

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:13

Key Idea: I believe in the Holy Spirit

Key Question: What is the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit?

Of the three persons in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the Holy Spirit seems to be least known and understood today. Yet He is most vitally and intimately involved in our initial conversion and birth into the family of God, as well as in the ongoing development of our Christian lives. Knowledge of and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit bring us power, joy, and hope. When we neglect Him, through ignorance or indifference we insure spiritual poverty.

It is of great importance that we be clear in our minds that God the Holy Spirit is as much a person as God the Father and God the Son. Many Christians are inclined to speak of Him as an impersonal "it." They give the impression that the Holy Spirit is no more than an influence. Perhaps this is partially due to the fact that we use the term "spirit," in casual conversation, in this sense. We speak of the "spirit" of the times or say that "a spirit of expectancy swept the crowd as they awaited the arrival of the President."

Misunderstanding may partially stem also from the fact that the work of the Holy Spirit is not as visibly prominent as that of the Father and of the Son. His work is never to call attention to Himself. Jesus, in speaking of the gift of the Spirit, said, "He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak. And He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13, 14).

The Third Person of the Trinity

Jesus gave some of the clearest scriptural teaching about the Holy Spirit. He called the Spirit the Comforter, or Counselor, "whom the Father will send in My name; He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). These titles clearly imply personality. The terms "comforter," or "counselor," convey the idea of a person, such as a lawyer, on whom one calls for help. Obviously, counseling and comforting would not be possible if the Spirit were merely an impersonal influence.

In John 16:7, as in the previous referenced, the emphasis is on Christ's going away and the Holy Spirit's being sent by the Father to replace our Lord Himself. This change, Jesus said, would be beneficial for His disciples. An impersonal force could hardly improve on the personal presence of Jesus Christ.

Repeatedly (John 16:7-15), Jesus used the masculine personal pronoun "He" when referring to the Spirit. As we have pointed out, the Greek word translated "spirit" is the same as that for "breath," and is neuter in gender. Jesus used the masculine pronoun deliberately, intending it to indicate personality and intimacy.

We ought to *treat* the Spirit as a *person*. Ananias was struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). The Spirit may be *grieved* (Eph. 4:30) and *sinned against* by unforgivable blasphemy (Mark 3:29). None of these things would be true of an impersonal force.

The Holy Spirit *does* things which only a person could do. He *speaks*: "The Spirit said unto Philip, 'Go near'" (Acts 8:29). He *strives*: "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:3). "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity...(and) *maketh intercession* for us" (Rom. 8:26). He *reveals, searches, and knows*: "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things...the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). He distributes spiritual gifts "to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11). None of these verbs could rightly be used of a mere influence.

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The Holy Spirit is not only a person – He is Deity. He is specifically called "God" in the Ananias incident (Acts 5:4). Paul says, "For the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17; cf. v. 18), and again, "Ye are the temple of God...the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. 3:16).

Our Lord says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is worse than blasphemy against the Son of Man. This can only mean that blasphemy against the Spirit maligns and discredits God.

The Holy Spirit possesses attributes which belong only to Deity. He is *eternal*: "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself" (Heb. 9:14). He is *omnipresent*: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7-10). He is the "Spirit of *life*" (Rom. 8:2) and the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:13).

The Spirit does God's work. He was involved in *creation*: "the Spirit of God moved upon the...water" (Gen. 1:2). He is involved in *regeneration*, the new birth: "So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit: "I cast out (demons) by the Spirit of God" (Matt. 12:28). The Holy Spirit participates in resurrection: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He...shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

Old Testament teaching

Five differing aspects of the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament.

1. The work of the Spirit in creation of the universe (Gen. 1:2) and of man: "the Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (Job 33:4).
2. The work of the Spirit in equipping for service. He conferred power on judges and warriors. For instance, "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon (Samson)" (Jud. 14:6). The Israelites cried out to God and He gave them Othniel, "and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel and went out to war" (Jud. 3:10). When the Spirit came upon people for a particular purpose in this manner, He did not necessarily transform their moral character. This happened to a very small number of people, less than 90.
3. The work of the Spirit in inspiring the prophets. Usually they began their message with, "Thus saith the Lord." At times, however, they also attributed their message to the Holy Spirit: "And the Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet" (Ezek. 2:2). And Moses exclaimed, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Nub. 11:29) When the prophets proclaimed God's message to His people, they spoke God's actual words. (Deut. 18:17-18; Isaiah 51:16; Jer. 1:9; Ez. 2:7)

Moral Living

4. The work of the Holy Spirit in producing moral living. David, in agony of repentance for his dual sin of adultery and murder, pleaded for God to create a clean heart in him, and begged, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). The Spirit, David knew, is good, and He leads men to do God's will (Ps. 143:10). Because of the presence of God's Spirit, which David sensed is inescapable, he pleaded for a searching of his heart and for clear leading in the eternal way (Ps. 139:7, 23, 24).
5. The work of the Spirit in foretelling the coming of the Messiah. There are those which prophesy a direct indwelling of the Spirit in one messianic figure: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings" (Isa. 61:1). Jesus read this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth and uttered the electrifying words, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21; cf. Lk 4:18; Isa. 9:2-9; 42:1-4).

Equips for a Task

The Old Testament's earlier teaching on the Holy Spirit emphasized the coming of the Spirit to equip a person to perform a certain task. The Scripture suggests that out of this bestowal of the Spirit, men grew

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more conscious of their inner need for God's help if they were to be morally pure enough to serve the Lord. Later in the Old Testament period, some scholars detect an awareness, on the part of believers, that the human government of Israel would never succeed in achieving the purposes of Jehovah, and a growing realization that, in time, the Spirit would be given to all God's people.

Promise of Indwelling for all Believers

Our Lord's words to the disciples in this connection are instructive: "(the Spirit) dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (John 14:17). Just as there was a dispute in the Church, during the Arian controversy, over the Trinity and whether or not the Son of God had existed eternally or was the first of God's creatures, so there was also conflict concerning the Holy Spirit. In the Nicene Creed He is called, "The Lord, the Life-Giver, that proceeds from the Father, that with the Father and Son is together worshipped and together glorified." This formula was finally adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

Proceeds and Given

The Gospel of John tells us: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (15:26). This and other statements (e.g., John 16:7; 14:16; 20:22, etc.) imply a type of subordination of the Spirit to the Father and Son. This is only a subordination of relationship, not of Deity.

"The union of the Father and the Son in 'sending' the Spirit really works against any idea of differentiation which would mar the inner harmony of the divine Triad...Scripture seems clearly to state that while the Spirit proceeds from the Father, He was also 'given' by the Son to His Church, and that He is as much the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of God.

Other Activities

In relationship to the world, the Spirit took part in the creation of the universe, as already mentioned. He is also referred to as the Preserver of nature." (Ps. 104:30).

Jesus outlined the work of the Spirit so far as humanity as a whole is concerned. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures, the One who inspired them (2 Peter 1:20, 21). He is also the One who interprets them and applies them to our hearts at a particular time. It has been rightly observed that this "illuminating" work of the Holy Spirit never becomes so mystical and subjective that grammatical and historical consistency are abandoned. In fact, the Spirit activates our mind so that we think like Christ. (Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 14:14-15; 1 Cor. 2:13, 16)

The Spirit and Christ

The Holy Spirit had a particularly intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His humanity was completely dependent on the Spirit. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Him (Luke 1:35). Jesus was led by the Spirit (Matt. 4:1). He was anointed for His ministry by the Spirit in a special way at His baptism (Matt. 3:13-17). He offered Himself as a sacrifice through the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and He was raised from the dead by the power of the spirit (Rom. 1:4). He gave commandments to the apostles, and through them to the Church, by the Spirit (Acts 1:2).

In the Church, the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts for the good of the whole body: "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Cor. 12:7; cf. entire chapter). He is the one who supplies power which was promised the Church before Pentecost: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Because of the phenomenal exploits of the Early Church, which turned the Roman world upside down, the Acts has been called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit's Sealing

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As soon as a person puts his trust in Christ He is "sealed" by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). A seal is a symbol of a finished transaction, of ownership, and of security. Because we are sealed by the Spirit, we can have certainty and assurance of salvation. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (cf. Rom. 8:16). No one is a Christian who does not have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:7), for He indwells and seal every believer.

We are sealed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the time we are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ: "for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). This baptism, with its attendant sealing and indwelling by the Spirit, takes place at the time of conversion. This participation in the Spirit is shared by all believers, despite their varying degrees of maturity, strength, and devotion.

Filled with the Spirit

Being filled with the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience, but one that may be repeated. On the Day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). A few days later, in a dramatic prayer meeting, they had such an experience again (4:31).

The filling of the Spirit implies being given power and boldness for God's service, and strength to meet particular crises. It is possible, and it sometimes happens, that the baptism of the spirit and the infilling of the Spirit take place at the same time. They need not be separated in experience. But the filling of the Spirit is an experience to be repeated as necessary in the life of each believer. We are, literally, to "keep on being filled" (cf. Eph. 5:8, lit.)

The fullness of the Spirit is not a matter of our receiving more of Him. Rather, it is a matter of relationship. To be filled with the Spirit means we allow Him to occupy, guide, and control every area of our lives. His power can then work through us, making us effectively fruitful for God and flooding our hearts with His joy. This filling applies not only to our outward acts but to our inner thoughts and motives. When we are filled with the Spirit, all we are and have is subject to His control. But, it is never a mindlessness. In fact, one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. 2 Tim. 1:7

It is the Holy Spirit who delivers us from the power of sin. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The Holy Spirit changes the pattern of our life so that we can overcome sin. He does not make us sinless (1 John 1:8), but in Him we are able to start fulfilling the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:4). Such holy living is a work of the Spirit and a result of salvation; it is not in any way the basis for our being saved. The Holy Spirit is actively conforming believers to the image of Jesus. (2 Cor. 3:18; Titus 3:5)

The Spirit's Fruit

When the Holy Spirit produces His fruit in us, we find that "love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control" (cf. Gal. 5:22, 23) come naturally to us instead of our having to labor strenuously to cultivate these traits.

The Holy Spirit is also a guide to the individual Christian. We are instructed to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). His leadership is one of the signs that an individual is really a child of God: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). The Holy Spirit clearly led and guided the early Christians, as we read in the Acts, and He does the same today if a Christian is open and sensitive to His control.

The Holy Spirit prays for us (Rom. 8:26). He prays with groanings too deep for words according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26-27) What a wonderful thing to realize, especially when we don't know how to pray, that the Spirit of God makes intercession for us!

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The opposite of this intimate, loving, dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit is experienced when we offend Him. We are not to "grieve" the Spirit (Eph. 4:30). To grieve is to make sad. In the verses immediately following this command, some of the things that grieve the Spirit are enumerated. They have to do with attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions. Other things also grieve God's Spirit – idolatry, hatred, strife, heresy, envy, etc. (Gal. 5:18-21). To withhold anything from His is to grieve Him. It is a solemn thing to realize that even as *we* can be grieved, we can also, in a much more profound way, grieve God's Holy Spirit.

We are commanded, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). Because the figure of quenching suggests the idea of fire, some believe that this sin is more related to outward service than to motives and attitudes. In the scriptural context it suggests both. The verse follows a call to rejoice, pray, and give thanks. It precedes a warning not to despise whatever claims to be of God, but to test it. We may not only quench the Spirit in ourselves, but, by sinful living, confused beliefs, and unconcern may quench His work in and for others as well. On the other hand, the Spirit may well use others to correct, enlighten, and encourage *us*. To fail to receive God's Word through another person simply because he, like us, is imperfect, is to quench God's own Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit we *come* to know Christ and by the Holy Spirit's power we *live* and *grow* in Christ, in the service of the King and in the fellowship of His Church.

Material from Know What You Believe, by Little

The Church

The Body of Christ, the Church, is formed by the Spirit and maintained by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22; 4:3; 1 John 3:34). Spiritual gifts are given to Believers for the common good and to build up the church. (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:12, 26; Eph. 4:11-16) The Holy Spirit distributes the gifts to believers according to His purposes (1 Cor. 12:11, 18). Certain gifts of the Spirit have strict rules which must be followed in the worship assembly. In particular the gift of tongues and prophecy (1 Cor. 14:27-32). When spiritual gifts are exercised, there ought to be order and decency (1 Cor. 14:40).

Test the Spirits

It is a repeated exhortation in Scripture to test manifestations of the Spirit, prophetic proclamations and teaching (1 Thess. 5:19-22). Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophetic utterances. But carefully examine everything; hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil." We are to test the spirits to see if it is from God or not. (1 John 4:1) The words of prophets ought to be judged or evaluated (1 Cor. 12:29) and teachers ought to be tested (2 John 1:9). Why? Because many, not a few, many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1) And we are warned by the Holy Spirit about deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

In the Spirit

The New Testament often refers to our spiritual location as either in Christ or in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). "You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you." (See 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:17; Eph. 2:18) Believers are to pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). We worship by or in the Spirit (Phil. 3:3). We walk by faith and by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Believers are being built into God's temple in Christ by the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

Material from Systematic Theology by H. C. Thiessen

Personal Questions

1. What are some of the differences between "the Spirit of God" and the "spirit in humans?"
2. Summarize what Jesus taught regarding the Holy Spirit in John 14-16.
3. List 3 differences between the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

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4. How would you define the work of the Spirit in the following areas: regeneration, illumination, repentance, faith and serve in the church?
5. Define sanctification in simple terms.

Group Study

OPEN

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Acts 2:1-15, 37-42

1. Obviously, this is something brand new that God did that day, and it has never happened again. Make a list of all the things the Holy Spirit did that day.
2. What in this list especially stands out to you and why?
3. Peter preached, people believed, and the church grew by 3000! What is different today?
4. The Holy Spirit inspired the Word and made sure it was written down. Read John 15:26-27. What does this tell you about the Holy Spirit? About the Bible? About believers?
5. Read John 16:12-15. What is the main focus of the Holy Spirit's work?
6. What is the difference between being baptized by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit? (See 1 Cor. 12:13 and Ephesians 5:18)
7. What is so confusing about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
8. Read Ephesians 4:3-6. How can we cooperate with the Spirit's work of unity in the church?
9. Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists gifts of the Spirit. Make a list of the gifts, then note what is said about them all generally in Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 7, 11.

KEY APPLICATION: We can trust the Holy Spirit to mold us into the image of Jesus.

Application: Go around the room and point out the gifts in the person on your right. Then pray, thanking God for their service in the church (and/or kingdom).

NEXT WEEK

Key Verse: Ephesians 2:20-21; 4:15-16

Key Idea: I believe in the Church, the body of Christ

Key Question: What does it mean that the church is God's primary means of accomplishing His purposes in the world?

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Study Passages

Ephesians 2:20-21; 4:15-16

Colossians 3:16; 1:28

1 Peter 2:4-8

Ephesians 1:12

John 15:5

Galatians 6:10

Romans 11:7-24

1 Cor. 14:26

1 Corinthians 3:6-9

Questions:

1. How does a church differ from a Bible study group?
2. Why should Christians become members of a local congregation?
3. What are some reasons not to?
4. What are some dangers of those who believe yet do not get connected to other believers in a local church?
5. What exactly should a local group of believers be doing and not doing?
6. Name some ways the Holy Spirit empowers the local church to bless the surrounding community.
7. The church should reach out to those who do not believe and reach in to build up fellow believers. Give some examples how you are engaged in both these purposes.