

# LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Water from Rock, January 31, 2017, Tim Smith

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*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” — <sup>10</sup>but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”*

1 Corinthians 2:9

## DEFINING TERMS: “SPIRIT”

“The Hebrew and Greek languages were host to a magnificent single word that could encompass stormy winds and settled souls, the rush of the divine and the hush of human holiness. Every interpreter, myself included, should preserve the magnificence and the breadth of the breath that animates and motivates all people.” (Jack Levinson, *The Holy Spirit for An Inspired Life*)

1. The English word “spirit” comes from the Latin spiritus.
2. There is a remarkable range of meaning to the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament words for “spirit”.
3. Hebrew word for “spirit” is ruach, and the Greek word is pneuma. Both words mean “breath”, “wind”, and “spirit”.
4. Both ruach and pneuma signify air in motion. Ruach and pneuma speak of that which animates and energizes; it is an invisibility that has visible effects. It symbolizes the invisible reality and power of God. The spirit is God in action.
5. Take away spirit, and people and institutions die.

## INTRODUCTORY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES ON THE SPIRIT

### Genesis 1:1-2

*<sup>1</sup> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

### Genesis 2:7

*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.*

## Scriptures relating to the Spirit in the life of Jesus

- Conception and Birth (Luke 1:35)
- Baptism (Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34)
- the reading at his home synagogue (Luke 4:14-21, Isaiah 61:1-2)
- Ministry (Matthew 12:18)
- Miracles (Matthew 12:22,28)
- Preaching (Luke 4:18-21)
- Temptations (Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1-13)

## Acts 1:8

*<sup>8</sup>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

*Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you whom you have received from God.*

“It [the Spirit] is that force of God, inexplicable and inscrutable... This breath of God blows where it will. It is the same wind that blew back the waters and created safe dry land, the same ruach that blew the waters back and freed our mothers and fathers from the bondage of slavery and let them sing ‘free at last, free at last.’ It is the same wind that rushed upon the eighth son of Jesse, converting a neglected nobody into an agent of political possibility, the same wind that will blow in Isaiah and let the belated son of Jesse affirm that ‘the Spirit of the Lord is upon me’ to render the economy of Jubilee. It is the same ruach that will power the timid church of Acts to stand before emperors and speak truth to power. Some ruach! The Bible struggles to find adequate vocabulary to speak about and name this unutterable, irresistible, undomesticated force that surges into history to liberate, heal, remake, and transform. We are left with this code term ruach, to speak about what we know we cannot say. (Walter Brueggeman, *Using God’s Resources Wisely: Isaiah and Urban Possibility*)

[Commenting on the Spirit as portrayed in Isaiah 11:1-10] “The poet refers to God’s life-giving, future-creating, world-forming, despair-ending power and wind, which can create an utter newness! This wind

of God is inscrutable, irresistible, beyond human control, management, or predictability... The wind indicates new possibility.” (Walter Brueggemann, *Texts for Preaching, Year A*)

## FOCUS SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Job 27:1-4 (Emphasis added)

*Job again took up his discourse and said:*

<sup>2</sup> *‘As God lives, who has taken away my right,  
and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,*

<sup>3</sup> *as long as my breath is in me  
and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,*

<sup>4</sup> *my lips will not speak falsehood,  
and my tongue will not utter deceit.*

1. The breath within us is more than just air; it is the moment-by-moment gift of God’s Spirit. The breath in us is the Spirit-breath that is in every human being. This echoes Paul’s words to the Athenians that in God *“we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17:28a).
2. We would not survive without the Spirit-breath in us every moment of our lives.
3. Breathe in! Every breath you take is Spirit-breath!
4. The Holy Spirit is present in us in far more ways than we can imagine; as close as your breath at every moment.
5. “You are the breath of God and right now God is breathing you.” (Catherine of Sienna, 14<sup>th</sup> century philosopher/theologian)
6. We experience the Spirit’s working not just in the spectacular, exceptional, mountaintop experiences, but also in the dark valleys of pain, suffering, struggle and persecution.
7. The Spirit-breath is with us in the everyday routine and valleys of life as surely as at Pentecost!