

## We Believe Part 15

We continue to examine what we believe as Christians, using the Apostles' Creed as our guide. Let's read it together. **I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy, apostolic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.**

In the first part of the Creed we affirm our belief in God the father and his work in Creation. In the second part we affirm our belief in God the Son and his work of redemption. Now we affirm our belief in God the Holy Spirit and his work of transformation in our lives.

We believe in the Holy Spirit we said. Let's explore that a bit this morning. What is it we believe about the Holy Spirit? Just who is the Holy Spirit? The bible refers to the Holy Spirit in a number of ways. If you've read *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, I mention 77 different names or descriptions of the Holy Spirit, who he is and what he does. I'm not going to go through those 77 things, but let's start here: **The Holy Spirit is God.** The bible clearly speaks of the Holy Spirit as God in both the Old and New Testaments. We believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God as Trinity, One God existing in and consisting of three Persons.

**The Holy Spirit is "He" not "it."** As one of the persons of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is a He, having personality. Jesus, in referring to the Holy Spirit in John 16 says, **"I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of sin..."** Paul warns the church in Ephesians 4:30 not to grieve the Holy Spirit. He can be grieved. The Holy Spirit speaks and sees. We could go on but the point is, the Holy Spirit is a Person in the sense of being part of the Godhead and not a lesser entity of some kind.

The bible refers to the Holy Spirit as both the Spirit of God the Father (Matthew 10:20) and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:19). For you church history buffs, you know the first big split or schism in the church came in 1054 with the Eastern church maintaining that the Holy

Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, while the Western church maintained the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Jesus said in John 16, referring to the Holy Spirit, “I will send him to you.” But then Jesus said, “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of Truth.” John 14:16. So we believe the Holy Spirit eternally issues or proceeds from the Father and from the Son.

**The Holy Spirit is the hidden story behind all of history.** From the beginning, the Holy Spirit is everywhere present, behind the scenes. In Genesis 1 the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, involved in creation. It was the Holy Spirit who gave life (breath) to the clay God fashioned into man. It was the Holy Spirit who divinely inspired and spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament. As we affirmed this morning in the Creed, Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus’ public ministry begins when the Spirit descends upon him at John’s baptism. He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness and returns in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the writer of Hebrews Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice to the Father through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost that empowers the church, giving us boldness for ministry. At salvation we are born again by the Holy Spirit and Jesus comes to dwell in us by means of the Holy Spirit’s abiding presence. It is the Holy Spirit that guides and directs us. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers and enables us to be witnesses of Christ and to take His gospel to the world in word and in power. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that these mortal bodies will some day be changed and put on immortality and we will be forever with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the story behind the story.

In his book *Fundamentals of the Faith*, Peter Kreeft wrote, “All of human history is a three-act play: creation, fall and redemption. The third act has three scenes: Old Testament times, the revelation primarily of the Father; Gospel times, the revelation primarily of the Son; and the age of the Church, beginning with Pentecost, the revelation of the Spirit. First God outside us, then God beside us, then God inside us – three stages of love’s intimacy. It is never either/or, of course. The Father reveals himself only through his word and Spirit. The Son reveals the Father and sends the Spirit. The Spirit reveals the Son and through him the Father. Yet in a sense we can divide history into the age of the Father, the age of the Son and the age of

the Spirit. We live in history's last age."

We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. Stuart Briscoe told of an old English preacher speaking to a group of young people. He told them that when the Father finished his work of creation, on the seventh day he figuratively sat down. When the Son finished his work of redemption and ascended to heaven, He figuratively sat down at the right hand of the Father. But then the old preacher said, "I want you to check in your Bibles and find out where the Holy Spirit has sat down. Where does it say that? Well, I'll help you. It doesn't say that. The reason is...the work of the Holy Spirit is not completed." The work of the Holy Spirit is not done. He is still working in us and through us the church, equipping and empowering us, drawing people to Christ, accomplishing the Father's plan and purposes.

Notice, **He is the HOLY Spirit**. Stating the obvious, but He is the Holy Spirit not the unholy Spirit, not the relaxed standards Spirit, not the casual-it-really-doesn't-matter-Spirit, but the Holy Spirit. That suggests something about what our life and practice should be as followers of Christ who are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "**You know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.**" **John 14:17**. It is the Holy Spirit that lives within us, calling us to and working to produce within us a life of holiness. If we honor the Holy Spirit and listen to His guidance, we can avoid the unholy things that corrupt and destroy us.

The apostle Paul declared, "**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.**" **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. We believe in the Holy Spirit and more than that, as born again followers of Christ with the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we must live holy lives as temples of the Holy Spirit.

Notice **He is the Holy SPIRIT**. The older versions of the Scripture used the term Holy Ghost. The original word, translated as ghost or spirit, meant wind or breath. As Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the breath, the life giving force and energy of God. He is the creative power of God. Whatever God is doing in us and in the world, the Holy Spirit is actively involved.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit dwells within us and is at work in us. As we allow Him and participate with Him, He works in our mind and emotions, through our personality, through our experiences, through the Word of God as we learn and apply it to our lives – the Spirit is working through all of these things to produce the character and life of Christ within us.

Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. This the character of Christ and the Holy Spirit is at work to produce these same qualities in your life, in abundance. **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law...Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:22-23, 25.** There is no law to restrict or limit the amount of the Holy Spirit’s fruit to be produced in our lives. We can’t love too much or have too much patience or be too kind or faithful. And notice Paul says, “since we live by the Spirit, let’s keep in step with the Spirit.” Keep up with the Holy Spirit as he produces his fruit in your life.

**The Holy Spirit is our Counselor.** Several times in John 14 and 16 Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Counselor. For instance, **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” John 14:16-17.** Some versions translate this word as Comforter. (Does everyone understand why the words can be slightly different? Jesus likely spoke Aramaic and Hebrew, but the New Testament was written in Greek. Then the bible has been translated into English for us so we look to find the most precise words to understand the meaning.) The word translated here as Counselor or Comforter is the Greek word *Parakletos*. Para means alongside. A para-medic is someone who works alongside the medical community. Kaleo means to call, so the Parakletos means **One who is called alongside to help.**

The Holy Spirit is our counselor, comforter, companion, in that he is the one called alongside to help us, to be with us, to strengthen us, to speak to us on behalf of the Father and the Son and also to speak on our behalf to the Father and the Son. He helps us in prayer, in confession, in guidance for our lives.

**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.** Notice in that passage Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. That’s good news for us because the Spirit of God only deals in what is true and real. He won’t give you something unholy. He won’t lead you into something that is false or deceitful or counterfeit. You can trust him. “Ah, but can I trust myself to rightly discern the leading of the Holy Spirit?” Look at what Jesus said concerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He gives us insight on how we can be sure it is the Holy Spirit’s leading.

**“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit,**

**whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:25-26.**

**“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” John 15:26**

**“But when he, the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” John 16:13-14**

The Holy Spirit will only speak the truth and will only lead us into truth. And look at this- this is how we know we can trust him and how we can trust ourselves to discern his leading – because the Holy Spirit will teach us about Jesus and will bring to our remembrance what Jesus said. That means the Holy Spirit will illuminate the Word of God as we read and study. He will bring to light and life the words of Christ as he brings them to our remembrance. He will testify of Jesus and point to Jesus and bring glory to Jesus. If something doesn't line up with Jesus, with the teaching of Jesus, with the nature of Jesus as revealed in the Scripture, then we can be sure it isn't coming from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn't draw attention to himself, he points to Jesus. He acknowledges and glorifies Jesus. John the apostle wrote, **“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.” 1 John 4:2-3.** The Holy Spirit testifies of this truth as he points us all to Jesus.

**The Holy Spirit enables and empowers believers to live a Christ-centered life.** In John 14 Jesus said, **“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14:15.** We read that and think, “I love Jesus but I don't know what's wrong with me. I have trouble obeying his commands. The things I know I should do, sometimes I find myself doing the very opposite. Maybe I should just work harder.” Hard work is good and Jesus isn't going to strong arm you to get you to obey his commands. He expects you to participate in the process, but here is the good news. Jesus didn't expect you to live this obedient life without his help. In the very next verse Jesus says, **“And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth... you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will**

**not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:16-18.**

The Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives and begins to change things. He changes our wants and desires. He produces a desire in us to want to obey, to want to please Christ. He rearranges our priorities and gives us a new sense of what can be done. He isn't threatening us to “do this or else.” He is enabling us and empowering us so that we want to and can do all things through Christ who strengthens us by the working of the Holy Spirit.

No longer can we say, “I can't do that!” because by the power of the Holy Spirit I can do all things through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. What we are really saying is, “I won't!” Ask Jesus for his help. Ask him to empower you with His Holy Spirit so you live a Christ centered and Christ pleasing life. You can if you will, by his Holy Spirit.

And he has also empowered us so we can be his witnesses to the whole world. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew they lacked the spiritual power that would be needed to go into all the world and be his witnesses. So they obeyed Jesus, waited, and on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples. Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood with the disciples, no longer frightened of the authorities he told the crowd the Jesus they had crucified just weeks before had been resurrected from the dead and had been exalted to the right hand of God and “He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

In response to his sermon, the crowds asked Peter, “**What shall we do?**” **Acts 2:37**  
Notice they didn't ask “what shall we believe?” What shall we do? **Peter told them to do three things: 1) Repent. 2) Believe in Jesus and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. 3) Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

Peter looked ahead by the Holy Spirit into the future, perhaps all the way into 2015 when he told the people, “**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**

We believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe in his enabling and empowering presence and work in the lives of the people of God. We believe the promise of the Holy Spirit is for us today. But like the people responding to Peter's sermon, we need to do more than believe. We need to ask, “what shall we do?” And the answer is repent, believe and then ask and receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit.