Inviting the Holy Spirit to work in my life

The Holy Spirit is God’s agent of change, of transformation. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul talks about the Spirit transforming us from one degree of glory to another. Inviting the Holy Spirit to work in our lives means giving him access to our lives so that he can change us for the better. It’s like handing over the keys and asking him to do whatever he thinks is best for us. That’s quite a step of faith, but this is what becoming a Christian involves: inviting Jesus to come into our lives by his Holy Spirit and to make a difference to who we are and to how we live.

So, if you have been a Christian for a while, how has the Holy Spirit been at work to make a difference in your life? Thank God for that. Try making a list of the many different ways in which the Holy Spirit works in our lives. Are any of the items on your list particularly significant for you?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-15. Most modern translations have ‘spirit of faith’ in v.13. But Paul could be referring to the ‘Spirit of faith,’ in the sense that it is the Holy Spirit who engenders faith in our hearts, and empowers us to express that faith out loud in words, just as he inspired the words of scripture that Paul quotes here. Read 2 Corinthians 3:14 a couple of times: what difference does it make if you read ‘spirit of faith’ or ‘Spirit of faith’? Which strikes you as being more convincing?

Paul’s words, ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken’ are taken directly from the Greek translation of Psalm 116:10. Sharing the same S/spirit of faith as the psalmist leads Paul to believe and to speak as the psalmist does. There is a tendency to assume that the words, ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken’ in Psalm 116:10 introduce the following statement, ‘I am greatly afflicted’ (Psalm 116:11), but if that is so, it is hard to see why such complaining about affliction (v.11) might be understood as an expression of faith (v.10). However, it could be that the statement, ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken’ points back to Psalm 116:1-9, verses which read like a testimony of God’s deliverance. In that case, the statement, ‘I was greatly afflicted’ (Psalm 116:10, KJV) leads into a further testimony of God’s salvation in the rest of the psalm (116:11-18). What do you think about this way of reading the psalm? In 2 Corinthians 4:14, Paul gives the reason for his faith and his witness in 4:13: how does 4:14 pick up on the themes of Psalm 116? If Paul is talking about the Spirit of faith in 2 Corinthians 4:13-15, what do we learn from these verses about how the Holy Spirit works? How do you feel about asking the Holy Spirit to work in these ways in your life?

At the end of all time, God will make a new heaven and a new earth, but the Holy Spirit has already started working on this. It has sometimes been said that the Spirit is like a little bit of heaven now. Although Paul does not explicitly mention the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, what do these verses tell us about how the Spirit is at work within us? Have you experienced this kind of renewing, or of living in the light of God’s future? Is this something you could be asking God to do for you?

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-7, what do the contrasting metaphors of a tent and a building tell us about the difference between our mortal bodies and our future, resurrection bodies? I suspect that, as we get older, we are all more inclined to groan about physical aches and pains! But Paul’s groaning is more about longing for what is to come than complaining about the present. How real is the hope of resurrection for you? Paul says that this is what God had in mind when he made us in the first place, and he talks about God giving us his Spirit as a guarantee of what is to come (5:5). The new life of God’s Spirit within us is God’s pledge that our ultimate destiny will be resurrection, not death. If we invite the Holy Spirit to make this hope real to us, what difference can that make to how we live here and now (5:6-7)?

There is so much more that could be said about how the Holy Spirit works and what he does for us. What do you think God wants to do in you/through you/for you? Spend some time inviting the Holy Spirit to effect this change in your life.

Be present, Spirit of God, within us,

your dwelling place and home,

that this house may be one where

all darkness is penetrated by your light,

all troubles calmed by your peace,

all evil redeemed by your love,

all pain transformed in your suffering,

and all dying glorified in your risen life. Amen.

Jim Cotter, from *The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer*