit

By the Spirit heaven is more than just ***a future prospect*** and destination. It can be ***a present reality***. We may not only receive revelation of future heavenly things by the Spirit (1

Cor 2.9-10,12), but through Him, here and now, on earth, experience the spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1.3), tasting the powers of heaven. The Spirit gives **a present foretaste** of our future inheritance.

Just as Israel tasted the firstfruits of the grapes of Eshcol before entering the Land of Promise (Nu 13.20,23-24), so the Church may taste the firstfruits of the Spirit before fully possessing her inheritance (Ro 8.23).

But there is more! The Spirit not only **gives** a foretaste of the firstfruits. He Himself **is** that foretaste. To taste the Spirit **is** to taste heaven. To partake of the Holy Ghost, **is** to partake of the firstfruits of our heavenly Land of Promise, to taste the powers of the world to come.

Let us look at some examples of how, through the Spirit, we may experience in the present, on earth, the atmosphere and attributes of heaven.

Lk 24.49	I send the promise of my Father (<i>i.e. the Spirit</i>) upon you... power from on high
Jas 3.15,17	this wisdom descendeth not from above... the wisdom that is from above... (i.e. from the Spirit of wisdom, Eph 1.17)
Ro14.17	the kingdom of God is... peace and joy in the Holy Ghost

In fact, **“every good gift is from above and cometh down”** (Jas 1.17).

But it does not end there. There is even more. We not only **receive and taste** of heaven. We also **reproduce and reflect** it in our lives.

Heaven reproduced

Born of heaven

In the modern world, many hold legal citizenship in a land in which they were not born. Not so the believer. Not only is his **citizenship** in heaven (Phil 3.20, Greek), his **birth** is of heaven.

Ps 87.5-6	Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her ... The Lord shall count, when he writeth up (<i>i.e. records, registers</i>) the people, that this man was born there .
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How can this be? Our birth certificates clearly record the location of our birth as earthly.

By the **new** birth. When Jesus said only those who have been born again can see the kingdom of God (Jn 3.3), He was not speaking only of the need of a new life, but also of **the source** of that life. To be born “again” may also be translated born “from above”, “from on high” (In fact, this is how the word translated “again” in John 3.3 is translated in John 3.31; 19.11 and James 1.17; 3.15,17.) So, when He said we must be born “again”, Jesus did not simply mean that we must be **born a second time**, but that we must be **born from above**.

The implication is glorious. The seed of our new birth from is from heaven. In fact, it **is** heaven.

How is that possible?

By the regeneration of the Holy Ghost (Ti 3.5), the heavenly gift. This is why Jesus said we must be **born of the Spirit** (Jn 3.5). The Spirit not only brings heaven nigh and gives a taste of heaven, He **implants the very germ or life seed of heaven within us**.

Bearing the image of the heavenly

Many with legal citizenship of a country other than their place of birth still retain numerous mannerisms, traditions and customs of their parentage and ancestral homeland.

Not so the citizens of the heavenly City.

Just as in a natural birth a child reveals the distinguishing features of its earthly parents, so **heaven is reproduced** in those born from above by the Spirit. They **not only experience and taste** heaven, they **reproduce** in themselves **the distinguishing characteristics of heaven**.

They bear the image of the heavenly.

We have seen earlier how the Spirit imparts to us and reproduces in us all that **Christ** is so that we come to bear His image. Now, since Christ is the heavenly Man, the Man of heaven, to bear His image is also to bear the image of heaven.

1Cor 15.47-49 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy (*i.e. the man of earth, Adam*), such are they also that are earthy: and **as is the heavenly** (*i.e. the Man of heaven, Christ*), **such are they also that are heavenly**. And **as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly**.

That heavenly Man not only **comes from** heaven, He **embodies** and reflects all that heaven is. So, if we bear the image of the Man of heaven, we are a heavenly people. We, too, bear the image of another world, reproducing and reflecting its distinguishing characteristics.

How can this be?!

In the same way that we come to bear the image of Christ. By the Spirit, the heavenly gift, the gift who is heaven come down.

We are the firstfruits of heaven

Through being born from above, we not only **taste and partake of the firstfruits** of our heavenly future by the Spirit. We actually ourselves **become the firstfruits** of that future.

- **Not only** Ro 8.23 ourselves **have** the firstfruits of the Spirit
- **But also** Jas 1.18 that we should **be** a kind of firstfruits of his creatures

By the Spirit the Church is the firstfruits of the new creation:

- Her experience of the regeneration of the Holy Ghost is a preview of **the** Regeneration, i.e. the rebirth of the whole earth (Mt 19.28).
- Her experience of old things passing away and all things becoming new (2 Cor 5.17) is a preview of the new heaven and new earth where former things will have passed away and all things have been made new (Rev 21.4-5).

So, the Church not only **has** a foretaste of the future heavenly kingdom. She **is** a foretaste of it. She is an incarnate preview and manifestation of the world to come before its time.

How? By the power of the indwelling Spirit, the heavenly gift.

Having seen how the Spirit, the power of godliness, reproduces Christ and heaven in us, let us now see how He restores our lost image and glory by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

5. THE RENEWING OF THE HOLY GHOST

The First Man, the Second Man & the New Man

“*What is man that thou art mindful of him...?*” asked the awed psalmist (Ps 8.4).

To answer that question, we need to look at three men,

- The first man
- The second Man
- The new man

The first was a man as God originally designed him, in the image and glory of God. But sadly, he fell and lost that image and glory. Because he was marred, so was his seed. As a result, no descendant of his by natural generation was ever a true man in the original sense of the word.

The second Man was Jesus. For the first time since Adam, the world saw a true man as originally designed to be.

Whereas the first man failed, the second Man fulfilled God’s original intention. Jesus, therefore, became the blueprint of the new man, the firstborn, the beginning, of a new creation (Col 1.15). In fact, as the Greek word in Revelation 3.14 literally means, He was both the **Beginning** and the **Beginner** of the (new) creation of God.

That new creation, therefore, is a man in Christ, a new man, a man as originally designed.

2 Cor 5.17 ***if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*** (The word “creature” may also be translated “creation”).

Eph 2.10 we are his workmanship, ***created in Christ*** Jesus

Eph 2.15 to make (Greek = ***create***) ***in Himself*** of twain one new man

Let us now see how the believer is progressively renewed.

The Inward Man is Being Renewed Day by Day

Although the new believer is a new creation in Christ, his experience of being made new is not yet complete. He goes through an ongoing, continuous renewing process.

2 Cor 4.16 the inward man is ***renewed day by day***

Renewed after His image

What is the nature and goal of that process?

Renewing is far more than merely a spiritual quickening, refreshing or strengthening. To be made new means to be progressively changed into the divine image. In other words, to be progressively restored the original image lost at the Fall (Gen 1.27).

Col 3.10 (ye) have put on the new man, which is (*literally, being*) ***renewed ... after the image of him*** that created him (*i.e. Christ, Rev 3.14*)

Eph 4.24 the new man which ***after God*** is created in righteousness

To be created “**after God**” does not mean created **by God**, but **according to God**. This means more than just to be created by God’s design. It explains what that design is. Just as the first man was the image of God, so the new man also is created to be like God, to resemble Him, to bear His image.

And to bear the divine image is to bear the divine glory.

Changed into the same image from glory to glory

To be renewed means more than to be changed back into the divine image. It also means glorification, a progressive restoration of the original divine glory. In other words, a full restoration of both the original image and glory of God (1 Cor 11.7).

2 Cor 4.16-17 the inward man is renewed day by day... our light affliction...
worketh for us an... eternal weight of glory

This growing weight of glory is not something being stored up for our future in heaven. It is a present, here and now, progressive changing of our inward man from one degree of glory to another.

So, then, the ultimate goal of this progressive renewing is the restoration of both the original image and glory of God. Both aspects are brought together in a beautiful verse.

2 Cor 3.18 we all... beholding... the glory of the Lord, are ***changed into the same image from glory to glory***

Let us look more closely at the full significance of this progressive change.

Transformed/Transfigured into His Likeness

In its original language, “changed” means “**transformed**”. And that is precisely how the word is rendered in the KJV in another very significant verse.

Ro 12.2 be ye ***transformed*** by the renewing of your mind

Notice, it is the renewing that effects the transformation.

But there is another rendering of this same word in the KJV which beautifully reinforces the full implications and purpose of the renewing. The word translated “transformed” in Romans 12.2 and “changed” in 2 Corinthians 3.18 is translated “transfigured” when describing what happened to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration.

Let us look in more detail at this event to better understand the full significance of being renewed after His image from glory to glory.

Lk 9.28	He took Peter and John and James... into a high mount to pray
Lk 9.32	Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw His glory
Lk 9.29	as He prayed, the fashion of His face was altered
Mt 17.2	(He) was transfigured before them and His face did shine as the sun
Mk 9.3	his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow (<i>Mt 17.2, white as the light, Lk 9.29, glistening</i>) so as no fuller on earth can white them
Lk 9.30-31	Moses and Elias... appeared in glory
Mt 17.5	a bright cloud overshadowed them

Lk 9.34-35 they entered into the cloud... and there came a voice out of the cloud
2 P 1.17 There came a voice from the excellent glory

(Moses saw and entered that same Cloud of Glory at Sinai. Like Jesus, his face also shone with glory. But there was a very significant difference. The glory was concealed when Moses put a veil over his face (Ex 34.29-35). With Jesus, however, the glory could not be concealed. It not only transfigured His face but shone through His clothing. Why the difference? Moses' glory was external, but that of Jesus irradiated from within. It was the outshining of the glory of His inner being.)

What a scene they saw!

- Jesus glorified,
- Two glorified men,
- The OT Cloud of Glory.

Now, the scene on the mountain was not only to encourage and strengthen the disciples. It was a preview of their own (and our) future glorification at His Coming (Mk 9.1).

At the present time, apart from limited occasions such as Stephen before the council (Acts 6.15), our inner glory is not seen externally. But the day will come when, like Jesus, the righteous will shine as the sun (Mt 13.43). There shall be an outshining of the glory within.

But glorification is not merely a future hope. It is a present work in progress. While we await that glorious future consummation, we are even now being conformed to the image of Christ and changed/transformed/transfigured from glory to glory.

How?

By the renewing of our minds, as already seen earlier in Romans 12.2. (See also Ephesians 4.23-24, which links the renewing of the mind with the putting on of the new man.)

Since it is the renewing that changes, transforms and transfigures us, then to be renewed means to be glorified. A man being renewed is a man being transfigured or glorified, A new (or renewed) man is a glorified man.

But how is the renewing of the mind attained? By what power?

How? By the Holy Ghost

The renewing of the Holy Ghost

The answer is, by the Holy Ghost, the indwelling power of godliness, the same power that reproduces Christ and heaven in us.

Ti 3.5-6 the... renewing ***of the Holy Ghost***, which He shed on us abundantly

The self-same power which transfigured Jesus is at work now within us.

2 Cor 3.18 we... are ***changed (i.e. transfigured)*** into the same image from glory to glory, even as ***by the Spirit of the Lord***

Once born of the Spirit, He is continually renewing us. He is the power changing and transforming us, restoring the lost image and glory of God.

The firstfruits of the Spirit

There is even more. As well as progressively renewing us, transforming and glorifying us, the Spirit also gives a present foretaste of the firstfruits of our future glory.

Having been present at the awesome spectacle on the mountain of transfiguration, Peter was very conscious of this glory. He spoke of experiencing it in the here and now as well as in the future.

- ***Not only*** are we called to His ***future*** eternal glory (1 P 5.10);
- ***But also*** we may partake, ***here and now***, of the glory that shall be revealed (1 P 5.2).

Peter gives an example of a present tasting of the future glory. He refers to “*joy unspeakable and full of glory*” in the midst of trials (1 P 1.8). Literally this means a joy which is *glorified*.

How can a believer experience such radiant, glowing joy? By the Spirit. By the Spirit of glory resting upon him so that the inner glory radiates out (1 P 4.14).

Truly, then, the renewing of the Holy Ghost is far more than a spiritual refreshing. In fact, it is nothing less than full salvation. It sums up the essence of the purpose of God in redemption, to recreate man in the image and glory of God. In other words, to make a new man.

Such a man would demonstrate just what a man was originally designed to be. In fact, a man is only a true man to the extent that he has been renewed by the Holy Ghost. The new man ***is*** man.

6. CONCLUSION: THE GRAND END TIME CLIMAX

We have now seen how the Spirit is the power to effect the mystery of godliness. This He does,

- By the Spirit of Christ;
- By the Holy Ghost, the heavenly gift; and
- By the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit progressively renews and transforms the believer from glory to glory back to the full original lost image of Him who created him, bringing him to reflect Christ and heaven more and more in every detail of his life.

Now this renewal and transformation takes place not only in the individual believer's own personal experience, but also in the Church corporate over Church history as a whole.

As detailed in earlier studies in "The Mystery of God shall be Finished" series, the letters to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are prophetic of the different phases of Church history. Initially the Church progressively lost her original endowment. But from the Reformation (Sardis) Church Age on, there has been a progressive recovery and restoration of all that was lost in earlier Ages, transforming her back to the original.

What is the ultimate goal of that transformation and restoration process, the final stage, the grand climax? Perfection.

Just as justification was the dominant theme of the Lutheran Sardis age, sanctification for the Wesleyan Philadelphia age, and the restoration of the baptism and gifts of the Spirit of the early Laodicea age, so the theme of the close of this final Laodicean age is perfection.

- **The Body** shall come to a perfect man, measured by nothing less than the measure of the full stature of Christ Himself;
- **The Harvest** shall come to perfection;
- **The Holy Temple** shall be perfected; and
- **The Bride** shall come to the perfection of beauty (living up to the Hebrew root meaning of her name, the complete, perfect one).

It is no coincidence that one of His attributes which the Lord draws attention to in His letter to Laodicea, is "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev 3.14).

Why is that significant? How is it relevant to the Laodicea Age? Because the word "beginning" also means "beginner", i.e. initiator. So, then, Jesus is both,

- **The Beginner** of the new creation, i.e. its Originator; and,
- **The Beginning** of that creation, i.e. He is Himself its Firstborn.

How appropriate is that attribute/designation for this final Church Age. This is the Age in which that new creation which He began will be finished. He Who is the Author/Beginner of our faith is also its Finisher/Perfector. He shall perfect that which concerns us. God is at work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. He Who began a good work in us will also bring it to its full, final completion.

Such a glorious climax may seem a paradox when we consider the awful condition of the church of the Laodiceans. Yet although it is the age of the great apostasy and of the greatest deception in all history, the climax of the renewing of the Holy Ghost will restore to the true Church the image and glory of God, manifesting the new creation in its full glory. Despite the end time apostasy and deception of the mass of professing Christendom, the faithful end time remnant bride, will come to the full knowledge of Christ, and to the full experience of Him as her all in all.

She will come to a perfect man.

It does not matter how great the opposing storm, how violent or contrary the wind, or how weary we may feel in seeking to attain unto His full calling. When all hope is gone, when we are at the end of our resources, when we have reached the darkest point in our journey, the Redeemer will come. He will stride through every obstacle, treading down all that rises up to frustrate our reaching the divine goal. The work shall be finished. Not by human might or power, however well intentioned. It will be all His work. Salvation is of the Lord. "Grace, grace unto it."

We shall arrive at our final, God-given destination supernaturally. By the Spirit.

In the darkest moments, our Advocate and great High Priest is interceding for us. He is able to save to the uttermost (or, as Hebrews 7.25 says in the original language, "perfectly"). His prayers will not be in vain.

Through the Blood of the everlasting covenant, the God of peace (i.e. of "shalom", of restitution, perfectness and completeness) will make us perfect in every good work to do His will. He will sanctify us wholly and entirely, spirit, soul and body.

Despite every opposition, the blessed goal will be accomplished and the grand climax reached in this age.

- **Why? Because the Word says so!** This is the prophetic Word of the Lord for this last phase of Church history, the present truth for today, the message of the hour. His prophetic Word for the end of the age will not return to Him void. It will accomplish that for which it is sent.
- **How? By the Spirit,** the power of godliness. By the inner working of the exceeding greatness of the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.

Truly, indeed, "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16).

Amen.

God willing, we shall look more closely at the full details and implications of the final stage of restoration in the next study in this series, "The Mystery of God is Finished".

APPENDIX

The Spirit of Power

A power has been at work all through Church history in the lives of individual believers. That power is the power of godliness, the power to make real in us the mystery of godliness.

The Christian life does not just **contain** the supernatural. It **is** supernatural. In every area we need that supernatural power from on high.

The source of that power is the Spirit. He is the Spirit of power.

- Ro 15.18-19 those things which Christ hath...wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient... **by the power of the Spirit of God**
- 1 Th 1.5 our gospel came not...in word only, but also **in power and in the Holy Ghost**
- 2 Tim 1.7 God hath... given us **the spirit of... power**

Let us look in detail at different areas of this power in operation.

Power to Save

The Spirit is the power behind each step of the process of bringing the unsaved to salvation.

He gives power to testify and power to the testimony.

- Acts 1.8 ye shall receive power after that **the Holy Ghost** is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me
- Acts 5.32 we are witnesses of these things, and so also in the **Holy Ghost**

He pleads with and convicts the unbeliever.

- Gen 6.3 My **Spirit** shall not always strive with man
- Jn 16.8 The Comforter (= the **Spirit**) will reprove (= *convict*) the world of sin... righteousness, and judgement

He reveals grace to those convicted.

- Heb 10.29 the **Spirit** of grace
- Zech 12.11 I will pour out **the Spirit of grace** and of supplications

He gives them new life.

- Jn 3.5 born... of the **Spirit**
- Ti 3.5 saved... by the washing of regeneration... of the **Holy Ghost**

And the inner assurance of salvation.

- Gal 4.6 because ye are sons, God hath sent forth **the Spirit** of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father
- Ro 8.15-16 ye have received **the Spirit** of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. **The Spirit** itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God
- 1 Th 1.5 our gospel came... in power and **in the Holy Ghost** and in much assurance

Power to Overcome the Flesh

The Spirit is also the power to overcome the weakness of the flesh in seeking to live a godly life subsequent to conversion (Ro 8.2-4).

When the new believer begins the Christian life, he finds a major problem.

- Ro 7.18-24 to will is present... but how to perform... I find not... Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
Gal 5.17 ye cannot do the things that ye would

Where can he find the power to live a godly life in Christ Jesus? How overcome the power of sin in the flesh warring against the desire to serve God? As Paul put it, "*Who shall deliver me from the body of this death*" (Ro 7.24)?

Through the **power** of godliness.

- 2 P 1.3-4 **his divine power** hath given unto us all things that pertain unto...
godliness... that... ye might be partakers of the divine nature

What exactly is that power which overcomes the power of sin in our flesh hindering us from living holy lives? The Spirit. He is the power of godliness.

- Ro 8.13 **through the Spirit** do mortify the deeds of the body
Gal 5.17,22 ye cannot do the things that ye would... But the fruit of **the Spirit** is...

Jesus overcame by that same power. Though tempted in all points like as we are (Heb 4.15), He won the victory through the Spirit. When He went into the wilderness to be tempted, He went full of the Holy Ghost and led of the Spirit (Lk 4.1). When He returned, He returned in the power of the Spirit (Lk 4.14).

Power to Sanctify

The Spirit is the power of our ongoing sanctification. Holiness is His essential nature. He is the Spirit of holiness (Ro 1.4).

- 2 Th 2.13 chosen... **through sanctification of the Spirit**
1 P 1.2 elect... **through sanctification of the Spirit**
1 P 1.22 ye have **purified your souls** in obeying the truth **through the Spirit**

Sanctification is not **to copy** His holiness. It is actually **to partake** of the very holiness of God Himself (Heb 12.10). Biblical holiness is supernatural, not just good, moral living. It is only by the Spirit that we can fulfil our calling to be holy just as He is holy (1 P 1.16). Our own efforts, however sincere, will fail.

In Fact, the Spirit is the Power of Every Area of the Christian Life

All through life, the indwelling Spirit is at work in us in every single area. He in us is the power of every aspect of the Christian life. In fact, He **is** the Christian life.

Here are some examples of that indwelling mighty power at work in us.

Character

Every aspect of a Christian's character is to be the fruit of the life of the indwelling Spirit.

Col 1.8	your love in the Spirit
2 Tim 1.7	the Spirit of love
1Th 1.6	joy of the Holy Ghost
Ro 14.17	peace and joy in the Holy Ghost
2 Cor 4.13	the Spirit of faith
Gal 6.1	the spirit of meekness
Gal 5.22	the fruit of the Spirit is... longsuffering, gentleness, goodness... temperance

Understanding the Word

Jn 14.26	the Holy Ghost...shall teach you all things
Jn 16.13	the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all truth
Eph 1.17	the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you might know...

Fellowship

Eph 4.3	the unity of the Spirit
Phil 2.1	if any fellowship of the Spirit

Praise & Worship

Jn 4.23	worship ... in the Spirit
Phil 3.3	we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit
Eph 5.18-19	Be filled with the Spirit... singing and making melody

Strength for the Spiritual Warfare

Jn 15.26	when the Comforter (= Strengtheners, Encourager) is come... even the Spirit of truth
Eph 3.16	Strengthened with might by His Spirit

Wisdom in Practical Matters

Acts 6.3,10	men...full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom (i.e. to serve at tables)
Ex 28.3	filled with the Spirit of wisdom (to make Aaron's garments)
Ex 31.3-4	filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom... to work in gold, silver and brass

Guidance

Acts 16.6-7	they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach... in Asia... they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not
Ro 8.14	Led by the Spirit

Preaching

1 Cor 2.4	my speech and my preaching was not with...man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power
1 Cor 2.13	we speak...in words...which the Holy Ghost teacheth

Prayer

Even our prayers are not to be our own, but inwrought by the Holy Ghost.

Jas 5.16	the effectual (<i>literally = inwrought, i.e. wrought in by the Spirit</i>) fervent prayer of a righteous man
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Ro 8.26-27 we know not what we should pray for: but **the Spirit itself** maketh intercession for us (*i.e. in and through us*)
Eph 2.18 access **through one Spirit** to the Father
Eph 6.18 praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**
Ju 20 praying **in the Holy Ghost**

To sum up

In fact, the Spirit is to permeate every area and detail of our lives.

Ro 8.9 ye **are...** in the Spirit
Rev 1.10 I **was** in the Spirit on the Lord's day
Ro 8.5 (NKJ) **set your minds on...** the things of the Spirit
Gal 5.25 **live** in the Spirit
Gal 5.16 **walk** in the Spirit
Jn 7.37-39 come...**drink**...out of his belly shall flow rivers... (...this spake he of the Spirit...)
Eph 5.18 be **filled** with the Spirit
1 Tim 4.12 be thou an **example...** in spirit

To put it concisely, the Christian life does not just **include** the supernatural. It **is** supernatural.

(I have deliberately not mentioned areas generally considered supernatural, such as signs and wonders, or the gifts and baptism of the Spirit. This is because I wanted to show how **every** area of the Christian life is to be lived in the supernatural life of the Spirit.)