

The Holy Spirit resides irrevocably in the hearts of all true Christians from the moment of their conversion, being received once and for all (Ephesians 1:13); nevertheless, the same Spirit continues to be supplied to them throughout their lives. Thus, it is the duty of those already indwelt by God’s Spirit both to request further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit, and to be filled continually with (i.e. controlled by) the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; Ephesians 5:18).

It is crucial to recognise the Holy Spirit’s work in the individual believer; nevertheless, since believers are baptised by the Spirit into the body, the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit’s work should not be ignored (1 Corinthians 12:12–13). The Holy Spirit works within the individual in the context of the community of believers: both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit assume the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit’s work (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Ephesians 5:18–21).

(Sola 5 Confession 6.6–6.7)

The first obvious manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant era was the filling of the Spirit in the upper room at Pentecost. One of the distinct features of that text is the corporate nature of the filling, as opposed to what we see repeatedly under the old covenant: individuals being empowered and emboldened by the Spirit for God’s work. Christians are accustomed to thinking of their individual bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, but the same New Testament that teaches that the individual Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) teaches that the local church is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). Confession clauses 6.6 and 6.7 speak to these dual realities: the individual and the corporate filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit. As we will see, the Spirit’s purpose, even in individual filling and empowering, is really corporate.

We previously (Confession 6.5) considered the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Confession 6.6 continues to highlight the reality of this personal filling and empowering, yet its purpose is greater than the individual. The Confession begins: **The Holy Spirit resides irrevocably in the hearts of all true Christians from the moment of their conversion, being received once and for all; nevertheless, the same Spirit continues to be supplied to them throughout their lives.**

Read Ephesians 6:13–14. What does it mean that the Spirit is a “seal” or a “guarantee” of our “inheritance”? What is our “inheritance” and how does the Spirit’s presence in our lives seal or guarantee that inheritance? *The inheritance is ultimate Christlikeness. The Spirit is God’s “guarantee” to us that he intends to work sanctification in us until we reach ultimate glorification. The Spirit is a “seal” so that every person whom he indwells is guaranteed of ultimate conformity to Jesus Christ and therefore of incremental sanctification throughout this life.*

In what way does **the same Spirit continue to be supplied to believers throughout their lives?** Does this mean that we only receive a portion of the Spirit at conversion and that we need more of him as life progresses? *Believers receive all of the Spirit when they are converted, but we are supplied with more of his power as we deliberately bring ourselves under his control. As we submit to the Spirit through the Scriptures, we learn to walk more closely with him and therefore to receive more empowering from him.*

Since we are in continual need of supply by the Spirit, **it is the duty of those already indwelt by God’s Spirit both to request further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit, and to be filled continually with (i.e. controlled by) the Holy Spirit.**

Read the following texts and note the means by which we receive **further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit.**

Luke 11:13: *First, it is our responsibility to ask for more supply of the Spirit, recognising that his supply is a gift of God and not something we earn through our own efforts.*

Ephesians 5:18–21 (cf. Colossians 3:16–17): *If we compare these verses, we learn that being filled with the Spirit is the same thing as letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, since the same results flow from these actions. We receive larger measures of the Holy Spirit, therefore, by allowing the word of God to dwell in our hearts and minds and thereby transform us.*

Lest we are tempted to believe that the Spirit’s work is designed for individual Christians alone, Confession 6.7 draws attention to the corporate nature of the Spirit’s work: **It is crucial to recognise the Holy Spirit’s work in the individual believer; nevertheless, since believers are baptised by the Spirit into the body, the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit’s work should not be ignored.**

Note: We will not take much time in this lesson to discuss the nature, continuation, or cessation of spiritual gifts. There will be opportunity for that in a future lesson.

Spiritual gifts are often thought of in an individualistic manner. While it is true that every individual Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, receives a spiritual gift, what does 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 say is the purpose of our spiritual gifts? According to Paul, spiritual gifts were given to individual Christians “for the common good” (v. 7). Individual spiritual gifts are not intended for the benefit of the individual alone, but for the individual to use that gift to work for “the common good” of the church.

Given your answer to the above question, what should motivate us as we **request further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit?** Foremost in our minds should be the good of the church body. We should be able to honestly look at the church and think (as Francis Chan puts it), “I love these people so much. I pray God empowers me in some way to encourage these people toward a deeper walk with him.”

Reflect for a moment on what it says about us if we are asking for the Spirit’s power only for our own benefit. Read Acts 8:9–25 to learn about someone who sought a spiritual gift for their own benefit. What do you learn from that text about seeking the Spirit’s power for selfish purposes? The Holy Spirit is not a commodity to be bought or traded according to our individual whims or felt needs. That is an attitude that speaks more of unbelief than of faith. This discussion necessarily calls into question our motives.

If we pray for more of the Spirit’s power with selfish motives, what should we expect? Read James 4:1–3 to help you formulate an answer to this question. James tells us that we have no reason to expect God to answer us if we ask with selfish motives. If the good of the church is not foremost in our minds as we seek more of the Spirit’s leading, we have no reason to expect God to answer our prayers.

What are some of the wrong reasons a person might seek the power of the Holy Spirit? Some might seek the power of the Spirit for personal attention. This sounds counterintuitive, but it was true not only of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9–25), but also of many in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:23–33). The result was chaos in the church. Others might seek the power of the Spirit merely for the manifestation of miracles. There is nothing wrong, per se, with wanting to see miracles, but if our pursuit of miracles is greater than our pursuit of God, something has gone awry.

The Confession closes this point with an important claim: **The Holy Spirit works within the individual in the context of the community of believers: both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit assume the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit’s work.** Read the supplied texts and note how each of them **assumes the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit’s work.**

1 Corinthians 12:4–11: Paul tells us that the Spirit’s power is given for acts of “service” and that God empowers these gifts “in everyone.” These gifts, though given “to each” church member, are given “for the common good.” The gifts listed in this section are intended to be used for the building up of the church, not for the notoriety of the individuals to whom the gifts are given.

Ephesians 5:18–21: Paul here shows that the Spirit’s power is manifested in a corporate way. When individual Christians are filled with the Spirit, they address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. They sing and give thanks corporately, and rather than pursuing their own fame, they submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In what way is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) a corporate thing? While the fruit of the Spirit comprises characteristics that are true of individual Christians, they are meaningful only to the degree that they are displayed and exercised toward other Christians. In the same way that the deeds of the flesh manifest themselves outwardly toward others, so much the fruit of the Spirit be displayed in actions and attitudes toward others—particularly in the context of the local church.