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LESSON FIVE

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS REVEALED IN HIS NAMES

(Part 1)

At least twenty-two different names are used in the Old and New Testaments in speaking of the Holy Spirit. There is the deepest significance in these names. By the careful study of them, we find a wonderful revelation of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

1. *The Spirit.*

The simplest name by which the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Bible is simply —“*The Spirit.*” This name is also used as the basis of other names, so we begin our study with this. The Greek and Hebrew words translated *Spirit* literally mean, “Breath” or “Wind.” Both thoughts are in the name as applied to the Holy Spirit.

1) The Spirit as “Breath.”

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." – John 20:22

The LORD God formed the man 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

The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life. – Job 33:4

What is the significance of this name from the standpoint of these passages? It is that the Spirit is the outbreathing of God, His inmost life going forth in a personal form to bring us to life. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive the inmost life of God Himself to dwell in a personal way in us. When we really grasp this

thought, it should overwhelm us. Just stop and think what it means to have the inmost life of that infinite and eternal Being whom we call God, dwelling in a personal way in you. How solemn and how wonderful and yet unspeakably glorious life becomes when we realize this.

2) The Spirit as “the Wind.”

“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” – John 3:6-8

In the Greek, it is the same word that is translated in one part of this passage “Spirit” and the other part of the passage “wind.” And it would seem as if the word ought to be translated the same way in both parts of the passage. It would then read, *“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Wind gives birth to wind. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Wind.”*

The full significance of this name as applied to the Holy Spirit (or Holy Wind) it may be beyond us to fathom, but we can see at least this much of its meaning:

(1) The Spirit like the wind is sovereign.

“The wind blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:8). You cannot dictate to the wind. It does as it wills. The same is true of the Holy Spirit—He is sovereign—we cannot dictate to Him. When the wind is blowing from the north you may long to have it blow from the south, but cry as loudly as you like to the wind, “Blow from the south” and it will keep right on blowing from the north. But while you cannot dictate to the wind, while it blows as it will, you may learn the laws that govern the wind's motions and by bringing yourself into harmony with those laws, you can get the wind to do your work. You can erect your windmill so that whichever way the wind blows from the wheels will turn and the wind will grind your grain, or pump your water. Just so, while we cannot dictate to the Holy Spirit we can learn the laws of His operations and by bringing ourselves into harmony with those laws, above all by submitting our wills absolutely to His sovereign will, the sovereign Spirit of God will work through us and accomplish His own glorious work by our participation.

(2) The Spirit like the wind is *invisible* but none the less *perceptible and real and mighty*.

You hear the sound of the wind (John 3:8) but the wind itself you never see. You hear the voice of the Spirit but He Himself is always invisible. (The word translated “sound” in John 3:8 is the word which elsewhere is translated “voice.”) We not only hear the voice of the wind but we see its mighty effects. We feel the breath of the wind upon our cheeks, we see the dust and the leaves blowing before the wind, we see the vessels at sea driven swiftly towards their ports; but the wind itself remains invisible. The same is true with the Spirit; we feel His breath upon our souls, we see the mighty things He does, but Himself we do not see. He is invisible, but He is real and perceptible. None of us have seen the Holy Spirit at any time, but of His presence we have been distinctly conscious again and again and again. His mighty power we have witnessed and His reality we cannot doubt. There are those who tell us that they do not believe in anything which they cannot see. Not one of them has ever seen the wind but they all believe in the wind. They have felt the wind and they have seen its effects, and similarly we, beyond any question, have felt the mighty presence of the Spirit and witnessed His mighty workings.

(3) The Spirit like the wind is *mysterious*.

“*You cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.*” Nothing in nature is more mysterious than the wind. But more mysterious still is the Holy Spirit in His operations. We hear of how suddenly and unexpectedly in widely separated communities He begins to do His mighty work. Doubtless there are hidden reasons why He does His work in this way, but often-times these reasons are completely undiscoverable by us. We do not know where He comes from or where He is going. We cannot tell where the next place might be that He will display His mighty and gracious power.

(4) The Spirit, like the wind, is *indispensable*.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." – John 3:5

If the wind should absolutely cease to blow for a single hour, most of the life on this earth would cease to be. Time and again when the health reports of the different cities of the United States are issued, it has been found that the five healthiest cities in the United States were five cities located on the great lakes. Many have been surprised at this report when they have visited some of these cities

and found that they were far from being the cleanest cities, or the most sanitary, and yet year after year this report has been returned. The explanation is simply this, it is the wind blowing from the lakes that has brought life and health to the cities. When the Spirit ceases to blow in any heart or any church or any community, death ensues, but when the Spirit blows steadily upon the individual or the church or the community, there is abounding spiritual life and health.

(5) The Spirit, like the wind, is life giving.

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” – John 6:63

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. – 2 Corinthians 3:6

Perhaps the most suggestive passage on this point is Ezekiel 37:8-10:

I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army. – Ezekiel 37:8-10

Israel, in the prophet's vision, was only bones, very many and very dry (vv. 2, 11), until the prophet proclaimed unto them the word of God; then there was a noise and a shaking and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh came upon the bones, but still there was no life, but when the wind blew, the breath of God's Spirit, then *“they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army.”* All life in the individual believer, in the teacher, the preacher, and the church is the Holy Spirit's work.

You will sometimes make the acquaintance of a man, and as you hear him talk and observe his conduct, you are repelled and disgusted. Everything about him declares that he is a dead man, a moral corpse and not only dead but rapidly putrefying. You get away from him as quickly as you can. Months afterwards you meet him again. You hesitate to speak to him; you want to get out of his very presence, but you do speak to him, and he has not uttered many sentences before you notice a marvellous change. His conversation is sweet and wholesome and uplifting;

everything about his manner is attractive and delightful. You soon discover that the man's whole conduct and life has been transformed. He is no longer a putrefying corpse but a living child of God. What has happened? The Wind of God has blown upon him; he has received the Holy Spirit, the Holy Wind. Some quiet day of worship you visit a church. Everything about the outward appearance of the church are all that could be desired. There is an attractive auditorium, expensive instruments, gifted vocalists, an interesting preacher. The service is well arranged but you have not been there long before you are forced to see that there is no life, that it is all form, and that there is nothing really being accomplished for God or for man. You go away with a heavy heart. Months afterwards you have the opportunity to visit the church again; the outward appearance of the church is the same as it was before but the service has not gone on long before you notice a great difference. There is a new power in the singing, a new spirit in the prayer, a new grip in the preaching, everything about the church is teeming with the life of God. What has happened? The Wind of God has blown upon that church; the Holy Spirit, the Holy Wind, has come. You go some day to hear a preacher who you have heard great things about. As he stands up to preach you soon learn that no one exaggerated when they praised his abilities from the merely intellectual and rhetorical standpoint. His diction is faultless, his style beautiful, his logic unimpeachable, his orthodoxy beyond criticism. It is an intellectual treat to listen to him, and yet after all as he preaches you cannot avoid a feeling of sadness, for there is no real grip, no real power, indeed no reality of any kind, in the man's preaching. You go away with a heavy heart at the thought of this waste of magnificent abilities. Months, perhaps years, pass by and you again find yourself listening to this celebrated preacher, but what a change! The same faultless diction, the same beautiful style, the same unimpeachable logic, the same skillful delivery, the same sound orthodoxy, but now there is something more, there is reality, life, grip, power in the preaching. Men and women sit breathless as he speaks, sinners bowed with tears of contrition, pricked to their hearts with conviction of sin; men and women and boys and girls renounce their selfishness, and their sin and their worldliness and accept Jesus Christ and surrender their lives to Him. What has happened? The Wind of God has blown upon that man. He has been filled with the Holy Wind.

(6) Like the wind, the Holy Spirit is *irresistible*.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." – Acts 1:8

When this promise of our Lord was fulfilled in Stephen, we read:

But they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. – Acts 6:10

A man filled with the Holy Spirit is transformed into a cyclone. What can stand before the wind? When St. Cloud, Minnesota, was visited with a cyclone years ago, the wind picked up loaded freight cars and carried them away off the track. It wrenched an iron bridge from its foundations, twisted it together and hurled it away. When a cyclone later visited St. Louis, Missouri, it cut off telegraph poles a foot in diameter as if they had been pipe stems. It cut off enormous trees close to the root, it cut off the corner of brick buildings where it passed as though they had been cut by a knife; nothing could stand before it; and so, nothing can stand before a Spirit-filled preacher of the Word. None can resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he speaks. The Wind of God took possession of Charles G. Finney, an obscure country lawyer, and sent him through New York State, then through New England, then through England, mowing down strong men by his resistless, Spirit-given logic. One night in Rochester, scores of lawyers, led by the justice of the Court of Appeals, filed out of the pews and bowed in the aisles and yielded their lives to God. The Wind of God took possession of D. L. Moody, an uneducated young business man in Chicago, and in the power of this resistless Wind, men and women and young people were mowed down before his words and brought in humble confession and renunciation of sin to the feet of Jesus Christ, and filled with the life of God they have been the pillars in the churches of Great Britain and throughout the world ever since. The great need today in individuals, in churches and in preachers is that the Wind of God blow upon us.