

WCCC 2021

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The Presence of the Holy Spirit (1)

Greetings brothers and sisters.

We thank the Lord, that even though the pandemic has been spreading throughout the world and that we are in this extraordinary circumstance, the Lord has given us an extraordinary gathering. We do recognize that there are limitations and inconveniences with our current way of gathering, that we may feel a little unfulfilled inside. However, we thank God; because He is a Spirit, and He is not limited by circumstance or time. We pray that this omnipotent and omnipresent Spirit will abide with all brothers and sisters. May you feel God's presence, whether you are home, or at other locations.

For this special Conference, our theme is on the Spiritual Reality of the Church. The original meaning of this word "reality" is "real" or "true." The Bible also speaks of Him as the Truth. But here we are talking about spiritual reality, or the truth in the spirit, which is different from reality of physical matters. I recall brother Spark mentioning in one of his books that, to him, spiritual matters were even more real than matters of this physical realm. We thank the Lord that throughout these years, from our own experiences, we can attest to our brother's sentiment. If we do not feel that spiritual matters in our own lives are real today, how can we live out this reality in our church life?

Therefore, this truth/reality tells us it is not false, fake, pretentious, or a substitute. We should be able to feel that in the earthly church today. Oftentimes, children of God cannot feel the spiritual reality; instead, the majority of the time we emphasize material reality. We then find a lot of substitutions in the church or in our personal spiritual lives. If that is truly the case, our personal life is weak. Church life is for sure weak as well.

This topic is therefore a very important reminder to us. We have to pursue spiritual reality. Brothers and sisters, if you truly touch and encounter this

spiritual reality, you naturally will not have that much desire, pursuit, or exert as much effort for external physical matters. We can then live a more simple, joyous, satisfied church life, and give more glory to the Lord.

May this topic remind us that we need to pursue the spiritual reality of the church.

For this conference my burden is to share with brothers and sisters the Manifestation of the Presence of the Holy Spirit, and I will divide it into two topics:

(i) The significance and importance of the work of the Holy Spirit from the perspective of God's will, and

(ii) the testimony of the Holy Spirit for Christ with us.

Let us first read some of the words of the Lord together.

John 7:38-39 – He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 14:16 – And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever

John 14:20 – At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

John 1:32-33 – And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

Galatians 4:4 – But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Acts 2:1-2 – When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Ephesians 1:13-14 – In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

We know that in the glorious will of God, the work of the Holy Spirit is very important. In the first chapter of Ephesians, apostle Paul lets us see that in the glorious plan of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have different roles and work. We know that there is only one God. And the triune God has specific ministries for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is as if there is a division of responsibility, but in fact the ministries are for the same purpose. In chapter one of Ephesians, we see the different ministries of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father elects and predestinates. The Son redeems and unites. The Holy Spirit seals and serves as the token/pledge/earnest.

Within the plan of the Father, He had done a marvelous and glorious work. He not only created Man, but He also elected and predestinated. The Bible tells us that before the foundation of the world, God, according to His foreknowledge, had chosen us. God's election is very precious. What does God's election mean? Here it tells us that it is not by accident or chance that we receive grace and salvation, but it is by the careful election by the Father. This election is indeed an extremely great grace of God because, even though God knew exactly our nature, He was still determined to choose us. Peter told us in his last years that this was God's great mercy. Today, it is all because of God's great mercy that we can become children of God. We can see throughout history how great God's election has been.

In the first chapter of the first book to the Corinthians, Paul pointed out "that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world..., the weak..., and the base things" (*1 Corinthians 1:26-28*). Certainly, among those who are called, there are those with wisdom such as Paul. However, there are also beggars like Lazarus, and tax collectors and prostitutes; those who are blind, or lame, or deaf, or mute. God has chosen them all before the foundation of the world. For the election of God we have to wholeheartedly thank Him. God sees the honorable and dishonorable to be the same. Why would God choose us who are so

troublesome and full of shortcomings? Thanks be to God, who is almighty: He is able to change us. Therefore God does not mind who He elects. The Bible tells us, He has chosen us to become holy, blameless, and without blemish before him. Brothers and sisters, this is a great election of God. Therefore, even though we are not perfect in this world, God has chosen us. He will lead us and take us to the stage where we will be holy and blameless.

Furthermore, He not only chose us, but according to His good pleasure, He has predestinated us. This word "predestinate" in the original language could mean "mark out." When the names of all the people are laid out before God, God was marking us out. Thanks be to God. While there are so many individuals and so many names in this world, you and I received favor and great grace. God has marked out our names. We are then adopted as sons through the name of Jesus Christ.

Through the name of Jesus Christ's sonship, we can truly become children of God. We can receive all the blessings as sons. Brothers and sisters, this is a plan that He had accomplished even before the foundation of the world. Through Ephesians 1:6-12, we can see that our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to submit to God's will to fulfill God's plan. We thank God, the Word became flesh, and came to earth. After thirty-three-and-a-half years, He was crucified on the cross. He proclaimed, "it is finished!" Then we know, the entire plan of the Father was perfected in the Son. In the position of the Man, He had fulfilled God's will. Therefore, He had accomplished the great work of salvation.

We know that this word salvation includes two aspects. In Chinese we use two characters, "to save" and "to redeem." The word "to save" means to free or liberate us from the hands of the enemy and the power of death. The Lord not only saved, but He also redeemed. Whatever was lost He redeemed back. Whether it was our shortcomings or weaknesses, He was able to reverse it. Therefore He is also our propitiation. We truly thank our Lord wholeheartedly. Today all children of God live in the grace of this salvation. It is a pity that many Christians only know that the Lord has saved us, but do not have a good understanding of the Lord's work of redemption. We have to know that the Lord not only saved, but He also redeemed.

The other great work that the Lord accomplished on the cross was the work of summation. He removed the divisive seed planted by the enemy, so that all things may become one in Christ. The church also becomes one in Christ. Even our divisive nature will become united in Him. We know that after the fall of Man,

the character of Man has been divided. The difference is only a matter of severity. If one's condition is severe, s/he sees a doctor and may be sent into the psychiatric ward. Even if our condition is not as severe, we have to know that, because of corruption by sin, our character has been divided and broken. With such a broken character, it is extremely difficult to become united. Even with the intimate relationship of husband and wife, it is difficult to be in perfect unity. With the many individuals in the church, it is no wonder that the talk about unity in the earthly church is so difficult. Today we thank God that the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ has saved and redeemed our divisive character. Our fallen and corrupted soul may be saved. Only the salvation of the Savior allows the church to reach unity. Of course today we see this to be a very difficult work for the earthly church. However, our Lord Jesus has already accomplished this on the cross. When the Lord returns, the entire church will be united in Christ. Brothers and sisters, our Lord has paid a heavy price to accomplish this.

But we know that God's ultimate will is to gain many sons. God desires that His plan, and all that His Son has accomplished, may be worked into those who received grace. Therefore our God sent the Holy Spirit to carry out this work.

Brothers and sisters, without the work of the Holy Spirit here, the plan of the Father and the accomplishment of the Son is only objective talk to us. The Holy Spirit comes, and this objective fact becomes subjective. He is to work the accomplishment of the Son into the life of each saint. Firstly, the Spirit serves as the seal. We see that on earth, everyone who has received the grace of salvation has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. That's how we know that we have been born again and saved. In the future we will see that all those who have the seal of the Holy Spirit are children of God and can enter into the kingdom of God.

He not only serves as a seal for each of us individually; he also serves as a token, a pledge, or an earnest, which is a guarantee. How can we know that all the work that God has accomplished will be fulfilled? We know because we have the Holy Spirit in us. This word in English carries the meaning of "sampling," as if we can foretaste heavenly grace in our spirit. By the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can enjoy the abundance of Christ. Of course, our enjoyment today is limited. One day, when that reality arrives, how abundant that will be!

Not only will He work on each individual saint, but the Holy Spirit also has a greater work to build up the body of Christ. He baptizes all into the body [of Christ], so that the reality of the body may be manifested through the church. Therefore, we can see from the glorious will of God the meaning and importance

of the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the heart desire of God. God wills that through the Holy Spirit the reality may be realized among His people. That was determined when God set His will.

Thanks be to God. We not only see how perfect a plan God had in His will. When God worked on earth, the Bible also reveals to us that God's work is separated into dispensations or ages. The Bible clearly shows us that there are differences throughout the ages. We see that during the time of the Old Testament, it was called the age of promise. The books of Hebrews and Colossians all spoke of this age as the age of shadow, during which God's will was not obvious. God spoke using types and parables. Prophet Isaiah mentioned that God was one who hid himself (*Isaiah 45:15*). The meaning of Christ was also hidden. Even though they knew that the Messiah was to come, they had very vague knowledge regarding this coming Christ. When we read the book of Isaiah, Isaiah seemingly mentioned clearly the birth, work and ministry, and even death of the Messiah. But what was missing was the name, Jesus. Therefore, during this age of shadow, even the meaning of Christ was blurry.

The work of the Holy Spirit was also not obvious. When He appeared in Genesis chapter 1, He "was hovering over the face of the waters" (*Genesis 1:2*). In the history of the Israelites, at times He would stay briefly with an individual. The work of the Holy Spirit also remained in the shadows. This period of close to 4000 years of Old Testament history shows, on the one hand, how God loves Man and has not given up; on the other hand, how the fall of Man also brought a great difficulty to God's work. God used a long period to prepare, and He chose a people on whom He did His work. Of course, God's heart was not satisfied; but that was also a necessary stage within His glorious plan. We then see that when the fullness of the time comes, within the entire history of Man, God has set His plan. Brothers and sisters, sometimes it may appear as if God is not working; but in fact it is only that the time is not yet. To understand God's heart desire, we have to learn to be patient because God works according to His own time.

The book of Galatians tells us, "when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman..." (*Galatians 4:4*), and that led to the age of the four Gospels and spoke of the work of Christ, the Word who became flesh. When the Old Testament period ended, there was none righteous in this world, but God's work had to be accomplished through man. Therefore the Son of God willingly became the Son of Man. Thanks be to the Lord. He became a sinless man who was able to fulfill the law. By this time, God's will in Christ was obvious and clear. He has brought the heavenly life on earth; this heavenly life was manifested beautifully and gloriously through His flesh. In His flesh God is

glorified. The will of God is apparent in Christ's flesh; so is the work of the Holy Spirit. When we read the four Gospels, we clearly see that the Lord Jesus was born of Mary who "was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew 1:18*). When the Lord Jesus was thirty years old, he was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. When He rose from the water, "the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (*Matthew 3:16*). The Gospel of John tells us that "the Spirit [descends], and [remains] on Him" (*John 1:33*). It implies that throughout the few thousands of years past, the Holy Spirit has not been able to find a home on earth because He was unable to continually abide in any man. Now there is one Man, the Son of God, who has fulfilled God's will, so that the Holy Spirit is able to make His home in this Person.

Thanks be to our Lord. When He was on earth, He spoke and worked according to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He even entered the spiritual warfare by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. There is a perfect union between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In the Man the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit is able to manifest His continual Presence. We thank our Lord Jesus Christ. Although he only spent 33.5 years on earth, He completed the work God has entrusted Him. The Lord endured all sufferings for us and paid the heavy price to accomplish God's will. He Himself became the model and pattern for God's will.

The New Testament speaks of Him as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (*1 Corinthians 15:20*), "the forerunner" (*Hebrews 6:20*), "the captain of their salvation" (*Hebrews 2:10*), "the firstborn" (*Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15,18*), the "grain of wheat" (*John 12:24*). In the position of man, Jesus Christ brought God's will to fulfillment. He was the expressed image of the very Man who was in the heart and mind of God from before the foundation of the world. He is in God's image, after His likeness. For this, we have to thank our God forevermore.

During the last days of our Lord Jesus' time on earth, before He left the world, He solemnly introduced the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John chapters 14 through 16: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (*John 14:16, KJV*). Here He mentioned "another" Comforter, implying that the Lord Jesus Himself is also our Comforter. In the second chapter of 1 John, Jesus was referred to as our "Advocate" (*1 John 2:1*). This shows that the goal of their ministries is in alignment. The Lord Jesus came to this world because of God's will. The Holy Spirit was sent also because of God's will. Their goal is the same; however, their work and functions are different. When the Lord Jesus was in the flesh, He was with the disciples and

His work was external. When the Holy Spirit came, He entered into man's heart to work from within. Therefore, the Lord referred to "that day," when a new dispensation would begin. After the Lord Jesus was risen, ascended, and glorified, the Comforter was sent.

After the age of the four Gospels, therefore, the age of the Acts of the Apostles began. We now enter the period where the body of Christ is being built up. It is the era of the corporate life. Since the Day of Pentecost, when we saw the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, many Bible scholars could feel how the Father's heart was fully satisfied. The Holy Spirit descended in the midst of the victory and glorification of Christ. It was as if God let out a great breath of fire. It was a glorious moment, and it ushered in a new era. From that time onward the work of the Holy Spirit in the church became obvious. He has performed a thorough work from inside to outside. What the Lord Jesus has mentioned in the four Gospels about the work of the Holy Spirit is all being manifested. He comes to convict (*John 16:8*), to enlighten, to teach, and to lead God's people. He continues the work that the Lord Jesus has been entrusted with; transforming us based on the model of Christ, bringing us to perfection, and baptizing us into one body.

This is arduous work. The Lord Jesus used 33.5 years to accomplish God's will on earth. The Holy Spirit uses much power over a much longer period to work in and outside of man, with long suffering. The work of the Holy Spirit is very detailed and meticulous. He governs our words and deeds, and even incorrect thoughts. He teaches us in both small and great matters in our lives. Therefore, in the days of the early church, after the saints received grace and were saved, they were able to fully submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we can see that the work of the Holy Spirit was apparent. He brought the reality of Christ into the church. The power of His resurrected life was also brought into the church.

At the beginning of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Peter rose to preach a seemingly straightforward message, but the power was so great that initially 3000 were saved, and then another 5000 were saved. The Apostles did not rely on knowledge, or "excellence of speech or of wisdom" (*1 Corinthians 2:1*). During subsequent generations, however, the church became weaker. When we preached the gospel, we relied on excellence of speech and of wisdom. It should never be! The work of the preaching of the gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit. It requires the work of the Holy Spirit.

I recall that Brother Kaung once told us a story about his good friend brother John Sung. He asked brother Sung why he had such power when preaching the gospel and brother Sung told him that before going up to preach, he always shut himself up in the room and prayed until the Holy Spirit poured out God's love into his heart. Our brother relied on the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel.

Here, the Holy Spirit added the power of the gospel onto Peter. Not long afterwards we saw that Ananias and Sapphira deceived the Holy Spirit and they received severe judgement. The work of the Holy Spirit was obvious. Peter and John called a man who was lame from birth to walk again. By the name of the Lord Jesus, they brought about spiritual reality. Later, we saw Stephen who walked entirely by the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us that he was filled by the Holy Spirit to a point that all the wise were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. He preached one message and was then martyred. His martyrdom was instrumental in the outward expansion of the church. He was initially chosen to serve tables (*Acts 6:2*), but when the Spirit of God came upon him, he became a witness for Christ.

We then saw the Spirit leading Philip to the eventual salvation of the eunuch of Ethiopia. We can feel that during that period, the children of God were following and submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The church was full of life. The church was very lively. By the time we reached Antioch, the name Christian appeared. This was the result of the children of God following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Next, we saw Apostle Paul receiving grace. All his work was done undeniably according to the Holy Spirit. In the first century, the work of the Holy Spirit in the church was obvious. Today when we enter this new era of the work of the Holy Spirit, each believer should live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit inherited a great commission. He not only has to bring each believer to be perfect like Christ, but He also has to work in the church. When we reach the book of Revelation, and later generations, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the seven Spirits before the throne. The number "seven" is a number of perfection. We can comprehend that during the last days the Holy Spirit within the church brings the will of God to perfection. Within the seven churches of Asia, we see the Holy Spirit speaking to each of the churches. The Holy Spirit encourages some of the churches, some He calls to repentance. Today, the Holy Spirit works within the church; He has not ceased or rested from His work. The

Holy Spirit is to build up and prepare the church well to become the bride of the Lamb. From the book of Revelation, we can see that the work of the Holy Spirit is very beautiful at the end. God desires that the church becomes the bride of the Lamb. We have to become fully compatible. Not only that, but in the book of Ephesians, the bride of the Lamb has to be holy, blameless, and without blemish. This is not a work that man can do. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot reach that stage.

We have to recognize the importance of the undertaking of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the book of Revelation where the complete work of God is described, the holy city New Jerusalem descends from heaven. Such a grand and magnificent city is made of gold and precious stones and is full of glory. It is not until then that the work of the Holy Spirit may cease.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are living in the generation of the New Testament. It is an era to testify of the continual work of the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can bring spiritual reality into the church. Before the feet of the Lord, therefore, we must have an accurate vision to see the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot be narrow-minded when we consider the work of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians desire to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. However, we cannot view it with a narrow mind. The Holy Spirit is not here to just teach us to speak in tongues, or perform miracles, healing the sick, or casting out demons. The Holy Spirit may perform these works; however, those are not the goals of the work of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord widen our perspectives to see the work of the Holy Spirit in the context of God's glorious will. On the other hand, we should not overlook the work of the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are afraid of mentioning the Holy Spirit, which is a prejudice we should not have. If you ignore the Holy Spirit today, this is an opposite attitude. Both of these attitudes will greatly limit the work of the Holy Spirit. It will bring about losses to our individual church life. We will then be unable to enter into the spiritual reality of Christ. The revelation from the Bible is very clear. We as children of God shall honor the word of God. May all that is revealed through the Bible become our perspectives and our attitude before God. The time is nearing the end, and there needs to be spiritual reality within the church. Are you satisfied with our current conditions of gathering? We have to pray so that the plan of the Father and the fulfillment by the Son may be realized within the church by the Holy Spirit. Then our spiritual living and worship before the Lord may be real and truthful, without pretense or falsehood. We look to the mercy of the Lord. May the Holy Spirit directly reveal these words within brothers and sisters.

Please bow our heads together in prayer.

Oh Lord, we wholeheartedly thank You. From your word we know Your glorious will. Not only had our Father made a perfect plan, but our Lord has also paid a heavy price to bring it to fulfillment; now the Holy Spirit is to work all this into us and the church. Oh Lord, throughout the near-two thousand years of church history, we see that the Holy Spirit has not ceased His work. With the knowledge of Your will, may we humble even more before Your feet and place ourselves into the hands of the Holy Spirit. In our meetings and gatherings, may we honor the authority of the Holy Spirit. Lord, lead us away from all the falsehood and pretense in our lives. Save us from a life that is not real. May the Holy Spirit lead us into spiritual reality. May Your mercy come upon us today. We prostrate before You. Please listen to our prayer. We pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ, Amen.