



GRACE COMMUNION  
INTERNATIONAL

Atlantic

Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin

June 5, 2022

Pentecost

Because members of GCI cover the 4 Atlantic provinces and we have one minister, worship services will continue through the ZOOM platform. Anyone is welcome to worship with us. Worship services are Sunday, at 10:30 a.m. If you need information about how to join us for worship services, please contact Mr. Vautour, minister. The contact information is at the bottom of the bulletin.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other materials are also available on our local website at [www.gciatlantic.org](http://www.gciatlantic.org)

**Offerings:**

1. You can make your donation by cheque; Address: Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.
2. You can call 1-306-653-2705 (GCI Canada main phone number) and make credit card donation.
3. E-transfers to [khorwood@gcicanada.ca](mailto:khorwood@gcicanada.ca) (her full name is Kathleen Horwood). There is no need for a password as the donations are deposited directly into the GCI banking account. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. Most banks send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.
4. You can also donate to our GCI Canada website at [Grace Communion International - Canada \(gcicanada.ca\)](http://Grace Communion International - Canada (gcicanada.ca)); click on Donate. In the donation box detail, and under Fund, make sure you click on General. In the message box, make sure that you identify your church and your church member number. If you don't know your church number, please contact Mr. Vautour.

**Monthly Bible Study - Thursday, June 9, at 7:30 p.m. We will continue from John 15:12**

**For new prayer requests, see our local website [www.gciatlantic.org](http://www.gciatlantic.org) under "Members Only". If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour**

**Please pray for all our believing brothers and sisters and all others** who are severely impacted by global change on our planet. Examples: Multiple dust storms have been blanketing Iraq since April causing all kinds of havoc. Many lakes in Canada are dying, the north pole is melting, and the unfortunate list goes on.

The National Canadian conference scheduled for August 4 to August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Everyone is invited. The theme of this year's conference is **"Welcome Home"**. ***"This will be the first national conference of GCI members in a number of years."***

***It will be a time to collectively celebrate our life in Christ and to discover how the "Hope Avenue" is a way we can share this life with others. As Christians, we have been "welcomed home" into a relationship with our Triune God, and we have been given the blessing of being avenues, to welcome others into this unique relationship.***

***The underlying scripture passage for the Conference is found in the prayer or benediction of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21***. For more information, please see our Canadian website at

[https://www.gcicanada.ca/news\\_updates.html?NewsID=108](https://www.gcicanada.ca/news_updates.html?NewsID=108) where you will find all the details.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Christianity has traditionally taught that the Holy Spirit is the third Person or Hypostasis of the Godhead. Some, however, have taught that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force used by God. Is the Holy Spirit God, or simply a power of God? Let's examine the biblical teachings.

### I. The deity of the Holy Spirit

**Summary:** Scripture speaks repeatedly of the Holy Spirit, known also as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit is of the same essence as the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is ascribed with the attributes of God, is equated with God and does work that only God does.

#### A. Attributes of God

**Holiness:** In more than 90 places, the Bible calls the Spirit of God "the Holy Spirit." Holiness is a basic characteristic of the Spirit. The Spirit is so holy that blasphemy against the Spirit cannot be forgiven, although blasphemy against Jesus could be (**Matthew 12:32**). Insulting the Spirit is just as sinful as trampling the Son of God under foot (Hebrews 10:29). This indicates that the Spirit is inherently holy, holy in essence, rather than having an assigned or secondary holiness such as the temple had. The Spirit also has the infinite attributes of God: unlimited in time, space, power and knowledge.

**Eternality:** The Holy Spirit, the Counselor, will be with us "forever" (**John 14:16**). The Spirit is "eternal" (**Hebrews 9:14**).

**Omnipresence:** David, praising God's greatness, asked, **"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there"** (**Psalms 139:7-8**). God's Spirit, which David uses as a synonym for the presence of God, is in heaven and in sheol (**verse 8**), in the east and in the west (**verse 9**). God's Spirit can be said to be poured out on someone, to fill a person, or to descend — yet without implying that the Spirit has moved away from or vacated some other place. Thomas Oden observes that "such statements are grounded in the premises of omnipresence and eternity — attributes ascribed properly only to God" (Life in the Spirit, page 18).

**Omnipotence:** The works that God does, such as creation, are also ascribed to the Holy Spirit (Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30). Miracles of Jesus Christ were done "by the Spirit" (**Matthew 12:28**). In Paul's ministry, the work that "Christ has accomplished" was done "through the power of the Spirit" (Romans 15:18-19).

**Omniscience:** "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). The Spirit of God "knows the thoughts of God" (**verse 11**). The Spirit therefore knows all things, and is able to teach all things (**John 14:26**).

Holiness, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience are attributes of God's essence, that is, characteristic of the nature of divine existence. The Holy Spirit has the basic attributes of God.

#### B. Equated with God

1. Triadic formulas: Several passages discuss the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as equals. In a discussion of spiritual gifts, Paul puts the Spirit, the Lord, and God in grammatically parallel constructions (**1 Corinthians 12:4-6**). Paul closes a letter with a three-part prayer: **"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all"** (**2 Corinthians 13:14**). Peter begins with a three-part formula: **"chosen according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood"** (**1 Peter 1:2**).

The triadic formulas used in these and other scriptures do not prove equality (for example, **Ephesians 4:5** puts unequal elements in parallel construction), but they support it. The baptismal formula has a stronger implication of unity — **"in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"** (**Matthew 28:19**). The Father, Son, and Spirit share a common name, indicating common essence and equality. This verse indicates both plurality and unity. Three names are given, but all three share one name.

2. **Word interchanges.** **Acts 5:3** says that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit; **verse 4** says that Ananias lied to God. This indicates that "the Holy Spirit" and "God" are interchangeable and thus that the Holy Spirit is God. Some people try to explain this by saying that Ananias lied to God only indirectly, simply because the Holy Spirit represented God. This interpretation might be grammatically possible, but it would still imply that the Holy Spirit is personal, for one does not "lie" to an impersonal power. Moreover, Peter told Ananias that he lied not to humans, but to God. The point that Peter was trying to make is that Ananias has lied not merely to God's representatives, but to God himself, and the Holy Spirit is God to whom Ananias lied.

Another word interchange can be seen in **1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19**. Christians are not only temples of God, they are also temples of the Holy Spirit; the two expressions mean the same thing. A temple is a habitation for a deity, not a monument to an impersonal power. When Paul writes “temple of the Holy Spirit,” he implies that the Holy Spirit is God.

Another type of verbal equation between God and the Holy Spirit is seen in **Acts 13:2**: “**The Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’**” Here, the Holy Spirit speaks on behalf of God, as God. In the same way, **Hebrews 3:7-11** tells us that the Holy Spirit says the Israelites “tested and tried me”; the Holy Spirit says that “I was angry.... They shall never enter my rest.” The Holy Spirit is equated with the God of the Israelites. **Hebrews 10:15-17** also equates the Spirit and the Lord who makes the new covenant. The Spirit who inspired the prophets is God. This is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

### C. Divine work

**1. Creating:** The Holy Spirit does work that only God can do, such as creating (**Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30**) and expelling demons (**Matthew 12:28**).

**2. Begetting:** The Spirit was involved in begetting the incarnate Son of God (**Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35**), and the full divinity of the Son (**Colossians 1:19**) implies the full divinity of the Begetter. The Spirit begets believers, too — they are born of God (**John 1:12**) and equally born of the Spirit (**John 3:5**). “**The Spirit gives [eternal] life**” (**John 6:63**).

**3. Indwelling:** The Holy Spirit is the way God lives in his children (**Ephesians 2:22; 1 John 3:24; 4:13**). The Holy Spirit “lives” in us (**Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 3:16**) — and because the Spirit lives in us, we are able to say that God lives in us. We can say that God lives in us only because the Holy Spirit is in some way God. The Spirit is not a representative or a power that lives in us — God himself lives in us. Geoffrey Bromiley gives a concise conclusion: “to have dealings with the Spirit, no less than with the Father and the Son, is to have dealings with God” (“The New Holy Spirit,” in *The New Life*, edited by Millard Erickson, page 23).

**4. Sanctifying:** The Holy Spirit makes people holy (**Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 1:2**). The Spirit enables people to enter the kingdom of God (**John 3:5**). We are saved “**through the sanctifying work of the Spirit**” (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**).

In all these things, the works of the Spirit are the works of God. Whatever the Spirit says or does, God is saying or doing; the Spirit is fully representative of God.

## II. Personality of the Holy Spirit

**Summary:** Scripture describes the Holy Spirit as having personal characteristics: The Spirit has mind and will, speaks and can be spoken to, and acts and intercedes for us. These indicate that the Spirit is personal—a Person or Hypostasis in the same sense that the Father and Son are. Our relationship with God, which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, is a personal relationship.

### A. Life and intelligence

**1. Life:** The Holy Spirit “lives” (**Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 3:16**).

**2. Intelligence:** The Spirit “knows” (**1 Corinthians 2:11**). **Romans 8:27** refers to “**the mind of the Spirit.**” This mind is able to make judgments — a decision “seemed good” to the Holy Spirit (**Acts 15:28**). These verses imply intelligence.

**3. Will:** **1 Corinthians 12:11** says that the Spirit “determines” decisions, showing that the Spirit has a will.[1]

### B. Communication

**1. Speaking:** Numerous verses say that the Holy Spirit spoke (**Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 21:11; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:7; etc.**). Oden observes that “the Spirit speaks in the first person as ‘I’; ‘It was I who sent them’ (**Acts 10:20**).... ‘I have called them’ (**Acts 13:2**). None but a person can say ‘I’” (*The Living God*, page 200).

**2. Interaction:** The Spirit may be lied to (**Acts 5:3**), which indicates that the Spirit may be spoken to. The Spirit may be tested (**Acts 5:9**), insulted (**Hebrews 10:29**) or blasphemed (**Matthew 12:31**), which implies personal status. Oden gathers additional evidence: “The apostolic testimony applied intensely personal analogies: guiding (**Romans 8:14**), convicting (**John 16:8**), interceding (**Romans 8:26**), calling (**Acts 13:2**), commissioning (**Acts 20:28**).... Only a person can be vexed (**Isaiah 63:10**) or grieved (**Ephesians 4:30**)” (*Life in the Spirit*, page 19).

**3. Paraclete:** Jesus called the Holy Spirit the parakletos — the Comforter, Advocate or Counselor. The Paraclete is active, teaching (**John 14:26**), testifying (**15:26**), convicting (**16:8**), guiding (**16:13**) and making truth known (**16:14**).

Jesus used the masculine form of parakletos; he did not consider it necessary to make the word neuter or to use neuter pronouns. In **John 16:14**, masculine pronouns are used even after the neuter pneuma is mentioned. It would have been easy to switch to neuter pronouns, but John did not. In other places, neuter pronouns are used for the Spirit, in accordance with grammatical convention. Scripture is not finicky about the grammatical gender of the Spirit, and we need not be either. We use personal pronouns for the Spirit to acknowledge that he is personal, not to imply that he is male.

### C. Action

**1. New life:** The Holy Spirit regenerates us, giving us new life (**John 3:5**). The Spirit sanctifies us (**1 Peter 1:2**) and leads us in that new life (**Romans 8:14**). The Spirit gives various gifts to build the church up (**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**), and throughout the book of Acts, we see that the Spirit guides the church.

**2. Intercession:** The most “personal” activity of the Holy Spirit is intercession: “**We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us.... The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will**” (**Romans 8:26-27**). Intercession implies not only receiving communication, but also communicating further on. It implies an intelligence, a concern, and a formal

role. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, but an intelligent and divine Helper who lives within us. God lives within us, and the Holy Spirit is God.

### III. Worship

There are no scriptural examples of worshipping the Holy Spirit. Scripture talks about praying in the Spirit (**Ephesians 6:18**), the fellowship of the Spirit (**2 Corinthians 13:14**), and baptism in the name of the Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**). Although baptism, prayer and fellowship are involved in worship, none of these verses shows worship of the Spirit. As an opposite of worship, however, we note that the Spirit can be blasphemed (**Matthew 12:31**).

There are no scriptural examples of praying to the Holy Spirit. However, Scripture indicates that a human can talk to the Spirit (**Acts 5:3**). If this is done in reverence or request, it is, in effect, praying to the Spirit. If Christians are unable to articulate their desires and they want the Spirit to intercede for them (**Romans 8:26-27**), they are praying, directly or indirectly, to the Holy Spirit. When we understand that the Holy Spirit has intelligence and fully represents God, we may ask the Spirit for help — never thinking that the Spirit is a separate being from God, but recognizing that the Spirit is the Hypostasis of God interceding for us.

Why does Scripture say nothing about praying to the Spirit? Michael Green explains: *“The Holy Spirit does not draw attention to himself. He is sent by the Father to glorify Jesus, to show Jesus’ attractiveness, and not to take the centre of the stage”* (I Believe in the Holy Spirit, page 60). Or, as Geoffrey Bromiley puts it, *“The Spirit is self-effacing”* (page 21).

Prayer or worship directed specifically to the Holy Spirit is not the scriptural norm, but we nonetheless worship the Spirit. When we worship God, we worship all aspects of God, including the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A fourth-century theologian explained it this way: *“The Spirit is jointly worshipped in God, when God is worshipped in the Spirit”* (Ambrose, Of the Holy Spirit III.X.82, quoted in Oden, Life in the Spirit, page 16). Whatever we say to the Spirit we are saying to God, and whatever we say to God we are saying to the Spirit.

### IV. Summary

Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit has divine attributes and works, and is spoken of in the same way that the Father and Son are. The Holy Spirit is intelligent, and speaks and acts like a divine Person. This is part of the scriptural evidence that led early Christians to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity. Bromiley gives a summary:

Three points that emerge from this survey of the New Testament data are: (1) The Holy Spirit is everywhere regarded as God; (2) He is God in distinction from the Father and the Son; (3) His deity does not infringe upon the divine unity. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune Godhead....

The divine unity cannot be subjected to mathematical ideas of unity. The fourth century learned to speak of three hypostases or persons within the deity, not in the tritheistic sense of three centers of consciousness, but also not in the weaker sense of three economic manifestations. From Nicaea and Constantinople on, the creeds sought to do justice to the essential biblical data along these lines. (pages 24-25)

Although Scripture does not directly say that “the Holy Spirit is God,” or that God is triune, these conclusions are based on scriptural evidence. Based on biblical evidence, we teach that the Holy Spirit is God in the same way that the Father is God and the Son is God.

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[1] The Greek word means “he or it determines.” Although the Greek word does not specify the subject of the verb, the most likely subject in the context is the Spirit. To find a different subject, one would have to backtrack through five verses and six mentions of the Spirit. But this grammatical leapfrogging is not necessary. Since we know from other verses that the Spirit has mind and knowledge and judgment, there is no reason to reject the conclusion in 1 Corinthians 12:11 that the Spirit also has will.

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## THE HOLY SPIRIT: CAN YOU HEAR THE HOLY SPIRIT?

By Mr. Joseph Tkach

When the church in Antioch gathered for worship, the Holy Spirit spoke to them: **“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”** Does the Holy Spirit speak to us today? Can we hear what he says to us?

People who are led by the Holy Spirit are children of God (**Romans 8:14**). We should expect the Holy Spirit to lead us, and we want to know how he does it.

### In different ways

God works in different ways with different people. He spoke in different ways to Adam, Abraham, Moses, Deborah, Samuel, Elijah, Mary and Paul. He can speak in different ways to us today. The messages given to Philip (**Acts 8:29**) and Peter are so specific (**Acts 10:19**) that distinct words may have been involved. But he spoke in a different way at the Jerusalem council (**Acts 15**). It is only after all the discussion had taken place that the apostles concluded that the Holy Spirit had made the decision for them (**verse 28**).

Just as the Holy Spirit decides to give different abilities to different people (**1 Corinthians 12:11**), he works with us in different ways. A person with the gift of miraculous words is likely to hear the Spirit in a different way than a person with the gift of compassion. The Spirit will lead a teacher in a different way than a server, because he has different jobs for different people.

The Spirit shapes us in different ways, and as a result, we value different goals. Someone with the gift of administration will value order and organization; someone with the gift of serving will ask whether people are being helped; someone with the gift of encouragement

will focus on peoples' attitudes; people with the gift of generosity will look for needs that they can fill. The Spirit works with us in the way he has caused us to be, according to our interests and values.

For some people, he speaks subtly, in general principles; for others, he must speak with unmistakable details. Each of us must listen in the way that God has made us, in the way that he chooses to deal with us. The important thing is that we listen—that we are ready and willing to hear, and heed, what he says. We should be looking for his leadership rather than ignoring it.

### Dangers

There are several dangers in this. **First**, some people have claimed to hear the Holy Spirit when he didn't really speak to them. They made false prophecies, gave foolish advice, led people into cults and made Christianity look bad. If God spoke to them, they badly misunderstood what he was saying. There is a danger of "hearing" things that God never said. We should be careful, for we do not want to use his name in vain.

**A second danger** is that some people, afraid of hearing incorrectly, refuse to hear anything at all. But as Dallas Willard has pointed out, we should not "shun the genuine simply because it resembled the counterfeit" (Hearing God, page 88). Our Father in heaven does speak to us, and the Holy Spirit leads us, and we will shortchange ourselves if we close our ears.

Hebrews 3:7 says that the Spirit speaks in the words of Scripture, and we should not refuse to follow what he says. He communicates to us today, convicting us of what we should do, guiding us in how we serve God.

**A third danger** is that some people seek the Holy Spirit for selfish reasons. They want the Spirit to make their decisions for them, to tell them what job to take, which person to marry, when to move and how to live. They want the Holy Spirit to be like an astrologer or horoscope, to save them the trouble of thinking and making decisions.

But God wants us to grow in maturity, to learn through experience what is right and wrong (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). Many of the decisions we face are not matters of sin and righteousness—they are simply choices. God can work with us no matter which we choose, so he leaves the choice up to us—the Holy Spirit doesn't speak on everything we want him to.

Some people would like to have the Holy Spirit as a conversational companion to keep them company. They want to chat, but the Holy Spirit isn't involved in idle words. He does not call attention to himself (**John 15:26**), and is often silent because he has already given us enough information and guidance. He wants us to use what he has already given; he has been training our conscience to respond rightly to what faces us. That does not mean that we rely on ourselves, but that we rely on what God has already done in our lives and what he has already taught us.

### Scripture

The Holy Spirit speaks to us primarily through the Scriptures that he inspired to be written and canonized. This is our foundation of faith and life. It is the word that everyone has access to, the word that can be studied and discussed most objectively. Often the word that we need to hear has already been written, and the Spirit simply needs to bring it to mind. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, his responses were quoted from Scripture. He had studied and memorized those words, and in each situation the Spirit led him to the appropriate verse.

The Spirit does not bypass our need to think, or our need to read and meditate on his words. If we are not seeking the words he has already given in Scripture, then we should not expect him to suddenly give us new words for new situations. Nor can we expect the random-access method of Scripture skimming to provide good answers for difficult questions. We cannot force, coerce or push the Spirit to speak when he does not choose to speak.

With Scripture, we have the potential for nearly constant communication with God, as we read and pray and live consciously in God's presence. As we pray, we should also listen, for God may use our meditations about Scripture to help us understand what we should do. We have the responsibility to read and study, for the Spirit usually works with words that are already in our minds. He works with our vocabulary, with our ways of reasoning, with the desires and values he has given us.

The devil can use Scripture, too, and the Bible is often misunderstood and misused. But the Bible is still an important means of being led by and hearing the Holy Spirit. Scripture is the standard of comparison for all other words from God. If we think that the Spirit is leading us to do something, our first question needs to be, "Is this in agreement with Scripture?" The Spirit does not contradict himself. He does not tell us to lie, steal, gossip or be greedy, for he has already told us that those things are not godly.

If we think the Spirit is leading us in one direction, we need to check it with Scripture—and the only way we can do that is to know what Scripture says. We need to study it, and since we will never know it all, we need to keep studying it. Memorization can be helpful, but what we need most of all is understanding. We need to see the principles of salvation, of Christian living, of divine love, of the way that God has worked and is working with his people; these will help us understand how he is working with us.

### Experience

We can also hear the Holy Spirit through experience. God sometimes changes his methods with us, but most often he works with us in a similar way from one year to another. Through experience, we see how he has answered our prayers and led us in past situations. This will help us recognize his "voice" when he speaks to us in the present. Experience comes through time, submission and meditation. The Spirit helps the humble, not the self-exalting.

We can gain even more wisdom by drawing on the experience of other Christians. The Spirit does not isolate us, but puts us into a church, into a community of other believers. He distributes his gifts so that we stay together, work together and benefit from one another's strengths (**1 Corinthians 12:7**). In the same way, we can help one another hear the Holy Spirit because we each have different experiences of how God works in our lives.

When a message from God comes to one person, other people are to consider it carefully (**1 Corinthians 14:29**). They are to consider, for one thing, whether it is really a word from the Lord. The Spirit can speak through the community as well as through certain individuals — the Jerusalem conference is a good example of that. The people learned from their experiences with the Gentiles, saw that those experiences agreed with the Scriptures (**Acts 15:15**), and through the discussion heard the decision of the Spirit (verse 28).

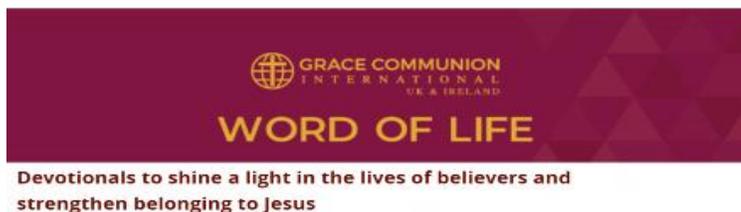
The Holy Spirit often speaks to people through other people: in worship songs, in small group discussions, in a whispered word of encouragement, in a smile, a picture or a magazine article. There are many ways we can learn from others, to receive godly guidance from others. But this is for each person to discern. Rarely does the Spirit tell one person to give orders to another.

Sermons are a common means of spiritual speech. Those who speak should strive to speak the words of God (**1 Peter 4:11**), so those who speak in church should strive to listen to God as they prepare the sermons, and those who hear the sermons should likewise listen for the words of the Lord. We need to let our worship services be times of listening, of thinking, of communing with God so that we are letting him change us to be more like Christ. Let us draw near to him, and he will change us.

Circumstances are another experiential means of “testing the spirits.” We may have an open door, or all the doors may be closed. Obstacles may test our convictions, or they may be indications that we need to think about whether we have correctly understood the directions. They force us to think again, to seek God again, to check with Scripture, and to check with others who have spiritual maturity.

### **Responding to the Holy Spirit**

If we want to hear, we need to listen. But if we want to hear in the biblical sense, we also need to respond. If we hear his voice, if we believe that God is telling us to do something, then we need to obey. We need to do what he has gifted us to do. We are to submit to God, for everything he says is for our own good. We bring him honor, and we bring ourselves blessings, by doing his will. It begins with listening. Can you hear the Holy Spirit?



### **Pentecost: The God of great reversals**

**When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them. (Acts 2:1-4 The Message)**

We are all familiar with the story of what happened on the day of Pentecost: people gathered for the Holy Day, strong winds, fire and then the miracle of speaking in different languages.

Taken by itself, this event speaks to the wonderful signs that God performed that day. It certainly drew the attention of those in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit was involved in the lives of that small group of Jesus' followers.

But there was more going on here than meets the eye, and more to this story than the birth of the church. Many commentators throughout the ages have stated that this event was a great reversal of what happened at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:6-9). Others also see the events recorded in Acts 2 as a fulfillment of the words found in Zephaniah 3:9. As Gordon J. Wenham writes: *In that day all the redeemed will unite in the worship of God. Zephaniah 3:9 seems to envisage an end of the confusion of Babel when he says: "At that time, I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord." And Luke evidently looked at the day of Pentecost when all could understand each other's speech as a sign of the last days when all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:8-21). The hopelessness of man's plight at Babel is not God's last word: at least the prophets and NT look forward to a day when sin will be destroyed and perfect unity will be restored among the nations of the world.*

This familiar pattern of failure or fall and restoration is found throughout Scripture. It even starts with the two book-end writings that make up our Scriptures, Genesis and Revelation. In Genesis we see God leaving humanity outside of the "garden"; in Revelation we see that humanity is again brought into the dwelling place with God (Revelation 21).

More importantly we see it in Paul's use of the first Adam and the restoration of humanity through the second Adam, Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 15:45-49)

When we celebrate Pentecost as the day the church began, may we also use this day to remind ourselves that we worship a God of great reversals and restoration.

Study by Bill Hall who is a minister in Grace Communion International, and is National Director in Canada.

**GCI principal website and Moncton Websites**—a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), b) [www.gciatlantic.org](http://www.gciatlantic.org) c) [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email— [evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)