

## **The Holy Spirit 2017**

In conversation with the staff over the past few weeks, questions were raised about the operation of the gifts of the Spirit and we decided it might be wise to spend a few Sundays talking about the Holy Spirit, who He is and what he is doing in the life of a follower of Jesus.

Many of you have read the book I wrote back in 1992, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*. It covers in very basic detail and in simple terms something of who the Holy Spirit is and what he does as revealed in the Scripture. If you've not read the book, I encourage you to read it as just a very basic primer on the Holy Spirit.

For a lot of people, the Holy Spirit is kind of the lesser known part of the Trinity. Some of you may have grown up in churches where the Holy Spirit was only mentioned as part of the benediction or as part of the blessing, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." Others of us grew up where the preacher talked about the Holy Spirit all the time. If you are old enough you heard him spoken of as the "Holy Ghost" and if you are of a certain age or from a certain style of Pentecostal church, the emphasis was on the first part of the name, "Holy Ghost." Just so you know, ghost is simply another word for "spirit" and as our language has evolved and changed, our reference to God's Spirit has changed as well. There is no theological advantage to calling the third person of the Trinity "Holy Ghost" rather than "Holy Spirit."

**Why don't we know more about the Holy Spirit?** Many of us have never been taught to depend upon the Holy Spirit or to be aware of His presence and work in our life. Attending an A/G church you are likely to think of the Holy Spirit in connection with the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, with these kind of supernatural or mysterious things, and you may not think of the daily, continual presence and work of the Spirit in the life of every believer. Understand, you shouldn't be frightened or anxious about the work of the Holy Spirit. He is simply one part of the Godhead, the Trinity. As all orthodox Christians, we believe in one God, eternally existent and revealed to us in three persons, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead, so when someone is talking about the Holy Spirit, they are talking about the Spirit of God. There is nothing scary or weird about that. Why don't we know more about the Holy Spirit?

**The Holy Spirit is unseen.** I know, we haven't seen the Father or the Son either, but we can picture them. We can create a mental image of Father. We likely have a mental image of

the Son, but it's difficult coming up with an image for the Holy Spirit. In fact, coming up with that image is made harder by the fact that even in the Scripture the Holy Spirit is symbolized in a variety of ways including the image of a dove, oil, tongues of fire or a pillar of fire or smoke, a rushing mighty wind, a river of living water. The bible speaks of the Spirit descending upon Jesus, falling upon people, being poured out on people, filling people, flowing out of and abiding with people. All of these images and references reveal something of his nature and his work, but it's hard for us to pin down an image or a way of thinking about the Holy Spirit. Another reason we don't know as much about the Holy Spirit...

**The Holy Spirit doesn't focus attention on Himself.** Jesus said the Holy Spirit would speak not about himself but about Jesus. **“He will not speak on his own...He will bring glory to me.” John 16:13-14.** The bible tells us the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus, testify of Jesus, reveal Jesus, bear witness of Jesus, so all the attention is focused on Jesus and not upon the Holy Spirit himself. Another reason we may not know much about the Holy Spirit...

**Much of the emphasis has been on dramatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit.** As I've already mentioned, we've emphasized certain gifts or manifestations of the Spirit and Spirit baptism but we have neglected the teaching about the Holy Spirit and what he is doing right now in the life of the follower of Christ. We have neglected his role in salvation, in sanctifying us, in bringing forth the character qualities of Christ in us, in bringing comfort to us, in leading and directing us and guiding and empowering the church. Understand...

**Everything Jesus secured and provided for us through his death, resurrection and ascension to the throne is given to us and brought to us by the Holy Spirit. He gives us power to live for God and to accomplish all the Father has ordained for us to do. He lives within us and equips, empowers and enables us to be the children of God that Jesus redeemed us to be.**

Understand, **The Holy Spirit is fully God and has all the attributes of divinity.** For instance, He is eternal. The writer of Hebrews refers to Him as the “eternal Spirit”. **“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.” Hebrews 9:14** He is omniscient, i.e., he knows all things. Paul writes, **“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-11** He knows the very

thoughts of God. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent. The psalmist said, **“Where can I go from your Spirit...If I go up to the heavens you are there, if I make my bed in the depths you are there...” Psalm 139:7-10.** Eternal. Omniscient. Omnipresent.

The Holy Spirit is fully God. Whatever action of God we are talking about, we see the involvement and activity of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. For instance, the Holy Spirit was active in creation. **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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 1:1-2** (The Holy Spirit is still often found hovering, creating something out of that nothingness of our life.) Job said, **“The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Job 33:4**

The Holy Spirit is still active in re-creation as well. He’s still bringing to life things we thought were dead and beyond hope. In Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones the Lord said, **“Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.” Ezekiel 37:13-14.** I believe the Holy Spirit is still bringing to life hopes and dreams and plans that we thought were long dead and lifeless. He can still bring things back to life!

The list can go on and on concerning the Holy Spirit. In my book I list 77 attributes or names or functions of the Holy Spirit. Just as an example, the bible tells us the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. He speaks. He teaches us. He makes intercession through us. He leads us. He performs signs and miracles, confirming the word of God. He reveals things to men. He illuminates the word of God to the believing mind. He calls men and women into ministry and service in the church. He purges and purifies his church. He unifies believers. He gives boldness and power to witness. He draws men and women to God. He abides with us forever. He testifies and bears witness that we are the children of God. He produces the character qualities of Christ in us (the fruit of the Spirit.) He supplies strength to our inner man. He builds up our faith. He helps us with worship and prayer. The Holy Spirit enriches the life of every believer and follower of Christ, not just Pentecostals. Be aware of the person and work of the Holy Spirit!

Let me emphasize again, **The Holy Spirit is personal, not impersonal.** We confuse the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit with the Holy Spirit himself so people say, “I got it.” They have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. They “got”, they received an experience, but

they did not receive an “it.” He is a person of the Godhead, so we can think of him with the non-physical attributes of a person. When we think of the Holy Spirit, we think of the power of God expressed. We think of divine energy and force and yet, He is not simply a force at work, he is a person of the Godhead. He is not just power. He has power, but he is not power, he is a person of the triune God. We need to understand the distinction. Power is impersonal. We want to get hold of power and use it. But the Holy Spirit is a person. He wants to get hold of us, to live within us and work through us and with us.

The Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit with personal pronouns. Jesus said, **“But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes...he will guide you into all truth...” John 16:7-13.** Jesus didn’t say I will send “it” to you or “something” to you, but rather he would send “someone” to us, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus implies a rich, intimate relationship. Referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, **“But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” John 14:17** He would be the counselor and comforter at work in our lives. As I said earlier, the Holy Spirit conveys to us what Christ has provided for us. Everything Christ secured for us by his death and resurrection, according to the will of the Father, is delivered to us by the Holy Spirit.

**The Holy Spirit reproduces the character of Christ in us. He conveys to us what we are in Christ, who we are in Christ, and not only that, the Holy Spirit conveys to us what God desires and designs for us to be.** In our churches, while we have emphasized Pentecostal baptism and speaking in other tongues, that is not at all the only role the Holy Spirit plays in the life of the believer. That’s why I want to point this out. If you think the only role of the Spirit is to give you power and enable you to speak in tongues, you are missing out on so much more.

The Holy Spirit is at work in your life, right now. At least he wants to be at work in your life right now. If you will allow Him, He desires to give guidance and direction to your life. He desires to produce His good fruit in your life. He desires to impart spiritual gifts to you to build up and edify the church. So let me ask you, **Given what you know, is there any reason you should be reluctant to invite the Holy Spirit’s full and complete involvement in your life?** Think about it. Can you think of any reason why you should be hesitant or reluctant to ask for the Holy Spirit’s involvement in your life?

Based upon what we've learned, we can say that the Holy Spirit wants to bring comfort to you, to assure you of your place in the family of God, to assure you that you have been adopted into God's family. He wants to impart wisdom, understanding, grace and truth to your life. He wants to purify and sanctify you so you can walk even closer to God. He wants to remind you of what Jesus taught and how that applies to your life. He wants to make the word of God come alive to you. He wants to enable you to love God and each other even more. All of that sounds good doesn't it? There is certainly no reason to be anxious about opening your life to the will and work of the Holy Spirit given his goals and desires for your life so far.

Let me ask you this. **Given what we know, what does this tell us about God and His desire for us?** It indicates to me his ongoing desire to reveal himself, his purposes, his will, his way to us and He does that by means of the Holy Spirit. Consider we said the Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God and reveals them to us. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God and prays in agreement with the mind and will of God through us. This indicates to me that God wants to communicate with us today and he does so by His Holy Spirit. This tells me God wants me to know the truth and to live by that truth. He wants me to overcome sin and temptation and he enables me to do so by the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

God didn't just set us adrift in this wicked world and tell us to do the best we could. He equipped and empowered us with His very presence, the indwelling presence of his Holy Spirit. And the power of the Holy Spirit that is at work in us is the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Romans 8 tell us if that same power that same Spirit is dwelling I us, then we can walk in victory over sin and temptation.

What does all of this say about God's desire for us? It tells me God wants us to be learning and growing, taught by the Holy Spirit. He wants his word to be illuminated to us and made alive in us by his Holy Spirit. It tells me God wants us to be bold witnesses by the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants us to walk in holiness, living lives that reflect and reveal to the world around us that the Holy Spirit, the Holy presence of God is living in us and because of that, we are making holy choices and living holy lives. His life in us has made us alive!

All of these dimensions to the personality of the Holy Spirit are to help us see what a rich experience we can have as we walk in the Spirit and live by the Spirit. All of this indicates that God desires that we walk in continual fellowship with him, being renewed daily, being

sanctified, growing, gifted, equipped, refreshed, empowered, made alive, never alone but always directed and led by His precious Holy Spirit.

This is what I desire for us as a church, as followers of Christ; that we would be aware of his presence and we would be open to all that Jesus has for us through the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Co-operate with Him. Open your heart and life to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, **“If you then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” Luke 11:13.** He wants to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you are a born again believer, then Jesus lives in your heart and life by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. But let me ask you, **Have you given the Holy Spirit access to every area of your life?** Let him sanctify and cleanse and convict and work in your life.

**Are you open to all that Jesus wants to do in your life through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit?** If you would like a deeper walk with God; if you desire to allow the Holy Spirit to really take control in your life, I invite you to ask the Father with me, just as Jesus said to do. Ask him. Ask the Father to pour his Holy Spirit upon your life. Ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit and give you that added spiritual power in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to advance into every part of your life, to cleanse and liberate and empower and accomplish the purposes of God in your life.

I challenge you to simply make yourself available to the Holy Spirit of God and all that he would like to do in and through your life. Tell him you are available. Tell him you are depending upon him, upon his power and presence to work in your life. Tell him you desire all he wants for you. Give yourself to God and to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and see what happens!