



## The Person and the Work of the Holy Spirit

### **Holy Spirit: One of Three Persons of God**

The Bible declares that there is only one living God. However, the Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is known in Christianity as the “Trinity.” This is a difficult concept to grasp. A common misconception is that Christians believe in three different gods. This isn’t correct. While each “personage” is distinct in function, each shares together in the same nature and each reflects the divine attributes of the one living God.

### **Holy Spirit: Much More than an Ethereal Life Force**

The Holy Spirit is not a vague, ethereal life force. He is not impersonal or unthinking. The Holy Spirit is a “person” equal in every way with God, the Father, and God, the Son. The Bible tells us that all the characteristics of God apparent in the Father and the Son are equally apparent in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is composed of intellect, emotions and will. In 1 Corinthians 2:11, we see an example of the Holy Spirit’s intellect and will: *“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”*

In Romans 15:30, we see the Holy Spirit has emotion. Although the Holy Spirit has all the characteristics of God, He has specific roles and functions in our lives. (see John 16:13).

In John 14:26, we learn that the Holy Spirit is our Counselor and teacher. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, we see that the Holy Spirit lives inside us. In Acts 1:8, we understand where our power comes from. In Romans 8:14, we understand where our direction comes from. In Romans 8:26, we learn that the Holy Spirit is there for us in times of weakness and prayer. In Hebrews 9:14, we see that the Holy Spirit is eternal. In 1 Corinthians 2:11, we see that the Holy Spirit is all-knowing. In Psalm 139, we see that the Holy Spirit is everywhere.

### **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The world’s a mess—a quick glance at today’s newspaper will tell you that. But God our Father is at work. He is waiting to anoint his disciples with the Holy Spirit and with power, the power to heal the sick, set captives free, and to do things that only God can do in order to fix that mess. All we have to do is ask. Listen to what Jesus says: *Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent, or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Lk. 11:9-13).*

As you can see as you look around, God works differently with each individual. In every case, though, the Holy Spirit gives power to live the Christian life, the life of Christ. *If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).*

The Apostle Paul says much about the Holy Spirit and essential reading is found in 1 Corinthians. *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and*

*there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:4-10).*

Here is a brief explanation of each of these spiritual gifts:

First, the gifts of **wisdom** and **knowledge**. Paul reminds us at the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). The Holy Spirit can empower you to speak a word of wisdom--the right word at the right time, a word that goes straight to the heart and gives clarity and conviction. When this happens, the person you are talking to will say, "It was the Lord." Sometimes you will be able to speak a word of knowledge. At a prayer meeting, a leader might say, "There is someone here who hates his sister. He needs to forgive her." That's a word of knowledge. Sometimes someone might pipe up in a prayer meeting and say something like, "The Lord wants to heal someone of an ulcer" or "There's someone here who suffers from migraine headaches and the Lord wants to heal you." That's also a word of knowledge.

Next on Paul's list is **faith**. The faith Paul is talking about here is not a human achievement. It's not the power of positive thinking. It's not intellectual assent to dogma, important as that is. The faith that Paul is talking about is the Word of God living and active in you. This is the faith which moves mountains. It's the faith of Christ, who trusted in his Father at all times and acted out of that trust.

**Healing** and **miracles** were not just for New Testament times. Peter explained to Cornelius "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power," and how after that Jesus went about doing good and healing (Acts 10:38). It's the same Holy Spirit today. God is anointing people today with the Holy Spirit and with power, and they are healing people.

It takes great faith to work miracles--not so much on the part of the person being prayed with, but on the part of the person doing the praying. As we live in Christ, as Christ, such things will happen more and more.

Next Paul mentions **prophecy**. When we hear the word "prophecy," we tend to think, "prediction of the future," but that doesn't really capture the meaning of the Biblical term. A prophet is someone who speaks the word of God. Although God sometimes will predict the future, usually he speaks to strengthen, encourage, comfort, guide and correct us in our present situations.

People experience prophecy differently. Some people just know, all at once, what God is saying. They are just certain. For some, a word, phrase or sentence pops into their minds and it just nags at them. It won't go away. Sometimes we may not know exactly what we want to say until we trust God and begin to speak.

Now some of you might be saying to yourselves, "No way, I don't want that gift." People haven't changed much. That's probably why Paul exhorted the Corinthians, "Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1).

As the Holy Spirit becomes more and more active in our lives, our ability to discern spirits improves. What does this mean? **Discernment** is the ability to tell in a situation whether the Holy Spirit, an evil spirit or your own flesh is at work. When Jesus was tempted in the desert, he used discernment. At the Jordan River, his Father had just said to him, "You are my beloved Son." Then, after fasting in the wilderness, in his heart he heard, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread" and "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here." "If you are the Son of God." Satan was

trying to get Jesus to doubt his divine Sonship. He will try to get you to doubt, too. Peter teaches, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour" (1 Pt. 5:8). But don't be afraid. He's like the cowardly lion in "The Wizard of Oz", or like a bully. He runs scared if you stand up to him. James tells us, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jms. 4:7). In fact, you have the authority of Christ. If Satan is tempting you, command him to leave. Say something like, "In the name of Jesus, I renounce you, you lying spirit." Or "you spirit of anger" or whatever it is. "In Jesus' name I command you to leave."

As we live the life of Christ, we get better and better at discerning the Enemy.

The last things Paul mentions are the **gifts of tongues** and of the **interpretation of tongues**. Speaking in tongues is an ability the Holy Spirit gives to pray in a spontaneous manner using words and sounds we do not understand. When we pray in tongues it's really us praying. We have the freedom to start and stop whenever we want and we might be conscious of praying to the Father, but it's the Lord. We couldn't do it without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We've already seen, in the passages from Acts, that speaking in tongues was common in the early church. It's a great blessing for prayer. It helps us when we don't know what to say to God, but want to pour out our hearts to him. It also helps us sing and praise God together. Along with the gift of tongues comes a new ability to praise God. People often experience the praise of God welling up within themselves, like a stream of living water. The Lord doesn't take over your mouth when he gives the gift of tongues. You have to start praising him out loud in English.

Speaking in tongues sometimes functions like prophecy. Someone speaks in tongues and someone else knows what it is that is being said. It's not exactly a translation. Usually the person interpreting the tongues has a clear sense about what the Father is saying. Sometimes God acts this way to get our attention and to build our faith.

When you are baptized in the Holy Spirit you will experience the presence and power of God in new ways. In particular, you will experience the Word of God planted in you becoming more conscious of the Father.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:15-16).

The spiritual gifts are not some add-on to your old life, the life of Adam. They are not like a watch that sometimes you wear and sometimes you don't. They are not this scary thing that comes upon you and overwhelms or crushes you. That's not it at all. This new life, the life of Christ, which was planted in you at baptism and is growing in you like a plant, produces fruit--the spiritual gifts. Christ is alive in our world today. Christ praying, Christ healing, Christ delivering people from the enemy. We are joined to Christ as branches to a vine. Fruit is the natural outcome.

### **Baptism in the Holy Spirit:**

A common question about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is when does it happen? Is it at the point of a persons conversion, or is it at a later point? I think the answer is 'Yes!'

The Holy Spirit is undoubtedly at work in a persons life well before conversion 'softening the ground' or 'creating thirst', and the Holy Spirit, often with the help of another person, is the one who brings a person to faith and new birth in Jesus (John3 and 1 Corinthians 12:3). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and so when the Holy Spirit lives in us and when we allow him to, he changes us from the inside out so that we become more and more like Jesus in what we are like (we call this the fruit of the Spirit) and in what we do (we can call this the gifts of the Spirit).

But then there seems to be another occasion, which can be at the same time as conversion or baptism but it also seems as though it could be a while later. This is when the Holy Spirit comes upon a person in order to empower them to be His witnesses in the World. This is what happened to the Disciples at Pentecost (see Acts 2) and other disciples a while later (eg see Acts 19:1-7) – we might call this a Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was Baptised with the Holy Spirit at his water Baptism (Luke 3).

This filling with the Holy Spirit is not just a one off event either, the Christian must 'go on' being filled with the Holy Spirit day by day – Jesus said 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (John 15).

"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." - Matthew 3:11

"John answered and said to them all, 'As for me, I baptize you with water; but one is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thongs of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'" - Luke 3:16

"And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'" - John 1:33

"...for John baptized with water, but in a few days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." - Acts 1:5

"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" - Acts 11:16

**Ask the God the Father to baptize you in the Holy Spirit and to give you the spiritual gifts.**

Tell him: "I'm willing to live the life of Christ. I reject Satan and all his works. I will use your power to build your kingdom." Also try saying a prayer like this: "Father, I say yes to you and to your way of working in the world. I want to be yours, your faithful son/daughter. I accept your Word in my heart. Jesus, I say yes to you. I want to be your disciple. I want to share your life. Holy Spirit, rain on me. Let the Father's Word grow in me.

Be open to the gift of tongues. It's a mistake to say, "I don't need this" or "I'll take this great gift but not that one." That's not how trust works.

Every person's experience is different. Some people have an experience in which they immediately sense the presence and power of God. Some people are prayed with and nothing seems different, but then they go home and pick up their Bible and find that Scripture has come alive and three days or a week after they have been prayed with they begin to speak in tongues. Some don't experience anything obvious, but as time passes they will look back at this moment and say, "Things were different from then on."

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