

Spirit Immersed and Spirit Filled

by Linda Rex

May 28, 2023, Pentecost—A while back I visited a bookstore to try and find a gift book for a friend. As I was wandering the aisles, I came across an entire section of the store dedicated to the supernatural, spiritualism, and gothic themes. The literature available included a full spectrum from white witchcraft to Satan worship, new age to eastern meditative practices.

The size of this section has grown in recent years. It seems there is a deepening hunger for something beyond our physical world, and a longing for there to be some way in which we can control the chaos and turmoil of our lives. We adore our human freedom, but we have not yet learned that freedom is something that must be laid on the altar of love, and used in relationship with Jesus with grace and humility in the service of others rather than of ourselves.

Unfortunately, even our Western religion has fallen prey to our adoration of all things self-focused and self-indulgent. We often talk about having the Spirit move in our world to bring about healing and change. This is good. We like the effects of the Spirit's presence, to gather in worship and have ecstatic experiences. This is also good. But we're not always as equally welcoming to the Spirit's movements to bring about healing and change in us, in our churches, and in our communities. We're not always immediately responsive to the repentance and change the Spirit is calling us to when the Lord is wanting to do something new.

In 1 Corinthians 12:3b–13, the apostle Paul sought to help the church at Corinth to understand that they were not given the Spirit so that they could impress each other with their spiritual abilities or gifts. They were not given the Spirit so they could cast curses on each other or so they could lord it over one another. Rather, they were given the Spirit for the common good.

In this passage Paul uses the metaphor of the parts of the human body making up a whole as a way of showing that the Church, the body of Christ, was meant to reflect God's way of being. As the body of Christ, the Church is immersed in the Spirit and filled with the Spirit, enabling its members to participate in Christ, in God's way of being. Our Father, his Son and his Spirit, are three Persons in one Being. We find within God what is to be reflected within the body of Christ—diversity with equality in unity.

In the divine Being, we see the Spirit's graces of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, and so on. We see the Son's sacrificial service as the Person who came to manifest God's life and way of being in sacrificial service for others. We see the Father's actions at work in this world, manifesting his kingdom and his will being done even now, through his Spirit and his Son Jesus. All of the Spirit's graces, the Son's sacrificial service, and the Father's creative and restorative actions are meant to be expressed in and through the Church as the members of the body of Christ receive the Spirit and allow the Spirit to work through them to benefit the world in which they live.

Individually and as congregations, it's important to make to effort to learn how God has uniquely created us, and how he has specifically gifted us and blessed us with certain abilities. It is also good to grow in our own personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, to learn to listen for the "still small voice" of the Spirit and how to distinguish it from all of the other often louder and more insistent inner voices of self, sin and Satan. We want to get in step with the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, no longer following our own human inclinations, which way too often get us in trouble.

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We were created for so much more than just a rational, fleshly existence. As we follow the Spirit's lead, we participate in what Jesus is doing in this world to bring healing, restoration, renewal and transformation. We aren't doing things *for* God, but rather are doing things *with* Jesus in the Spirit—participating in God's life and love, allowing him to love and serve others through us. What begins to happen when we get ourselves out of the way and allow Jesus to live in and through us in this way is that the power of God begins to be manifest in tangible ways in this world. This isn't magic, because we are not the ones in control—God is. As we respond to the Spirit's lead, God's life and love is expressed in and through us in caring for those around us and for the world in which we live.

Heavenly Spirit, forgive me for all the ways in which I take you for granted, and the ways in which I grieve, insult, or offend you. Come, heavenly fountain of life, and pour over me anew, immersing me again in your living streams. Each and every day, may I be a ready conduit through which you may change and heal this world, in Jesus' name. Amen.

“... no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:3b–13 ESV