

6. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Grace + Holy Spirit = Power

In our study today, we want to know and understand more about the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, in the hope that we can become more intimately acquainted with Him and His work. There has been a great deal of fear when it comes to the Holy Spirit, partly because many of us grew up with an older English translation of the Scripture where He is called the Holy Ghost. Let me say up front; there is nothing ghostly or spooky about the Holy Spirit. He is a person, in the same way as the Lord Jesus and the Father. He thinks (Acts 15:28), speaks (Acts 1:16), leads (Romans 8:14), and can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). □

Sometimes He is described as the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9), or the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7). On the evening of the Last Supper in the Upper Room, Jesus began to explain to the disciples what was ahead for them that very night. He would be arrested and the next day crucified. He told them that He was not leaving them alone and that the Holy Spirit would come and be close to them in the same way that Christ had been. He would not leave them comfortless. He would send the Holy Spirit to walk with them and even be in them.

¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17).

The Lord called the Holy Spirit the *parakletos*, which means the "one called alongside." There is no one word to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word is translated in different ways in different English translations as helper, counselor, comforter or even encourager. He would be "another" counselor. The word for "another" means "of the same kind." In other words, the Holy Spirit is just like Jesus.

The Spirit of God in the Old Testament

Right at the beginning, the Holy Spirit was active together with the Father and Son at the Creation of the world. The Spirit was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:1-2). If we look closer at the word "hovering," we find that it conveys the idea of a bird sitting in a nest, hovering and brooding over her eggs, caring for the new lives. The same word is used to describe how "an eagle stirs up its nest, [and] hovers over its young" in Deuteronomy 32:11. Further on, when God created man, He "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" (Genesis 2:7). The Hebrew word implied here for breath is *ruach*, which is also the word for "Spirit." The *Ruach* of God brings life not only to man but also to lifeless churches, too. New life and spiritual power come as man responds to the Spirit. When the Spirit came on individuals in the Old Testament, it was for particular purposes. For instance, artistic gifts were given to Bezalel for the work of the Tent of Meeting, "skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship" (Exodus 31:3-5). This kind of gift still happens today with worship leaders and Christian artists

of all kinds who, when the touch of the Spirit comes upon them; their work takes on a much greater dimension with an ability to "inspire" the heart. □

The Spirit of the Lord worked in the life of Sampson when He was given strength way beyond his human capacity. We often think of Samson as a 7-foot muscular colossal guy, but I do not believe he was. I think he looked small and thin. Why? If he had been muscular and strong, the Philistines would have thought his acts on pulling up the gates of the city and carrying them off (Judges 16:3) was done in his own strength. Scripture indicates they were mystified by his power, so much so that the Philistines employed Jezebel to find out the secret of his strength (Judges 16:6). It was so evident to them that his power was supernatural. It was the Spirit that would come upon Sampson and give him superhuman strength (Judges 15:14). Then, there was Othniel (Judges 3:9-10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), Saul (1 Samuel 10:10), David (1 Samuel 16:13), and there are many more examples in Scripture. These are just a few.

The Promised Holy Spirit

Jeremiah the prophet spoke of a New Covenant (Testament), which would be different from the first covenant in the fact that God would put His laws in our hearts. □

³¹The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," *declares the Lord*. ³³"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because **they will all know me**, from the **least of them to the greatest**," "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

What does it mean to know the Lord? How can a person grow in intimate knowledge of God? □

This new relationship spoke about more than five hundred years before Christ would be given, not just to specific individuals at certain times, but to all people, young and old, men and women. The prophet Joel also spoke of the age of the Spirit with a promise: □

I will **pour out my Spirit on all people**, Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, **I will pour out my Spirit** in those days (Joel 2:28-29).

We now live in that day or age of the Spirit. John the Baptist heralded the coming of the Spirit before the baptism of Jesus. "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16).

Jesus was a man wholly filled with the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God descended on Him in bodily form at His baptism (Luke 3:22). He returned to the Jordan "full of the Holy Spirit" and was "led by the Spirit in the desert" (Luke 4:1). He returned to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit" (v. 14). In a synagogue in Nazareth, He read the lesson from Isaiah 61:1, "the Spirit of the Lord is on me," and Jesus said, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21).

Under the inspiration of the Lord, Ezekiel, the prophet, spoke of a time when, out from under the threshold of the Temple, a river of life would flow toward the east that would start ankle deep, become knee deep, and would eventually become so deep it would lift people off their feet and carry them along in its path (Ezekiel 47:1-9). Wherever this river flowed, it would bring life, fruit, and healing. This longing of the Jews for such a time of blessing was celebrated at the Feast of Tabernacles, which falls in the middle of October in our calendar. Thousands of Jews would go to Jerusalem on this third major feast of the year. The seventh day of the feast was the most noteworthy (John 7:37). It was only later that an eighth day was added. On the seventh day, the last great day of the feast, with thousands of people looking on, the High Priest would go down to the Pool of Siloam and fill up a two-pint golden pitcher and carry it back into the temple courts, to the center of the crowd that stood before the altar of the Temple. Together, the crowd would circle the altar seven times in remembrance of the walls of Jericho were brought down. Then, with the whole event accompanied by the singing of various Psalms, the Chief Priest would pour the water onto the altar as a prophetic sign that the Jewish people were ready for the water and river of life to be poured out, just as the prophet Ezekiel had said. The pouring out of the water spoke of their expectation that, perhaps in their day, the river of life would begin to flow as the pitcher was poured out.

To the Jewish people, the center of the world was Israel. The center of Israel was Jerusalem, and the center of Jerusalem was the Temple. It seems that, at that very moment of the pitcher being poured out, Jesus made Himself higher than everyone else, probably by standing on something, shouting with all His voice so that all could hear His words,

³⁷On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. ⁴⁰On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." ⁴¹Others said, "He is the Messiah" (John 7:37-41).

What He was saying was that out of the temple of His life would flow the refreshing, life-giving, and healing power of the Spirit. When Christ lives in us and has been given full ownership to rule and reign over us, this river or spring will flow from the very center of our being, the spiritual Temple of the Lord Jesus. This river of life comes to us when we are born-again of the Spirit and have become spiritually one with the Lord just as He prayed that last night with His disciples, "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20). 76 times the Bible references the words, In Christ (KJV).

Jesus was saying that the prophecy of Ezekiel and others would not be fulfilled in a place but a person. Jesus is the temple out of which will flow the water of life—the Holy Spirit is that life of God. John, the apostle, went on to explain that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit, “**whom those who believed in him were later to receive**” (John 7:39). He added that “**up to that time the Spirit had not been given**” (v.39)

Why do you think the Holy Spirit could not come to all God’s people before Jesus?

He did not discriminate between them and us, for he **purified their hearts** by faith (Acts 15:9).

The Spirit of God could not come and live in the believer until each one had been purified at the level of their inner being, what the Bible calls the heart. The barrier of sin between God and man had to be taken away (Isaiah 59:2).

The promise of the Father was fulfilled after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. They had to wait until fifty days after Passover. In that intervening time, Jesus told His disciples, “**I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from high**” (Luke 24:49). Listen to what the Spirit of God is saying to you from the Word of God—The Holy Spirit is a promise from the Father. God’s not holding back on His promise. He wants to fill us with His Spirit. Luke tells us that Jesus will give His people power. The Greek word translated into the English word “power” is *dynamis*. We get the English word dynamite from it. It is a word used to describe God’s *ability* to perform. For the believer, *power* is given to achieve by applying the Lord’s *abilities*. The good news is that this power is for all of us, not just a few.

The promise of the Father is fulfilled. Every Christian receives the promise of the Father. The Holy Spirit is no longer for particular people at particular times for specific tasks. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given for *all* Christians: “**Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’**” (Acts 2:38). On the day of Pentecost, when the crowd asked what they needed to do, Peter the apostle told them that they would all receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Listen to what he further told them: “**The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off- for *all* whom the Lord our God will call**” (Acts 2:39). Has the Lord called you? Then this is your promise.

How Do We Recognize the Holy Spirit in our Lives? What does He do?

I want to look at how the Holy Spirit makes Himself known. After all, we know He is a person. He is like Jesus and was sent to come alongside us when the Lord departed from this earth. He is the one who makes Jesus known to us, throughout our journey in the Christian life. Let’s look now at the things the Holy Spirit can do in our lives as believers. □

He guides you into all Truth

The Holy Spirit can unlock and unveil truths formerly hidden from us. Paul the apostle wrote: “**The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they**

are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). I remember when I first became a Christian. The Word of God became alive to me. Before I was a Christian, I remember walking down the road close to my house and seeing a sign outside of the Salvation Army building. The sign read: “Are you really alive?” Think of how ridiculous that sounds if you do not know the life of Christ in you. What do you mean by the question, am I alive? I have to be alive to read the sign! I remember thinking that those people were crazy. Only after I became a Christian did I understand what the poster meant. □

When the Holy Spirit illuminates the Word of God to us, it is like a light being switched on. The truth is made clear to us. He wants to continue to do this for us, revealing Himself in His Word. My personal experience has been that the Word is profound and that you will never exhaust the treasures in the Word of God. You will never exhaust the Holy Spirit, either. Ask Him to show you new things about Jesus, and you will be a continual learner. When the Holy Spirit guides us, He shows us what is there that cannot be seen with our own eyes. Some people are prideful, and it is humbling for some people to admit their need of the Holy Spirit. What is the cost? Our pride has to be shattered. However, once we are broken and able to see our stubbornness, the Spirit will show us amazing things in Scripture. We will never outgrow the need of our heavenly guide.

Can you think of a time when you felt that the Spirit was leading you? At the time, it may have felt like a hunch or your intuition, but looking back, you are aware that God was leading you by His Spirit. Briefly describe the situation. □

In the early 1950s, as persecution swept through the Chinese church, a pastor named Li lived in Guangdong Province in southern China. Li had a wife and five children, aged from twelve to a newborn baby. The authorities arrested Pastor Li for “counter-revolutionary” activities and sentenced him to prison with hard labor in an iron mine in remote northeast China. So that she could be near her husband, Pastor Li’s wife took a simple job at the Iron mine where the prisoners worked. The prison director took her outside to an area above where 3,000 prisoners worked below the ground in an iron mine. He said, “Do you see this red button? Your job is to stand next to this pole all day, every day, and when someone tells you to push it, you must push it straight away. This button is the emergency button, and when it is pushed a siren is triggered deep below the ground that makes the men evacuate as fast as they can. This button should never be pushed by accident, or without us telling you to push it.” For day after day, week after week, young Sister Li stood next to the pole with the red button. When she received her first pay—just a few dollars—she and her family were overjoyed.

One afternoon, as she was standing next to the pole, she suddenly heard a voice say, “Push the button!” She spun around to find no one near her, and she was confused. A few moments later she heard the same voice again, this time louder: “Quick! Push the button now!” Sister Li again turned but saw no one. She thought she was losing her mind and just stood there confused. She couldn’t push the button unless there was a major emergency, and nothing looked any different from normal. A few seconds later she heard the voice for the third time, but on this occasion, it was with great authority: “Sister Li, push the button now!” This time she realized it was no less than the voice of the Lord that had been speaking to her. She didn’t understand why He was telling her to push the button, but she knew she had to obey. She immediately pushed the red button, and the emergency alarm sounded deep underground. □

Three thousand men emerged to the surface as quickly as they could. They were confused and eager to learn what emergency had taken place. The prison director came running from his office and demanded to know why Sister Li had pushed the button and brought production to a halt. Then, just moments after the last man had evacuated from the mine the ground started to shake violently. A strong earthquake struck that lasted for about 20 seconds, completely collapsing the mine to such an extent that nobody has been able to enter again to this day. When the shaking stopped, an eerie silence came upon the gathered mass. Every eye was fixed upon the tiny, frail figure, still standing next to the pole and the red button that she had so jealously guarded. The terrified prison director asked in a stammering voice, "Comrade Li, how...how did you know that you should push the button when you did?" She was given a fruit-box to stand on so that she could be seen just above the heads of the gathered men. In the loudest voice she could muster she said, "It is the Lord Jesus Christ who told me to push the red button. He told me to do it three times, and finally, I did. Jesus Christ is the only way for you to know the true and living God. He loves you, as seen by the fact he saved all your lives this day. You need to repent of your sins and give your lives to him!" Immediately all three thousand men, including the prison director, knelt and prayed with great sobs, asking Jesus to come and forgive them and live in their hearts. □

We can see that God really does lead us. He does this in various ways. He speaks to us as we read His Word, but by His Spirit, He also speaks to our hearts, sometimes in a still small voice, or something we hear or read, even the counsel of a friend. Knowing God more and more, you will improve at recognizing His voice when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. One important thing to note is that the Holy Spirit will always agree with Jesus and the Father, so He will not reveal something that is contrary to what God has told in His Word. □

The Holy Spirit Only Speaks What the Father Gives Him to Say

"He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears" (John 16:13). The Authorized Version (King James) translates this verse, "He shall not speak of himself," which is one of the more unfortunate translations in biblical translation history. As we saw above, it has led good people to believe they should barely mention the Holy Spirit for He does not like to have people talk about Him. This thinking is mistaken, after all, the Holy Spirit wrote the New Testament! That is how we know about the Holy Spirit! The correct translation is not that He would not speak of Himself but that He will not speak "on his own" or "on his own authority" (ESV). It means He passes on what the Father tells Him to say.

Never be afraid to talk about the Holy Spirit. It is precisely what the Father and Son want you to do. The Holy Spirit continued the same pattern that Jesus followed. Jesus said: **"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing; because whatever the Father does the Son also does (John 5:19).** This Scripture means that Jesus took His cues from the Father—what to say, where to go, when to heal and when to reply. He did nothing without receiving the green light from the Father. The Father orchestrated everything that Jesus did. Everything. The Son did nothing on His own. Ever. That is what the Holy Spirit is saying about Himself. □

The Holy Spirit Predicts the Future

He will tell you what is to come (John 16:13). This is the basis for prophecy. All prophecies in the Old Testament – from Moses to Elijah, from Samuel to Malachi – were borne by the Holy Spirit. “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please (Isaiah 46:10). In the New Testament, Agabus was called a prophet and knew a famine would be coming (Acts 11:28). Paul, the apostle, knew the ship he was on would be shipwrecked (Acts 27:23-26). God knows the future as perfectly as He knows the past. In the matter of prophecy today, we still must test prophetic words we hear, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:29. There is safety in knowing the Scriptures, for the Holy Spirit will never contradict the revealed Word of God. God's Spirit still speaks to His people today. □

The Holy Spirit Always Glorifies Jesus

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, “He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (John 16:14). One of the interesting things about the Trinity is how they interact. The Father honors the Spirit and the Son. The Son honors the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit glorifies the Son and speaks what He hears from the Father. In glorifying Christ, the Holy Spirit honors Him for who He is, what He said, what He did for us, and continues to do for us. The Holy Spirit leads us to praise the Lord Jesus. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would take “what is mine.” “What is mine” refers to Christ’s work as the Redeemer. Jesus is the focus. He is the One who was and is to be glorified. The Lord prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:1-5.) Jesus is our Redeemer, the God-man. It is not the Spirit whom we are to focus our attention on. You may ask: Is not the Holy Spirit God? Yes, but it was not the Holy Spirit who died. It is not the Holy Spirit to whom every knee shall bow one day. So, when Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would take “what is mine,” He was stating that the focus would be on the Redeemer and Savior of the world. Christ is the Bridegroom with whom we will be married. Therefore, we see that the Holy Spirit is always pointing us towards Jesus and making His praises glorious.

The Holy Spirit is our Reminder.

Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, “He will bring to remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26 ESV). This ability of the Holy Spirit to remind us of the Words of Jesus is an essential thought for us to consider today. The more you fill yourself with the Word of God, the more the Holy Spirit will be able to recall Christ's Words for you. We are to spend time with the Lord in His Word. It is powerful because those who are spending time reading His Word will also have the Holy Spirit bringing those Words back to them. It is not just a matter of receiving a touch from the Holy Spirit, although we should be open to that, we have a banqueting table, a feast in God’s Word if we take the time. The more we do this, the more we will sense the Holy Spirit coming alongside us and reminding us of His Word. There are many today who want the Lord to touch their lives and give them a feeling, a direction, etc. We are invited to come to Him at all times and cultivate our relationship with Him. He wants to guide and teach us; He does not want us to feel alone. I would encourage you to develop your hidden life with God as Jesus did. □

Prayer: Father, I open my life up to Your Holy Spirit. Whatever rooms of my life are closed to you, please come and fill, rule and reign in me. I am thirsty for more of you. May I be led, guided, and in step with Your Holy Spirit. Amen!

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