

# Holy Spirit

## Introduction:

Before Jesus was crucified, He promised His disciples that when He went away, He would send a Helper to be with us and in us. This Helper and Advocate is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God just as the Father and the Son are God. He lives in believers and both directs and empowers their actions. Jesus was led and empowered by Him and at the close of His physical earthly ministry, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples so that they and we might live just as He lived and that we might do greater works than He has done (John 14:12).

Scripture Focus: John 14:16, 24; John 16:12-15; Acts 1:8 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Romans 8:1-11  
Scripture Memory: Ephesians 5:18

## 1. What are some causes for concern regarding the teaching on the Holy Spirit?

- Pentecostal view point that speaking in tongues is a universal sign of the presence / baptism of the Holy Spirit. Presbyterians typically do not want to be viewed as Pentecostals.
- Many believe the Spirit is unreal because the 5 senses cannot perceive Him.
- Some who believe in the spirit world have experience with evil spirits (which are eager to display their presence and power) more than with the Holy Spirit. This brings both fear and confusion.
  - Interacting with an uncontrollable Being who is exceedingly more powerful than us.
  - Uncertainty around the source of the spiritual communications we experience.

## 2. Work of the Holy Spirit

### • In Jesus

Jesus being God did not consider his deity and its associated power and glory something to be clung to, but instead humbled himself (set aside the innate power, authority and divine attributes such as omnipresence, omnipotence, immortality) and became a man. He never stopped being God, He just chose not to rely on His capability as God to walk among us in His incarnation. He became a human being in every way, yet without a dead spirit because He was without sin and was born of God not man and therefore did not inherit a sinful nature. He chose to become like us and model for us the way we should live by relying on God the Father through the communication of the Spirit to guide all of His words and actions. (c.f. John 5:19 & 30)

Philippians 2:5-7

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. NLT

At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus was baptized and the Father and Son participated in the ordination. Jesus was empowered and lead by the Spirit as is seen in Matthew 4:1.

Matthew 3:13-4:1

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "**Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. NRSV

John 5:19

Jesus gave them this answer: "**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.**" NIV

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John 5:30

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. NASB

The same attitude of reliance on God as we are to rely on Him is found in:

John 8:28-29

John 12:49-50

John 14:10

- **In believers**

When Jesus arose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to be for His disciples and for us what He was for them when He was walking on the Earth. The Spirit is our literal connection to God (Father, Son and Spirit). He being fully God dwells in the believer and guides each of us with the very Word of God. Jesus is the Word and the Spirit explains the Word to us. Not only does He teach us, but He enables disciples of Jesus to follow it.

John 14:26

John 16:7-14

Acts 1:8

Romans 8:26

1 Corinthians 2:9-13

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

The difference that the Holy Spirit can bring to our lives is clearly seen in the dramatic change that we see in Peter. This brash fisherman who, though he confidently insisted that he would never deny Jesus was unable to admit to a servant girl that he was His follower. He ran and hid. In a very short while, He decided the whole thing was an interesting diversion, but now it was time to get back to work as a fisherman. He had decided to put it all behind him because Jesus was dead and the authorities who killed Him could at any time arrest and crucify them all. Then 50 days after Jesus was laid in the tomb, the Holy Spirit was sent to the believers just as Jesus promised. With the power of Holy Spirit, this scared fisherman who often blurted out the wrong thing stood in front of the very people who had crucified Christ and gave an eloquent message, expounding Torah and pointing to the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ. When he was brought in for questioning regarding his role in the healing of a beggar and proclaiming the gospel, he stood in the Sanhedrin and said:

Acts 4:8-21

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. 11 This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' 12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Due to Peter and John's directness and unwavering faithfulness the members of the Sanhedrin were amazed and perplexed.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus. 14 When they saw the man who had been cured standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 So they ordered them to leave the council while they discussed the matter with one another. 16 They said, "What will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it. 17 But to keep it from spreading further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more

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to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; 20 for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." NRSV

What other explanation can there be for such a dramatic change in Peter than the very real presence and power of the Holy Spirit in him. This same Holy Spirit continues to perform this kind of transformation in anyone who will trust in Him.

- **In the world**

Jesus said that the world could not receive the Spirit, but they would be affected by Him. He has come to minister to the world. He has come to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit provides the conviction so we don't have to. Through Him, they will know that they are sinners and must believe in Jesus to have their sin and guilt removed. Through Him they will be shown who Jesus is and by His leading they will know that following sin and the author of sin leads only to judgment and subsequent abandonment from the presence of God.

John 16:8-11

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. NASB

The fact that believers do not take on the responsibility for convicting the world does not mean that we aren't involved. The Spirit who fills us will work through us to touch the lives of those who don't know Jesus. The real difference is that we don't convict on our own initiative because this leads to self righteous indignation not a demonstration of the love of God. We will talk much more about this in the class on Ministry.

### 3. Being filled with the Spirit

In Ephesians 5:18, we are told to not be filled with wine which brings about debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. I find it interesting that the Apostle Paul used the contrast of drunkenness against being filled with the Spirit. I think it's because when we become filled with alcohol, we are no longer in control of our faculties. By the same token, being filled by the Spirit causes us to no longer be in control of our lives. Loss of control due to alcohol consumption is a path to ruin while yielding control to the Spirit is the way to abundant life.

How does one become filled with the Spirit? First of all we need to understand that once we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in our lives. There is no need for some second work of grace to encourage the Holy Spirit to live in us. He is in each believer fully the moment they are by faith adopted into the family of God. (Romans 8:9, I Corinthians 3:16 & 6:19) Yet we are told to be filled with the Spirit. There appears to be a distinction between His indwelling us and His filling us. Ephesians 5:18 instructs us to be continuously filled with the Spirit. We all believe that God is fully present in our lives every moment of every day; however, many times I feel the need to invite Him into my presence. He is never absent, but when I do not acknowledge Him, it is as though He is not around. The same is true for the filling of the Holy Spirit. When I do not acknowledge Him, do not yield control of my words and actions to Him and do not rely on Him to empower me in all I do, it's as though I am running on empty and need a fill up. He is present, but I am not experiencing the dramatic difference He can make in my life until I step out of the control center and submit to Him. Then He teaches me everything that Christ taught, causes me to be Christ witness to the world around me and transforms my character into that of Jesus.

### 4. Walking according to the Spirit

Like being filled with the Spirit, walking according to Him requires a conscious decision to do so. For this reason we are instructed to walk by the Spirit or according to the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16

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But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

We can only possess one nature. It is the core of who we are; possessing more than one would be multiple personality disorder. We possess a sinful nature until we by faith receive the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. At that very moment we undergo both death and recreation. The sinful nature is crucified with Christ and our new nature is raised in Christ. We are a brand new creation with Christ's nature at the core of who we are. We are in Him and He is in us. The Christian life is not a work of renovation. No amount of renovation will improve the sinful nature. It cannot be rehabilitated; it is dead, and we must reckon it so. Although our sinful nature is dead and we are alive in Christ, we retain the ability to choose to trust either in ourselves or in the Holy Spirit to live our lives. That is, we can walk according to the flesh or we can walk according to the Spirit. If we attempt to live like Christ through self determination and self reliance, even this is walking according to the flesh, and we will become self righteous. Even our most righteous deeds are like filthy rags in the light of God's righteous requirements. This will result in one or more of the following:

- 1.) We will fall into despair over constant failure
- 2.) We will become legalistic, typically majoring on the minors, while carefully pointing out the slightest infractions of others
- 3.) We will remain self centered because we have to focus all of our attention on ourselves to monitor all of our words & actions (forget about secret thought life).

We can either walk according to the flesh and remain in hostility with God or walk according to the Spirit and find that the requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us.

Read Romans 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as *an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. NASB

## How do we walk according to the Spirit?

- 1.) What is meant by "walk"?
  - 2.) What is meant by "according to the Spirit" vs "according to the flesh"?
  - 3.) How can we live under the direction and by the power of someone we cannot hear, see or touch?
1. Walk is synonymous with live, fully engaged in life, acting, interacting and reacting within ourselves and our social sphere.

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2. According to the Spirit - living in synchronous harmony with God the Holy Spirit. That is to say, under His direction and empowered by Him who lives in those who believe in Jesus Christ and yield control of their lives to Him. Conversely, living according to the flesh is to live for ourselves relying strictly on the finite resources we can employ apart from the Infinite and Eternal.
3. Following someone we cannot perceive with our physical senses is the first critical hurdle that we face when we commit our lives to the Lord. John 4:24 says that God is Spirit and those who worship him must do so in spirit and truth. Worship and for that matter any other communion with our Father is uttered from our spirit (that part of us that is the new creation in Christ). Our intellect, emotions and actions get involved, but they are prompted by our spirit. This is very different from our natural voluntary actions and reactions. Our bodies naturally act and react to the prompting of our intellect and or emotions, which are generally responding to signals from one or more of our physical senses. Everything we do is decided on this basis and done using our personal resources (physical, mental, financial, etc.). This is in the most literal sense living according to the flesh; living independent of God. If on the other hand, we start making choices to act and react from an intellect and emotions that are responding to God's voice in our spirit rather than from how things feel or appear, and we work to accomplish what He guides us to do by drawing on His power, we would be living according to the Spirit.

How are we to respond to God's Voice if we can't hear it? This takes practice. Most healthy people function very well in their physical environment. Years of practice have honed their sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. We can understand our physical world because we have used these senses for years and have learned to distinguish reality from fantasy, locate physical preferences, and recoil from harmful or undesirable sensations. On the other hand, most people do not function nearly as well in their spiritual environment. Many of us get easily confused in our spirits wondering if a thought that enters our minds intuitively has come from God, Satan, or just our own personal mind game. Some get right and wrong turned upside down. Others ask for God's direction and then try to discern it through physical means and personal preferences.

There has been a time in all of our lives in which we were inept in the physical realm like many of us are today in the spiritual realm. We needed to learn the correct application of some basic laws regarding gravity, thermal dynamics, leverage, inertia, friction, electricity, and more too numerous to mention. I remember a time when I thought an electrical outlet was an interesting place to probe with a hair pin. I rapidly learned that it wasn't interesting at all! Then there was the time I learned that normal surface tension of water was not sufficient to support the specific gravity of a small six year old boy. I jumped in a swimming pool at the deep end and tried to drink the pool down to a safe level. Eventually, I learned enough of the essential lessons that I can function reasonably well in my physical environment.

In the same way we need to practice listening to the voice of God in your spirit. I practice by discussing Scripture with Him. Bible study is not just to learn what's in the Bible; it is to build a relationship with God. Relationships are built because we communicate with one another. This is also true with our relationship with God. If we are to follow Him, we must hear Him and know what He is saying. The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit and we in turn converse with Him. Bringing the Bible into the conversation is like carrying a Spanish to English dictionary around with us in Mexico. The Bible helps us to understand God and that the words we are hearing are truly from Him. He will never contradict Himself; whereas Satan and our own intellect and emotions will often stray from the patterns of thinking given in Scripture.

Another aspect of discerning God's voice is to act on what He tells you to do. Obedience has a way of improving your spiritual hearing.

**Will you commit to learning to listen to God this week and attempt to take some baby steps at walking in the Spirit?**

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