

THE SPIRIT EMPOWERED LIFE¹ (Pete Hughes)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

Three areas where the Spirit works in our lives: (1) He **Awakens Us** to the person of Christ; (2) He **Forms Us** into the likeness of Christ; (3) He **Empowers Us** to participate in the ministry of Christ.

1. **The Spirit awakens us to the person of Christ and draws us into the life of the Spirit.** *'God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6 NIVUK); 'the Spirit who gives life' (Romans 8:2,10; 2 Corinthians 3:6). In the Genesis creation account, 'the Spirit² of God was hovering over the waters' (Genesis 1:2); 'the Lord God formed a man³ from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being' (Genesis 2:7). When things go wrong, sin leads to idolatry and creation unravels, 'Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. The images he makes are a fraud; they have no breath in them' (Jeremiah 51:17).*
2. **The Spirit forms us into the likeness of Christ and we become like Jesus in character.** *'Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed⁴ on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20:21-22). The same word used in the Greek (LXX) creation account (Genesis 2:7 – see above) and in Ezekiel's vision, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life' (Ezekiel 37:5); also, 'When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created...' (Psalm 104:29-30). Jesus says to his disciples, 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate⁵ to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth' (John 14:16-17). The coming of the Spirit may look messy, but, just as in the creation out of primeval chaos where 'the earth was formless and empty...', 'the Spirit of God... hovering over the waters', prepares the way for the Word – 'And God said, "let there be light",' (Genesis 1:2-3).*
3. **The Spirit Empowers us to participate in the ministry of Christ.** Christ's Incarnation is by the Spirit: *"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you"* (Luke 1:35). The work of the cross is by the Spirit: *'Christ... through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God'* (Hebrews 9:14). Resurrection is by the Spirit: *'He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you'* (Romans 8:11). All of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels (and through the Apostles in Acts) is by the Spirit: *'Jesus was baptised... and as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove'⁶ (Luke 3:21-22). After 40 days in the wilderness, 'Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4:14). In the Nazareth synagogue he announced, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...' (Luke 4:18). Jesus promised his disciples:*
***"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you"* (John 14:12-17).**

¹ Since this message covered so many Bible references, I have not provided the usual sorts of questions. If you choose to focus on one text, may I suggest John 14:12-17. The question: 'What do you think Jesus meant by "greater things than these"?'

² Heb. *ruach* can mean 'spirit', 'wind', or 'breath'.

³ Heb. *adam*, a name, but also meaning 'humankind'.

⁴ Gk. *emphuseo*. Here Hugh J Schonfield translates it as, 'He expelled a deep breath'. 'In the LXX this denotes the blowing of God's breath into or upon humans' (Kittel, abridged and trans. Geoffrey Bromiley)

⁵ Gk. *allos parakletos* = 'another (of exactly the same kind as Jesus) one called alongside to help'. *Parakletos* can mean 'advocate', comforter, encourager. Barnabas, known as the 'son of encouragement' (Acts 4:36). Gk. 'son of *paraklesis*'.

⁶ Aramaic *Targum* on Genesis 1:2, familiar to 1st Century Jews reads, 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters like a dove.'