

The Sovereignty of the Spirit

by Zac Poonen

The Holy Spirit is sovereign and works in varied ways, and we should focus on the inner reality of His working, not the external manifestations or the wrapping.

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:11-12, Job 38:1, John 3:8, Acts 2:4, Romans 8:14, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit", "Embracing Diversity in Spiritual Experiences"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, illustrating that just as the wind is unpredictable and uncontrollable, so is the Spirit's work in our lives. He warns against the tendency of believers to confine the Holy Spirit within human-made rules and traditions, urging that the Spirit operates freely and diversely, surprising us in His manifestations. Poonen highlights that the Spirit may come with powerful emotional stirrings or in gentle whispers, and we must be open to both forms. He stresses the importance of recognizing the Holy Spirit as the true gift from God, rather than getting caught up in the varying experiences of how that gift is presented. Ultimately, the message calls for a mature understanding of the Spirit's work, encouraging believers to embrace His sovereignty without imposing their expectations.

Transcript

The Holy Spirit is sovereign and works in varied ways. Jesus said, " Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it will go next, so it is with the Spirit " (John 3:8-LB). You can't control the wind - either its speed or its direction. So too with the Holy Spirit. And yet many believers think that they can control Him and make Him work according to their rules and patterns. When the Second Person of the Trinity was here on earth, the Pharisees tried to tie Him down with their petty rules and traditions. But he refused to be locked up in their water- tight compartments. The descendants of the Pharisees in evangelical Christianity are today trying to tie down the Third Person of the Trinity. But He refuses to work according to manmade patterns. He blows where He wishes. We can hear the sound of His working, but He will not be controlled or directed by us. We cannot say that He should work in the same way in other lives as He has worked in ours; neither should we expect Him to work today in the same way as He worked in days past. No. He is Sovereign. The best thing that we can do is to set our face towards the direction in which the wind is blowing and to let that wind carry us along. The Holy Spirit cannot be tied down in any doctrinal compartment of any denomination. We shall find that He surprises us by the way He works. Both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals need to recognise this.

The Holy Spirit may at times manifest Himself like a whirlwind. There may be deep stirrings of the emotions and even physical reactions too. We must be willing to accept this. God spoke to Job out of a whirlwind (Job 38:1). But we also need to remember that the Spirit may at times blow like a gentle breeze. When Elijah heard the whirlwind, it says that God was not in the whirlwind (1 Kings 19:11). No. Every stirring of the emotions is not from God. And so we must be careful. To Elijah, God spoke in a gentle breeze (1 Kings 19:12). The Holy Spirit does not always blow like a tornado. Sometimes He does, but not always. We should not expect Him to blow like a whirlwind all the time in everyone's life, just because He did so once in someone's life. Equally, we should not expect Him to blow always like a gentle breeze. We do need His blowing as a tornado upon many of our churches today, to uproot the things that are dishonouring to Christ therein.

The wrapping should never be mistaken for the gift. The Holy Spirit Himself is the Gift of the Risen Lord to His Church. When He falls upon people, it may be with shouts of Hallelujah, tears of joy and the gift of tongues, or it may be quietly, silently and without much emotion. Temperaments vary, and the Spirit of God (unlike many Christians) is willing to adapt Himself to each temperament. It is foolish therefore to expect that others should receive the Gift in the same wrapping in which we received Him - whether spectacular or commonplace. Only babies are taken up with the tissue-paper in which a gift comes to them. Mature men recognise that the gift itself is more important than the wrapping. The Apostle Paul was converted through a vision of Jesus. But he did not preach that all needed a similar vision before they could be saved. No. He recognised that it was the inner reality that mattered, in whatever wrapping it might come. So too with the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

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