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Why We Believe What We Believe – Holy Spirit Part 1

[Easley:] Stop! Don't stress so much. Don't work so hard. Find the place where you work and rest. Use the resources of the very Spirit of God who indwell every one of us who believe in Him. After all He is a person and He's God.

[Lepine:] This is in context with Michael Easley, I'm Bob Lepine. Michael, we're going to hear a message today on one of the critical doctrines of the faith; one that is scary to some folks -

[Easley:] [Laughs]

[Lepine:] - because it is brought with controversy and as a result, some folks just kind of shy away from the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but this is something we need to understand because it's essential to how we live our Christian life.

[Easley:] We've talked before about the Trinity in two different broadcasts; to begin to understand the Trinity. Now we move into the person and work of the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit is maligned. The Spirit is neglected. The Spirit is misrepresented and unfortunately with so many of these doctrines Bob, the Scripture has a great deal to say that we can know with clarity and certainty. So some of the things we can't always know about the subjectivity of these doctrines, there's a wealth of data in the Bible that we can know and that's what I hoped to accomplish in these messages.

[Lepine:] Some people have over emphasized the ministry of the Spirit in the Christian life and as a result, others have let the pendulum swing in the other direction.

[Easley:] Right. Right.

[Lepine:] We've underemphasized something that we ought to investigate, understand and embrace, right?

[Easley:] Perhaps the evangelical church is more guilty of moving to the truth side, if that's a fair equation, of the Spirit versus truth. And some of our Pentecostal friends and those of the charismatic leaning and other types of associations would move more to the Spirit, and that becomes entangled with emotion and experience and their interpretations. So it is a balance. It is understanding what we know of the Scripture, clearly, and how that aligns with the work of the Spirit today.

[Lepine:] Well let's look together at what the Bible does teach us about the ministry of the Spirit. Here to take us through that is Michael Easley.

[Easley:] The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a fountainhead of controversy. I'm reading *The Foundations of Faith*. The book that you're required to read, I chose to read. I read it on a plane this weekend and was fascinated with Dr. Cornman and other sections as they walk through the creeds and how these creeds were written in a context and what's added to them what is explained to them and as I've been reading also on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, there are many similar kinds of concepts where as you study the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, things are added to explain and to exclude as we continue in our development of understanding this person; the work of the Holy Spirit.

In recent decades, of course, the Pentecostal movement, charismatic movement and what we sometimes call neo-charismatics and other hybrids of these, these energies have developed into more and more specialized applications and interpretations of the role of the Holy Spirit. Like all the issues of doctrine, it's enormous to try to get your arms around.

One article I came across that was quite compelling was by Dr. Dan Wallace called "The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics." Listen to what he writes.

"The relation of the Holy Spirit to hermeneutics is a hot issue among evangelicals today. On a popular level there's always been a large misunderstanding about the Spirit's role. Many Christians believe if they simply pray, the Holy Spirit will give them the proper interpretation. Others are not so concerned about the interpretation of the text. Rather, they're happy to see an idiosyncratic meaning of the text. In other words, 'What this text means to *me*.'

"All of this is the doctrine of the priesthoods and of the believers run amuck. Although each of us is responsible before God for understanding and applying the message of the Bible, this in no way means a pooling of ignorance or merely a pietistic approach to the Scriptures that meets a divine mandate. Surprisingly, there's also an increasingly large gap of conservative scholars. For instance Dr. James DeYoung says, 'When it comes to scholarly method of interpreting the Bible, the Holy Spirit may as well be dead.'"

He goes on to describe why he believes this polarity, this divergence, this frustration really, in how we understand the role of the Spirit is played out today.

He says there are four reasons. One, "the shift towards postmodernism." We would say, "Duh."

Number two, "because of the unwillingness to do hard study."

Three, "because evangelicals thought it was indeed imbibed too much in rationalism."

And four, "because evangelicalism is moving toward post-conservatism in which tolerance, rather than conviction, is the popular stance on many issues."

Listen to that again: "In which tolerance, rather than conviction, is the popular stance on many issues."

So, in the inclusive and diverse and "why can't we get along" discussion in the large umbrella of evangelical fundamentalism, when we start to disagree on theologies we say, "Oh well it's not that big a deal. It's just semantics. It really doesn't matter if we have a Trinitarian Godhead. It really doesn't matter the role of the Holy Spirit interpreted vastly different from different groups that would call themselves believers in Christ."

Now my course of study is perhaps not unlike yours. On my shelf I did a survey this week. *Keep In Step With the Spirit* by JI Packer; *The Ministry of the Spirit* by AJ Gordon; *The Holy Spirit* by Sinclair Ferguson, a good reformed writer, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* by Abraham Kuyper, a very reformed writer; *The Holy Spirit at Work Today* by John Walvoord; *The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching* by Roy Zuck; *The Holy Spirit* (that's just a shorter title) by Charles Ryrie; and the last one *The Secret* by Bill Bright.

So you got the continuum of sort of arch reformed to almost pop evangelicalism just on my study in my few years of trying to get my arms around this doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Now some of us in this room are from a stoic side of the continuum. You would be happy if there wasn't a Holy Spirit. [Laughter] You don't like the whole concept. The Holy Ghost language gives you the heebie-jeebies, you know? It would be better off if there wasn't this subjective component to the Holy Spirit.

The other side of us in this room perhaps have been bread and buttered in a Pentecostal, charismatic, maybe a more open view of the Holy Spirit's role and we would be more subjective. Not to be oversimplified, let's put stoics on the one side and those subjective on the other; stoics who vilify experience and the subjective who see everything in the experience and some place in between.

Now we hear this in different ways. People pray and they say, "The Lord led me. The Lord told me."

Have any of you had a person come up and tell you that God told them to tell you something? How many? Raise your hand. Be proud. Be one of the few; one of the pointed out. I've had a number of people in my life tell me, "God told me to tell you..." That puts you in a very interesting situation, doesn't it? [Laughter]

I mean, you know if they're dressed rather oddly and have alcohol on their breath [Laughter] and haven't bathed a few weeks, then you can sort of dismiss that one, but you know Balaam's donkey spoke to him. So what do you do with those experiences? How do you interpret them?

Now what I want to do today is not give you the definitive *treatise avis* on the Spirit's ministry of the impossible. I was dusting through Kuyper's book the other day and I was amazed how many things I never thought of that Abraham Kuyper wrote pages about. So it's not as though we are really being exhaustive with the surveys, but why we believe what we believe about the Holy Spirit is crucial.

So what I wanted to do today is not point out where other groups are wrong or where we are right or I'm right. What I want to do is show you what I think the Scripture does tell us very specifically that are clear facts we know about the Holy Spirit of God and to begin this, I want to start with the word pneumatology. Obviously you all know the word *pneuma*, the Greek word for Spirit or wind. "Ology" is the study of something, the content, the word of it; so we have the study of the Spirit.

Let's limit our conjecture on the Spirit and look specifically at the text of Scripture. The Old Testament to begin with has over a hundred references to the Spirit of God. Two passages that are easy to look at, Psalm 51:11:

*Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*

David of course after he sinned, he committed murder, he tried to cover up his sin, he had an adulterous affair, he tries to absolve himself of this and when he's exposed by the prophet he writes this incredible Psalm, one of the most penitent Psalms in all the Psalter.

"I can't offer a sacrifice to you God. The only thing I deserve is death."

So David in Psalm fifty-one throws himself on what we would call the mercy and grace of God and he says, "Don't take Your Holy Spirit from me."

David the king understood at full measure that God's very Spirit somehow indwelt him. He didn't have the full revelation you and I have of the New Testament and he understood this.

Isaiah sixty-three. Isaiah sixty-one through sixty-three are rich texts in the Old Testament about the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 63:10:

*But they rebelled
And grieved His Holy Spirit;
Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy,
He fought against them.
Then His people remember the days of old, of Moses.
Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them*

So the prophet Isaiah, by inspiration of God, talks about the Holy Spirit at the Exodus, the Holy Spirit working in their lives. At the risk of oversimplifying it, let me give you four roles in the Old Testament of the Holy Spirit.

Number one, He's involved in creation. Number one, He's involved in creation. The Spirit of God was moving over the waters. It's *Ruach*, in Hebrew; *Ruach Elohim*, the Spirit of God. God's presence in the person of the Spirit is, one text said, brooding over. I like that. Hovering over the waters, we have the Spirit involved in creation.

Secondly we have the Holy Spirit and the Old Testament sustaining life. Listen to Job 33:4:

*"The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life."*

We've talked about this a number of times. God breathed His Spirit and made man in His image. Job understands this. Job, as I understand it, is the oldest book in our Bible, so if we just look at a dating of the way the books are written and transcribed and developed in your texts you hold, the oldest book of the Bible includes a clear understanding of the Spirit of God giving life and sustaining him.

Thirdly, the invisible activities of God. There are two references if you'd like to jot them down; Judges 3:10 and 1 Samuel 10:6. Judges 3:10, remember the first judge Othniel says:

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel.

So here we have this period from the prophets to the judges when things couldn't get any worse morally, they couldn't get any worse spiritually and God raises up Othniel as the first judge and His Spirit comes upon him to do this work of the seven cycles in

judges that you know so well and the first judge comes out and he's announced as being full of God's Spirit.

Fourthly is God's presence. So in the Old Testament we have creation, we have sustaining life, we have the invisible activity and then what I would call His presence. This can apply to prophecy. It can apply to when God makes a covenant with His people. It can apply when they have supernatural wisdom like Solomon. One passage in Isaiah fifty-nine verse twenty-one:

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth."

And so this activity of God through His Spirit judging, creating, sustaining life; His power and His presence are all seen in the Old Testament.

Now there's a lot of other passages we can look at the Old Testament. Some are quite interesting when you see even what I would suggest is some controversy about the Spirit early on. Remember the story of Eldad and Medad in Numbers eleven? They're prophesying. They're speaking and Joshua tells Moses, "Make them stop. Make Eldad and Medad stop."

And he says "No. This is God's Spirit."

And so there was a recognition of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament that we sometimes forget. Isaiah sixty-three I mentioned before, the first three verses, I won't read all three of them but they're rich in the Holy Spirit's doctrine.

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted*

And here we have the Messianic shadows of what Jesus will do. The Holy Spirit is sending Him and of course you know how most of these connect the dots.

The last Old Testament passage I want to look at is reference to the Spirit's filling which Peter, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will speak at the day of Pentecost in Joel 2:28 and 29.

*"It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.*

*"Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days."*

So again, a hundred plus references in the Old Testament; the Old Testament believer understood from Job to David, to Joshua and Moses, to Isaiah the prophet, to the judges that God's Holy Spirit somehow moved in the believing Jew to accomplish things are

often difficult to describe.

Now let's jump to the New Testament for just a few moments. The synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, talk about the work of the Spirit mainly in referencing to Jesus Christ's ministry. So Matthew, Mark and Luke, if you take all the references of the Holy Spirit, they primarily talk about the work of Jesus Christ. So that's interesting when you look at the way Johannine literature will talk about the role of the Spirit in a very different way.

Let me give you just four observations of the synoptic use; the birth narrative, the baptism of Jesus, the temptation of Jesus and the great commission, which if you just took those four alone, it is interesting that God superintended the appearance of His Spirit, the record of His Spirit on these four crucial events of the life of Christ.

The birth announcement in Matthew 1:18, for example. That Mary is going to have this child. The Holy Spirit will overpower, overshadow her, will literally impregnate her and by the act of the Holy Spirit of God coming over her, she is going to bear Messiah. The birth narrative.

The baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:10. I've pointed this out many times before. It is crucial that you have the Trinitarian Godhead at the baptism; the Father, Son and Spirit.

The temptation of Jesus in Matthew four; isn't it interesting? The Holy Spirit is involved in Jesus' going into the wilderness to be tempted. Because as fully God and fully man, He has to be tempted in all ways and He is; He was. He was hungry. He was tired. He was angry. I don't have any reason to conclude that Jesus did not become ill in His lifetime. There's no record of it in the text but He's certainly crucified; He's susceptible to pain; susceptible to being wounded and killed and beaten. So in every way He relates to you and me.

So here we have the baptism and the temptation and finally a great commission. It is through His Spirit that what is going to occur through the disciples and through Jerusalem, Judea and the remotest part of the Earth, it will require God's very Spirit to pull these four crucial events in the life of Christ and continuing.

Now Luke and Acts in the Lukan literature, and by the way you know that Luke and Acts comprise more of your New Testament than Paul. Luke has a great length of literature and vocabulary so it's interesting to see how he talks about the Spirit. Many times we refer to the book of Acts as what? Not the acts of the apostles, but as the acts of the Holy Spirit because as you read through those pages, chapter one verse eight and what the Spirit will do and how the Spirit leads and moves and guides at how people come to Christ and the dramatic change when the Holy Spirit indwells them at Pentecost and all these events.

I remember one of the best illustrations I ever had given to me to understand the book of Acts, and I should do a slide sometime to show you this, but if you picture a New Testament and right in the middle you have a diamond; the diamond is the book of Acts. Law and grace collide; works and grace collide; Jewish believers and the Gentile world collide and all these things collide in the book of Acts and it takes God's Spirit to sort through these things to verify that the old is fulfilled in the new; in the work of Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts is a book of Holy Spirit transition. That's why you can't always sequence some of the events in the book of Acts so neat and clean because the Holy Spirit is transitioning through different situations, different contexts; when baptisms occur; when they spoke in tongues; when miracles were performed; when they're whisked to different places. All of this required the Spirit's work to verify these things.

In Lukan writing we have the prophecy of John the Baptist, the conception of Jesus again, and an interesting phrase, I think, where Simeon knows that this is baby Jesus and what does he call Jesus? The consolation of Israel. Isn't that great? "The consolation of Israel," because Israel's in upheaval. Israel is waiting for their king to come. Israel wants to be liberated and Simeon says, "It's the consolation of Israel this Jesus Christ."

All of these are the Holy Spirit at work.

[Easley:] Bob when you think of the Holy Spirit's work in Bob Lepine's life, what comes to mind?

[Lepine:] Well the thing that first comes to mind is that the only way I have a relationship with God; the only way I can understand who God is is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That I have a Counselor, I have an Illuminator. In fact, any time I come to the Scriptures I pray the prayer from Psalm 119:18 that says:

*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.*

It's really because I depend on the Holy Spirit to have any accurate understanding of who God is.

I think the other thing is conviction of sin which I don't always like, but I always need and it is a gracious gift of the Holy Spirit to point out to me where I am straying from God's Word and to point me back to truth. Again I don't always like that when it happens, but it's God's grace.

[Easley:] When Paul speaks of the believer being "spiritually appraised," I love the truth that when the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, when we read a story and a Scripture that before may have been interesting, now is profound.

[Lepine:] Right.

[Easley:] A great scholar in the book of Genesis, one of the great rabbinic teachers of all times did not believe it. Brilliant insights. There is no better grammar and language student than this particular Rabbi, but without hope; without understanding.

[Lepine:] Hmm.

[Easley:] Through the eyes of the Spirit we see the meaning; we can appraise it; it has new value, so I think you're right on, that the Spirit gives us the ability to ascribe value to what was once just another book, another story.

[Lepine:] And we want to acknowledge that there is controversy among Christians about many things related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If you want to get a clearer understanding about what the Bible teaches regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit, let me encourage you to go to our website incontextradio.org. There's information there about the study guide that we've put together on this series on "Why We Believe What We Believe" and we also sent along with the study guide the *Moody Handbook of Theology* that will give you clearer understanding of what God's Word has to say about the Spirit's ministry.

Again our website is incontextradio.org and by the way, that's a website you'll want to mark on your bookmarks because the best way to keep up with what's going on with *inContext* in the weeks and months to come is by visiting our website on a regular basis. Michael, there are changes underfoot and in fact you're already in the midst of some of those changes. You've had a change of venue for your ministry, right?

[Easley:] We moved down to Brentwood, Tennessee in late December of last year, Bob, and are just having a great time being part of a local church again. You know Bob, I'm going to circle back to talk about that *Moody Handbook of Theology*. What an extraordinary tool.

I've just given a copy of that to all of our elders at our church and challenged them to flip through the sections on the role of the Holy Spirit; on the doctrine of salvation; on the doctrine of the end times because, you know, we don't understand this stuff and it's really neat to have a single volume like that that provides an easy way to turn there and say, "Okay, how did we get to this place where we hold certain doctrines?"

Anyway, it's just a great resource and I'm so thrilled that Moody radio is making that available to listeners during this time. But yes, Cindy and I are loving Tennessee, Bob. We've got to get you to come down here -

[Lepine:] [Laughs]

[Easley:] - and check it out with us. It's a fun place to live. It's even better than Little Rock.

[Lepine:] [Laughing] Well, let me encourage our listeners again to keep in touch with the ministry of *inContext* by staying in touch with our website, incontextradio.org and as you hear changes take place on your local station, keep up with us by going to the website on a regular basis.

We're going to talk more about what the Bible has to say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit on tomorrow's program. I hope you can be back with us tomorrow for *inContext* with Michael Easley.