

Holy Spirit, From on High

William Hiley Bathurst (1796–1877)

Holy Spirit, from on high,
Bend o'er us with pitying eye;
Animate the drooping heart;
Bid the power of sin depart.

Light up every dark recess
Of our heart's ungodliness;
Show us every devious way
Where our steps have gone astray.

Teach us, with repentant grief,
Humbly to implore relief;
Then the Savior's blood reveal,
And our broken spirits heal.

Other groundwork should we lay,
Sweep those empty hopes away;
Make us feel that Christ alone
Can for human guilt atone.

May we daily grow in grace,
And pursue the heavenly race,
Trained in wisdom, led by love,
Till we reach our rest above.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

A Response to Criticisms: Another Spirit

Kevin T. Bauder

As we have seen, 2 Corinthians 11:4 refers to “another Jesus, whom we have not preached” and “another gospel, which ye have not accepted.” I have argued that Paul is not referring to two different things. The identity of Christ is bound up in the truth of the gospel. The Jesus of Arius cannot save. The Jesus of Apollinaris cannot save. The Jesus of Joseph Smith cannot save. To preach one of those men's Jesus is effectively to accept a false gospel.

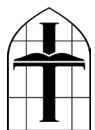
Paul also refers to “another spirit, which ye have not received.” What spirit is he talking about? Does this other spirit also entail the rejection of the gospel? If so, how?

This is one of the most controversial questions about 2 Corinthians 11:4. Some commentators believe that Paul is referring to a demonic spirit. Others believe that he is referring to an attitude that is incompatible with true Christianity. Still others believe that Paul is talking about false views of the Holy Spirit, views that were part of the heresy invading the Corinthian church.

Each of these three alternatives would affect the gospel message. Clearly, receiving a demonic spirit would be incompatible with faith in the gospel. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians, Paul makes it clear that certain attitudes such as greed, argumentativeness, and abusiveness are incompatible with a profession of the gospel (1 Cor 5:9–11). If the “other spirit” of 2 Corinthians 11:4 is either a demonic spirit or a destructive attitude, it would constitute a practical denial of the gospel.

What if the “spirit” of 2 Corinthians 11:4 is the Holy Spirit? In that case, this text would mean that the Corinthian church was in danger of redefining or rejecting some ministry of the Holy Spirit that is essential to the gospel. This is not surprising, since the New Testament associates several ministries of the Spirit with salvation.

According to Romans 8:9, all present-day believers are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This indwelling is strongly connected to our salvation. Paul makes it clear that a person who is not indwelt by the Spirit does not even belong to Christ. Consequently, to deny that the Spirit indwells all



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900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

believers at salvation is to commit a fairly serious error. It is to deny one of the effects of the gospel.

Another ministry that the Holy Spirit performs at salvation is baptizing. He baptizes or immerses all believers into the one body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13 cf Eph 2:16–18; 4:3–6). This baptizing work of the Spirit produces the fundamental unity of the Church. Since this ministry applies to all believers and to only believers, it must take place at the instant of salvation. To deny the Spirit's role in baptizing believers into the body of Christ is a rather important error and it denies one of the effects of the gospel.

Still another ministry that the Spirit performs at salvation is His sealing (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13–14; 4:30). Properly speaking, the Holy Spirit is Himself the seal, applied by God, to certify our safe delivery to God's purpose. Along with being our seal, the Spirit is also our earnest or down-payment, a guarantee of our full inheritance to come. Denying that the Spirit is our seal and down-payment is another serious theological error. It too entails a denial of one of the effects of the gospel.

Yet another work that the Spirit performs at the moment of salvation is regeneration. Indeed, the Spirit is Himself the agent of regeneration who creates new life and births us into the family of God (John 1:12–13; 3:7–8). We may quibble about the juxtaposition of faith and regeneration in the *ordo salutis*, but we must recognize that we do not regenerate ourselves. Any attempt to tie regeneration to a human work (such as baptismal regeneration) is a fundamental error that denies the gospel itself.

Paul could be thinking of any of the above when he cautions the Corinthians against receiving "another Spirit." None of them, however, appears in the context of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 3, however, Paul describes another ministry of the Spirit by contrasting it with the ministry of commandments "written and engraven in stone," a clear reference to the Decalogue.

In this passage Paul is clearly responding to an attempt to make sanctification the effect of law-keeping. In his response, Paul never denigrates the Law. In fact, he makes the point that the Law (specifically the Ten Commandments) was glorious. It came as a brilliant disclosure of the moral nature of God.

The problem was that the Law had no power to enable obedience. It was a glorious revelation, but no sinner could live up to its glory. Consequently, all the Law could do for sinners was to condemn them. While glorious, it was a ministry of death.

Paul's point is that the Holy Spirit is better than the Law. The Law was tied to the Old (Sinai) Covenant, but the Spirit has a New Covenant kind of ministry (v. 6). The Law kills, but the Spirit gives life (v. 6). The Law was

glorious, but the Spirit's glory is so much greater that the Law seems like darkness in comparison (vv. 7–8, 10). The Law had a ministry that produced condemnation, but the Holy Spirit has a ministry that produces righteousness (v. 9). The ministry of the Law was always meant to be temporary, but the ministry of the Spirit is permanent (v. 11).

Paul's punchline comes in 2 Corinthians 3:17. He claims that "the Lord is that Spirit," drawing attention to the Spirit's status as a person of the Triune Jehovah. Then he adds, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." If this is true, then the attempt to substitute Law-keeping for the inner work of the Spirit in sanctification constitutes an implicit denial of the gospel. The gospel not only delivers us from the penalty of sin but also delivers us from sin's power in our lives. The Spirit is the one who changes our hearts so that we truly seek to please God. He changes us in a way that external regulation never could. Anyone who teaches that we please God and become holy merely by keeping external rules and regulations is effectively denying the gospel.

Apparently the false teachers in Corinth were trying to lead believers to attain sanctification by legal means. By substituting law-keeping for the internal change made by the Spirit, these teachers were effectively redefining the Spirit and making Him into something other than the true Spirit of God. They were introducing "another spirit" of the sort that Paul references in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

In other words, Paul's references to Jesus, the gospel, and the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 11:4 are not references to three segregated topics. Instead, these references interweave as aspects of a single discussion of the gospel. The gospel was under attack in Corinth, perhaps in multiple ways. In this text Paul is defending the gospel, not simply as the plan of salvation but as a network of theological truths that depend upon one another. This network includes truths about the Spirit of God upon which the gospel depends.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
