

What We Believe, Part 5: God The Holy Spirit

John 14:15 ESV (Pg. 525) “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, **17** even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:25 ESV “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. **26** 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 that I have said to you.”

John 15:26 ESV “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

John 16:7 ESV “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 go, I will send him to you. **8** And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; **11** concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. **12** I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. **13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **15** All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; and that the Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, sanctifies, empowers and dwells within every believer in Christ as an abiding helper, teacher, guide and comforter.

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian witness and service, desiring to continually fill each believer and impart his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and the work of ministry in the world. We believe that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first century are available today and are to be earnestly desired and practiced in an orderly manner; and that these gifts are essential in the mission of the Church in the world today.

- I. We come today to the 5th message in our series on the fundamental Biblical truths embraced by NRLC. At this point we have learned about the Authority of Scripture, the nature of the Trinity, The Person of God the Father, and the Person of Jesus the Son. Today we turn our attention to the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. Due to the overwhelming volume of teaching about the Holy Spirit in the Bible (especially the New Testament) I cannot be exhaustive this morning, but, to the best of my ability, I will attempt to answer, in a very rudimentary fashion, the question: “Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does he do?”

- A. The first thing that we must notice is that the Holy Spirit is **He**, not “it”. The masculine personal pronoun “He” indicates that he has **distinct personhood**.
1. He is not, as is believed by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, merely an “active force”¹, something akin to electricity that flows out of the Father.
 2. Because of this, we see many personal and distinct actions attributed to the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible. We are told that he...
 - a) Comforts or helps (John 12:26; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), teaches (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13), speaks (Acts 8:29; 13:2), and makes decisions (Acts 15:28). He grieves over sin (Ephesians 4:30), overrules human actions (Acts 16:6-7), and searches the deep things of God and knows his thoughts (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). He determines the distribution of Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11), interprets and brings human prayer before the throne of the Father (Romans 8:26-27), assures believers of their adoption (Romans 8:16) and bears witness to, and glorifies Christ (John 15:26; 16:14).²
 - b) These are the actions of a Person, not a force (like electricity, magnetism or gravity). We should remember the Personhood of the Spirit when meditating on him or addressing him in Prayer. We don’t plug into **it** or somehow conjure **it** up, but we speak to **him**.
 - (1) I often hear people talk about how the Spirit “really moved” in a service, as though, by chance, an impersonal thunderstorm had rolled in and we got much needed rain.
 - (2) But what are the odds that we would see more of his activity if we just spoke to him, inviting him near, and responding to his promptings?
- B. The second thing to keep in mind is that the Holy Spirit is, like we said of Christ last week, 100% fully God, equal in essence to the Father and the Son. Every attribute that is found in the Father or Son is found in equal measure in the Spirit.
1. Scripture teaches that the Spirit is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), omnipotent (Luke 1:35-37) and holy (Rom 1:4)³.
 2. Although he proceeds out of the Father and Son, and glorifies Jesus, this should not indicate a lesser status. He is fully God, co-equal to the Father from whom he proceeds, and the Son, to whom he bears witness.
- C. The Holy Spirit did not just show up on the Day of Pentecost when he was poured out on the fledgling church, but was present throughout the Old Testament as well.
1. **Genesis 1:2 ESV** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters. His role in Creation was to bring “order and differentiation out of chaos (light and darkness, land and sea, day and night).”⁴

¹ <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/what-is-the-holy-spirit/>

² ESV Large Print Study Bible; Biblical Doctrine: An Overview; The Holy Spirit, Pg. 2766; © 2008 Crossway

³ *ibid*; Pg. 2767

⁴ Dictionary of Biblical Imagery; The Holy Spirit, Pg. 391; © 1998 InterVarsity Press, USA

- a) The Hebrew word for Spirit here is “Ruah”, which means “Breath or Wind”; evoking a picture of God blowing across the barren canvas of the cosmos, like wind that cannot be easily observed, but whose effects are transforming and often violently so.
 - b) In West Texas, we know better than most that wind is something you cannot control or manipulate! Do remember the haboob in 2011 that engulfed our city in a mile-high cloud of dust? Or perhaps the 1970 tornado? No one could control those forces, only submit to them!
2. Additionally, we read of the Holy Spirit coming on several Old Testament characters, such as Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Saul, and David, and even on the craftsmen that constructed the Tabernacle and the Temple⁵. I Peter 1:10-11 Says that the Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming Christ by revelation activity of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Of course, in the New Testament we see a flurry of his activity as well.
1. Gabriel told Zechariah that his son, John the Baptist would be “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). Mary was told “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:35) resulting in Jesus being placed in her womb.
 2. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his Baptism in the form of a dove, and the Bible shows us that all of his teachings and miracles were done in the power of the Spirit resting upon him. (Luke 3:21-22; Acts 10:38).
 3. The Bible tells us that it was the Holy Spirit who both drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2), and it was the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).
 4. **Acts 1:8 ESV** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - a) This promise was gloriously fulfilled in the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church.
 - b) The rest of the book of Acts records the history of all the glorious work that the Holy Spirit did through empowering the Apostles and the early church. It is a work that he continues to this day.
- II. With all of this in mind, we have to ask the question, what is the function of the Holy Spirit today? What is he doing, does it matter to you and me, and if so, why? In the most simple terms, the Holy Spirit “fulfills an ongoing but invisible role of connection and communication between people and God.”⁶
- A. In our text today, Jesus made an astounding claim to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away”.
1. Imagine you are one of the 12. You have walked with Jesus for 3 years. You’ve left your profession and your home. You’ve watched him silence critics, encourage the downtrodden, heal the sick and even raise the dead. You are now convinced beyond doubt that he is the long-awaited Messiah, and that He will right all the wrongs and forever reign in righteousness.

⁵ Systematic Theology; Wayne Grudem; The Work of the Holy Spirit; Pp. 636-637, © 1994, Zondervan

⁶ ⁶ Dictionary of Biblical Imagery; The Holy Spirit, Pg. 390; © 1998 InterVarsity Press, USA

2. And it is at the apex of your hope and expectation for the future with Christ that he says over dinner one night, "I'm leaving, and where I'm going you cannot come. But it is to your advantage that I am going away." Advantage? How could you feel anything but devastated and abandoned at that moment?
- B. What could he have possibly meant? And what reality could possibly be more desirable than having Jesus actually present with them to walk with and talk to?
 1. We spoke last week about how Jesus the Son, in order to satisfy God's righteous requirement for the human race, became one of us, and still is, at the right hand of God in glory, fully human (although simultaneously fully God).
 2. When Christ had taken on humanity, he embraced its limitations. This means that Jesus was limited to one geographical area of ministry and fellowship at any given time. If you were where he was, it was amazing! But as Mary and Martha found out, when their brother Lazarus died, if he wasn't around when you thought you needed him, it could be agonizing and devastating!
- C. And here was the advantage to his departure. He said "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 go, I will send him to you."
 1. Jesus would return to the Father, having sufficiently satisfied all of the righteous requirements of the Law, and having died a substitutionary death and thus removing the guilt of human sin. Now he would sit enthroned at the right hand of God, forever living to make intercession for his elect saints (Hebrews 7:25).
 2. But he would not leave his followers as orphans! He would provide another Comforter or Helper to be with them at all times, in every place.
 - a) Since both the Son and the Spirit, though distinct persons, are both fully God, his arrival would be to the disciples like having Jesus with them everywhere they went! (Philippians 1:19 the "Spirit of Jesus Christ"!)
 - b) There would be no geographical limitations. Everywhere believers went, Jesus would be present through the agency of the Holy Spirit! His wisdom, power, and grace would no longer be localized in single area.
- D. And what all would that constant presence accomplish?
 1. He would be the agent of God's **regenerating** work - the one who calls dead sinners to life in Christ Jesus. He would be the agent of God's **sanctifying** work-the one who works in believers to make them holy. Once again the Spirit hovers over God's new creation to bring order out of chaos, and to differentiate between light and darkness, death and life.
 2. He would also be the agent of God's **empowering** work. The one who pours out a myriad of gifts on the church in order to glorify God, and confirm the preached Word of God with authority, miracles, signs and wonders.
- E. He would not only be the one who helps us connect to God, but also the one enables our communication with God. And this works in two ways.
 1. First, no one can know what God is like unless the Holy Spirit reveals him through the Word of God. 1 John says he is our teacher. He gives us revelation knowledge so that we'll know whom it is that we are seeking, worshipping and praying to. This revelation is always rooted in the written Word of God. ***If it isn't Holy scripture, it isn't Holy Spirit.***

2. But after helping us get a picture of who God really is, he enables us in many ways to effectively communicate with him. **Romans 8:26 ESV** Likewise the ***Spirit helps us*** in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the ***Spirit himself intercedes for us*** with groanings too deep for words. **27** And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because ***the Spirit intercedes for the saints*** according to the will of God.
- III. Now imagine you lived somewhere in the eastern world in the time of Christ. Imagine you heard about this teacher, preacher, miracle-worker from Israel.
- A. He would not have been like anything you had ever heard about before. There would be no one to compare him to. You find him to be utterly unique.
 1. Rumor had it that he had healed the sick -deaf, blind, lame, lepers, you name it! Some said that he could walk on water, feed thousands with just a few pieces of bread and some fish, and even raise the dead.
 2. You would have heard how he had silenced the smartest, proudest and most arrogant people in every room, usually with just a sentence or two. His logic and intellect was unimpeachable, and yet he spoke things in such a simple way that peasants heard him gladly. You might have even been amazed to hear that this great man welcomed children, and ministered to and received ministry from women, even some of questionable reputation!
 3. But he did all of this with never a blemish on his own moral character! Oddly, even though he was obviously innocent, you had heard that he was taken by the big shots, who were threatened by him, and beaten, mocked and killed. But in his ultimate miracle, he was raised to life after being dead for 3 days, and that he showed himself to over 500 people, proving his resurrection. Later he even he physically and visibly rose to heaven as people watched!
 4. And what if you heard that this resurrected man actually claimed to be God in the flesh, and that he offered forgiveness for free to anyone who would accept it? ***Wouldn't you want to personally know this man?***
 - B. Imagine your joy if you found that this man had left you (specifically) a message? **John 14:23b ESV** "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and ***we will come to him and make our home with him.***"
 1. And that is the "payoff" of the gospel! God, together with the Son, has promised that they will come and dwell with anyone who believes. They will bring all of their love and goodwill - their grace. They will bring their power to overcome any obstacle, and their wisdom to lead and guide.
 2. But how will they do this, if God is exalted in the highest heavens, and Christ is seated at his right hand making intercession for you and I? They will do it through the agency of the Holy Spirit! He will be their representative, and will make his temple, his dwelling place, within the likes of you and I!
 - C. **Acts 2:38 ESV** And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and ***you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*** **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

1. I grew up in a church where the gift of the Holy Spirit was a secret that you had to unlock. You had to pray the right things, in the right way, for the right amount of time, and then, if you were worthy, you might receive the Spirit.
 2. But it seems that this passage is saying something completely different. It seems to be saying that the Spirit **will be received** by those who will repent and believe in the name of Jesus, and will demonstrate that belief by obedience in baptism. In fact, Peter calls the gift of the Spirit a **promise!**
- D. And if he truly is a gift, freely available for all who will repent and believe, we must ask ourselves this question: Why aren't we seeing more evidence of his presence and his activity in our lives, our families and our churches? Let me propose a few answers.
1. First, perhaps we have not ever considered that, after we believed, there was anything more available to us; viewing our Christianity through a "one and done" lens. We believed, now we'll wait on heaven so we can meet the Lord.
 - a) But Paul told us in Galatians 5:16 to "walk by the Spirit", denoting a dependent and continual, ongoing action.
 - b) The Holy Spirit did not just wake you up to your need for Christ, but has daily (even moment by moment) guidance and support for you in this life.
 2. Second, some may have had an experience (or sense) of being filled with the Spirit once, but it has long since faded and you haven't much worried about freshness. But in Ephesians, Paul says to "Be filled with the Spirit", and the Greek indicates an ongoing action, like "Keep on being filled with the Spirit."
 3. Lastly, some of us might be too busy waiting for some confirming experience, like speaking in tongues, falling down, etc. But let me caution you not to idolize and seek after an experience, at the expense of trusting what God's Word simply says: that those who repent, believe and obey will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- E. What would fullness of God's Spirit mean to your struggles with sin? Your battles with worry and anxiety? Your power to witness at school and work? Your understanding of Scripture? Your peace and assurance with God?
1. Isn't it worth looking to God, thanking him for his promised Holy Spirit, receiving Him in faith (just like you received Christ!), and asking him to demonstrate his presence and power in whatever way he chooses?
 2. Think of what you stand to gain by believing God's word! And what could you possibly lose?
- F. I am proposing that we seek him today, claiming what God has already promised, and believing that he is going to change us by his presence.