

PART 9: THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Greek word for 'spirit' is "*pneuma*" which can also mean "wind" or "breath". This definition denotes a mystery and power to the character of the Holy Spirit which can be clearly seen in an important passage of Scripture from the Gospel of John.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8)

The idea of the "breath," attributed to the Spirit also speaks of such qualities as speaking and bringing forth life that are in turn closely linked with the ideas of life, creation and generation. Thus Scripture describes God as having breathed life into man in the act of creating him (Gen 2:7).

Because the nature of the Holy Spirit is often depicted as being like the wind or breath, some have drawn the false conclusion that the Spirit is nothing but the impersonal force of God. Throughout history the true church of God has had to contend with this false teaching concerning the person of the Holy Spirit.

For example around 300 AD there arose a heresy known as Arianism, which not only denied the Trinity and deity of Christ but maintained that the Holy Spirit was just the force of God. This doctrine is still present in the cult of Jehovah's Witnesses that teaches that the Holy Spirit is not a person but merely the energy that God causes to emanate from Himself to accomplish His will.

Similarly, Islam teaches that: The spirit is a creation of Allah. It is used by Allah to give us life (Surah 32:9, 38:72), strength (Surah 5:110), and guidance (Surah 40:15). But this "Spirit" is not a living being.

Scripture makes it plain that the Spirit is a personal being with the same intimate qualities as the other members of the triune being of God. Thus Paul is able to say that believers can grieve the Holy Spirit when they sin (Eph. 4:30).

Because the Holy Spirit is a person, the authors of Scripture often used personal pronouns when referring to Him.

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. (John 15:26)

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2)

As we see from above passages, as well as many other places throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is part of the triune being of God who is deity, coexisting, personal and eternal with God the Father and God the Son.

By revelation we see His work in the act of creation of the Universe and the Earth.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1-2)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses (Ps 33:6-7).

He was also active in the creation of man and bestowing life to his being.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ...And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen 1:26; 2:7)

After the fall, the Holy Spirit was active in the regenerative work and redemption of man. During the period of the Old Testament, and even into the New Testament period before the outpouring of the Spirit recorded in Acts upon the ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is only given to certain individuals for certain specific purposes.

In the process of redemptive history, the Old Testament gives us the story of how the Holy Spirit was instrumental in establishing the nation of Israel, which was the seed of Abraham, the church of the Old Covenant. It was by the Spirit that Israel received the law, was given instructions on the building of the tabernacle and was instructed in the institution of the system of sacrifices which was a shadow of the New Covenant to come (Heb 8:5, 10:1).

And Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, ...with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and of the weaver — those who do every work and those who design artistic works. (Ex 35:30-35)

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the

high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. (Heb 9:6-8)

The Holy Spirit called the judges of Israel and empowered with ability to defend Israel in times of deliverance from their enemies.

When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. (Judg 3:9-11)

The Spirit also called Samuel from childhood to judge Israel and led him to anoint their first kings, Saul and David.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. (1 Sam 16:13)

The Spirit spoke to and through the prophets to the children of Israel with words of judgment and encouragement.

Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." (2 Kings 17:13)

And through the prophets, the Holy Spirit brought forth the written revelation of God.

knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit moved upon the lives of Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, although being of old age and beyond childbearing, to conceive and give birth to John the Baptist as the forerunner and prophet to the coming to the Messiah Jesus.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:13-16)

It was the Spirit which moved upon the Virgin Mary to bring about the miraculous conception and birth of Christ

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

Jesus spoke to His Apostles, just before His arrest and crucifixion, of the Holy Spirit as a comforter and guide, which would come to them after His death and ascension.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (John 14:26)

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; (John 16:13)

Jesus promised them the power which they received when baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

But of all of the activities of the Holy Spirit, it is the regeneration, renewal and empowering of the life of the individual believer that is most personal and endearing to us, for it was by the mercy and grace of God that the Spirit sought us first even before we sought Him.

It was the Holy Spirit who initiated the call of the Father into our soul, opening our heart and mind, enabling us to respond to the message of salvation with repentance and enter into new life.

And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple

from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:13-14)

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (1 Cor 3:5-8)

So profound and marvelous is the work of the Spirit in our own experience of regeneration it has been said that, in many ways, it mirrors the creation narrative of Genesis when God moved upon the darkness to bring forth light, form and life.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Gen 1:1-3), so it is with the believer, For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

In our response to the call of the Father with repentance, the Spirit applies the work of Christ to our life bringing to us forgiveness, justification and a new life with a heart anew. This is why Paul says that salvation is “*not by works of*

righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

It is the Spirit who adopts us into the new family of God in union with Christ and the church as sons and daughters of God. Paul writes that our adoption is *“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6).*

Once justified, regenerated, and adopted, the Holy Spirit now guides the believer.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom 8:14)

It is the Holy Spirit who helps the believer in spiritual growth through the process of sanctification. Paul wrote to the Church of Rome saying that he, Paul, *might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:16)*

Even our desire to do God’s will comes from the Holy Spirit living within us, which is why Paul insists that *“it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).*

It is the Spirit who baptizes and empowers believers with spiritual gifts according to His will.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Cor 12:4-11)

As Derek Prince wrote: “The Holy Spirit Himself dwelling in a believer, is invisible. But by these gifts operating through a believer, the presence of the Holy Spirit in made manifest to the human senses.” (Faith to Live By)

God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Heb 2:4)¹

¹ For much more on this, see Bread of Life Level One Foundations and Fundamentals by Dr Phillip L. Wiley – Class 2: Holy Spirit Baptism.

The Holy Spirit is also essential in the life of the church in bearing not only the gifts of the spirit but also fruits.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23)

It is through the Spirit that we are illuminated to understand the revelations of God.

the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (Eph 1:17-18)

And we should not overlook the connection between the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and growth in godliness (otherwise known as sanctification). Paul says that “*you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor 6:11). But that sanctification process comes about only when we immerse ourselves so much in God’s word that the thinking of God becomes our thinking. This is the renewing of the mind emphasized by Paul in the twelfth chapter in Romans, and it is what he is getting at in Ephesians when he urges them to be washed in the word.

...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:26-27)

And finally it is the Spirit who will bring us resurrection in the last day with a body that will be beyond pain and suffering.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

As we can see, our experience of God, which includes our worship and sacrifice, is dependent upon the Holy Spirit's revelation of God to us, along with His work of calling, regenerating our hearts and mind, energizing our willingness and cooperation to sustain us with His assurance and continual mercy.

In this short study we have only conveyed briefly the good things that God, by the Holy Spirit, has done, is doing and will do for us in the work of redeeming us and bringing us fully to the Kingdom of Light and the Holy City of God our future home and eternal dwelling.