

“Holy Spirit: Basic Teaching”

I love the story about the little boy who went to very traditional church where they still spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Holy Ghost. He was used to hearing his pastor say, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” One day, the boy’s guinea pig died, so he decided be the “pastor” and bury the little critter. So he dug a little hole in the ground, tenderly held the guinea pig for a few moments, then said in a real churchy tone, “In the name of the Father and of the Son...and in the hole he goes!” Plop!

Most of us know the difference between the Holy Ghost and a hole in ground – but many people (even Christians) seem a bit confused, or ignorant of, the Holy Spirit. We can be sort of like the early Christians in Ephesus in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit since you believed?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit!”(Acts 19:2). He is certainly the lesser known Person in the Holy Trinity. We talk about our heavenly *Father*. We focus a lot on the *Son*, Jesus. But the Holy Spirit is often ignored, or minimized.

So, I’d like to take time today to look at the Holy Spirit: Who is He? What does He do? This sermon is actually more *teaching* than preaching. Some of what I say may be “old hat” to some of you – stuff you already know – but even if that’s the case, it doesn’t hurt to be reminded of how important the Holy Spirit and His work is to our life in Christ.

So, let’s begin by saying that *the Holy Spirit is God*. He is the third person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). He is God, present in the world, and present in a special way dwelling in the lives of believers. The New Testament also refers to Him as the Spirit of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus at work in the world today.

So what does He do? *The Holy Spirit creates in us a sense of need and draws us to Christ*. Hear these words of Jesus: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:7-8). When Jesus was no longer with His disciples, He said He would send the “Helper”. The Greek word is “parakletos”, and it means someone called to our side to help, an advocate. This Helper, or Holy Spirit, will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Whenever we recognize our sin and repent, whenever we feel drawn to the message of the gospel and feel the ring of truth in it, whenever we grasp the reality of God’s judgment and our need for a Savior, that is the work of the Holy Spirit! Sometimes Christians talk about a person being “under conviction”, prior to repenting and coming to Christ – that’s the work of the Holy Spirit! If you’re a follower of Jesus today it’s because the Holy Spirit drew you to Christ. People are won to Christ not by our cleverness or by human efforts alone, but by the Holy Spirit creating a sense of need in a person and drawing that person to Christ.

The Holy Spirit gives life. He not only *prepares* someone to accept Christ, He gives new life to that person. *This happens when we’re born again*. Jesus said, “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" (John 3:5-6). Whenever anyone is born again, and experiences a spiritual rebirth and the new life in Christ, it is Holy Spirit imparting life.

Then too, the Spirit gives new life to a believer, again and again. Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing" (John 6:63). There are times when we are refreshed spiritually. Our faith comes alive again. There is new joy in believing. That is the renewing work of the Spirit in a believer's life. The Holy Spirit also brings periods of spiritual renewal to churches, and communities, and even nations! Like the revival that took place a few months ago at Asbury University. Perhaps you can think of a time when you found a fresh new breath of life in your relationship with Christ. I recall a lady in a church I served, bubbling over with new enthusiasm for Christ! She said how she had found faith again! That's the Holy Spirit's at work!

The Holy Spirit lives in believers and brings God close. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul says to believers that our body is a temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. Think of it! The Holy Spirit is actually *God's own Spirit* living inside us! How much closer to God can you get than that! We find these words of Jesus in John 14:16-18: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you." Notice, He abides with you, and will be in you!

The Holy Spirit living in us leads to other things: *The Spirit guides us.* Romans 8:4 says, "All who are *led* by the Spirit of God are children of God." Read the Book of Acts, and you will see how believers in the early church got specific guidance through the Spirit as they expanded the gospel into the world. This *can and does* happen today! Early in my ministry several books tuned me in to this ministry of the Holy Spirit. David Wilkerson's book, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (describing the founding of Teen Challenge in New York City) was one of these books. Another was *God's Smuggler*, written by an anonymous Christian who called himself "Brother Andrew". His ministry involved smuggling Bibles into Communist countries, and again and again he tells of incredible instances of the Holy Spirit leading him in ways that he was able to avoid being caught for this "crime".

Ordinary people like you and me can receive *extraordinary guidance* through the Holy Spirit if we ask for it and put ourselves at His disposal. Probably the most vivid example of the Spirit's guidance in my life has been the mission work that the Lord brought about in Kenya. Amazing things have happened to launch that work of God, and it is the Spirit who provided the guidance and made things happen!

Then too, the Holy Spirit, as He lives in us, teaches us. Jesus said when the Helper, or the Holy Spirit, comes, He "will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). Jesus also said the Spirit "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) I remember how when I first got serious about my commitment to Christ as a teenager that at one point I was asked to lead a study in our youth group. I picked Luke 15, the story of the prodigal son. I was very nervous about doing this, but I shared my thoughts about that story. Afterwards, my pastor commented how I was "Spirit taught". I was still in high school. I had not gone to college or a

Bible school, yet as I studied this parable of the prodigal son, unbeknownst to me the Holy Spirit was teaching me truths in this part of God's Word. The Spirit does that!

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 that the Spirit reveals the things of God to us. That's why, if you're not a follower of Jesus and don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not going to understand a lot of the truths of the Bible. You're not going to grasp the deeper spiritual truths of the Christian life. We have to commit ourselves to Christ first, be given the Holy Spirit, and then we will begin to grasp spiritual truths!!

The Holy Spirit gives us power. There are many sincere Christians who *want* to live effective lives for the Lord, but lack power to carry out these good intentions. It is the Holy Spirit who can give us that power!

After Jesus ascended back to heaven, before His disciples could begin to share the gospel with the world, Jesus told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the power of the Holy Spirit to come on them. "I am going to send you what my father promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Acts 10:38 says Jesus Himself knew the power of the Holy Spirit in His life: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power." The Apostle Paul prays that believers will be strengthened "with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16).

The Holy Spirit gives us power to resist temptation.....overcome sinful habits/attitudes.... triumph over suffering and hardships.....share our faith with non-Christians. He wants to give us power to live a godly life, and to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The key here is to yield to the Spirit, nurture the life of the Spirit in us through prayer, feeding on the Word of God, having fellowship with Christians, so that Spirit can be more in control of us!

The Holy Spirit gifts us for service in the church and the world. I believe there are 20 gifts of the Spirit named in the New Testament. These are listed in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. Gifts like teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, great faith, leadership, and others. 1 Corinthians 12:7 it says "To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." So, if you're a follower of Jesus, you have at least 1 spiritual gift, to be used to build up the Body of Christ (the church), so the church can be in mission to the world!

The Holy Spirit gives us assurance of salvation. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." Do you know for sure that Christ has saved you from your sins and that you belong to God as a son, a daughter? Do you know for sure that when you leave this life you will be with God in heaven? God wants us to have that assurance once we give our lives over to Jesus Christ! 2 Corinthians 1:22 says that the Holy Spirit has been given to believers as a "down payment" ("deposit") of the full blessing we're going to inherit in the life to come! God wants us to know that we are His children, and that we have eternal life in Christ. If you're not sure, ask the Holy Spirit to give you that assurance!

Then, last but not least, *the Holy Spirit can be offended and His influence in us hampered.* Ephesians 4:30 says, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” We all know what it is when someone does something to grieve us or make us feel sad, don’t we? Well, the Holy Spirit can feel that too!

1 Thessalonians 5:19 warns, “Do not quench the Spirit.” God’s Spirit wants to be the fire that motivates us and drives us to give ourselves over to God completely. But we can pour water on the Spirit so that the fire of God goes out of our life. Willful sin, neglecting prayer, unkind and unloving actions, preoccupation with the material things of life, can all be ways that we grieve the Spirit or quench His influence in us

Well, this has been a whirlwind tour through Scripture to see what the Spirit wants to do in each of us! How is it with you and the Holy Spirit right now? Does He live inside you? You can have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you if you will turn from your sins and ask Him to come in.

But we can be one of those people who have the Spirit, but does the Spirit have us! He’s there, because we believe in Jesus, but unwholesome habits and attitudes, and earthly distractions are muffling His ability to *have us and fill us and use us.* The Bible says we are to be “filled with Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

This might be a time when God is speaking to you, to come clean, and surrender yourself in a new way to the Holy Spirit.

We can have a new beginning with living in the stream of God’s Spirit today!

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