

The Holy Spirit; His Person, Work, and Controversy

Theology of the Spirit

The chief topics of theology respecting the Holy Spirit are: (1) His person; (2) His work; (3); and His controversy.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for the God's Spirit is *ruach* meaning "breath," "wind" or "breeze." The word always used in the New Testament for the Spirit is the Greek neuter noun *pneuma*, with or without the article, and for Holy Spirit, *pneuma hagion*. The word for Spirit in the Greek is from the verb *pneo*, "to breathe," "to blow."

Who Is the Holy Spirit? As a Person, He is:

1. The Second Person of Trinity

a. He is associated with the Godhead:

We see from Matthew 28:19 (Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.) that the Spirit is associated with the Triune God. The prophecy of Isaiah 11:1-5 is a Trinitarian preview of the working of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son, who is the branch of Jesse. Looking forward to the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him" (Isaiah 11:2).

- Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations."

Exercise: Read through Isaiah and mark each time you see God the Father (to include God, Creator, Lord, Savior, etc.) with the letter A. Mark God the Son (to include Redeemer, Messiah, the Holy One, Savior, etc.) with the letter B. Mark God the Spirit (to include the Healer, Comforter, the Sent One, etc.) with the letter C. You will discover that A = B = C. You can do the same exercise in the Book of John.

The connection of God the Father as Savior through the work of His Spirit by the act of His Son is seen in Titus 3:5.

5 **He** (i.e. God the Father) saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the **Holy Spirit** (i.e. God the Spirit),
6 whom He poured out upon us richly through **Jesus Christ** our Savior (i.e. God the Son).

b. He is ascribed divine attributes.

Knowledge 1 Corinthians 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

Sovereignty 1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Eternal Existence Hebrews 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Omnipresence Psalms 139:7 Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?

Omniscience 1 Corinthians 2:10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

Omnipotence Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

c. He operates as God and is equated with God.

Acts 28:25

25 And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

2 Corinthians 3:17

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Ephesians 4:30

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Isaiah 63:10

10 But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

Ezekiel 36:27

27 And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

d. He performs divine works.

Creation Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

New Birth John 3:7-8 "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 do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Indwells Man John 14:16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

Performs Miracles Matthew 12:28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The Holy Spirit in the Trinity may be thus summed up:

(1) The Holy Spirit is the same in substance and equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son.

Q. 11 of the Larger Catechism How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?

A. The scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

(2) He is, however, as to the mode of His operation, subordinate to both the Father and the Son, as He proceeds from them and is sent by them

- John 14:26 "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 said to you.
- John 15:26 When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.
- John 16:13-14
13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.
14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.
- Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

2. He is a Personal Being

The Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, though united to both in the mysterious oneness of the Godhead.

- He is not simply a personification or figurative expression for the divine energy or operation, as some have held at various periods of the history of the church (Anti-Trinitarians), but He is an intelligent agent, possessed of self-consciousness and freedom.

a. He has a personality that is distinct from the Father and Son.

Matthew 3:16 NASB

16 And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him.

John 14:16-17

16 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.

John 15:26

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,

b. His personal being is described through the pronouns used in reference to Him.

John 16:13-14

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.

Acts 13:2

2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

c. He is personal because the attributes of personality, self-consciousness, and freedom are ascribed to Him.

1 Corinthians 2:10

10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

1 Corinthians 12:11

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

3. He is the perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:2

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

a. He brings to fruition that which was started in the new birth.

- It is not Jesus Incarnate that perfects, but the Spirit of Christ.
- And what the Lord starts, He will complete by the work of His Spirit (Phil. 1:6).
- Completion may be a struggle because we still war with the flesh, but He who is within us is more powerful than he who is within the world (1 John 4:4).

b. He impresses the law upon the hearts of believers.

Ezekiel 11:19-20

19 And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

- In order for man to walk in obedience, the Spirit of God must operate on their heart and give them the grace to do so.
- One heart is a new heart that seeks to please the Lord. Since man's heart is evil continually (Gen. 6:5), it would take the work of the Spirit to motivate us toward goodness and righteousness.

Jeremiah 31:33

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

- God's law is maintained upon the hearts of men as a work of the Spirit.

c. He prunes us in order to grow us into the character of Christ.

John 15:4

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

- The Spirit helps us to abide, for without Him dispensing grace, we would not abide in Christ. Abiding is one thing, but continual growth will need pruning of those things in our lives that keep us walking in the flesh.

John 15:1-2

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.

d. He preserves us in order that we do not lose our election.

Isaiah 54:10

10 "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the LORD who has compassion on you.

- The Spirit is the maintainer of God's peace and the One who will maintain the promise of eternal life (John 5:24).

John 6:37

37 All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

- It is the Spirit that causes the saints to persevere in faith and gives assurance that none will be lost.

The Work of the Spirit in reference to the Life of Man

- This may also be called the "Office of the Spirit."

1. The Spirit strives with man.

Genesis 6:3

3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

- Prior to the indwelling of the Spirit in believers, man also strove with God because man wars with his flesh. Even after the new birth, we will still struggle with our flesh and do that which is not good (Romans 7:15-18).
- The Spirit helps us put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13)

2. He instructs and discloses truth.

John 16:13

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

3. He regenerates and sanctifies believers.

Titus 3:5

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

1 Peter 1:2

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.

- The Spirit illumines us to God's truth and influences us to obey Christ.

4. He creates and breathes life into man.

Job 33:4

4 "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

5. He puts His Spirit in man.

Ezekiel 36:27

27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Ezekiel 37:14

14 "And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.' "

- Chapter 37 is the vision of the "Valley of the Dry Bones" where we read about the Spirit and the Wind moving over deadness to create life. What this teaches us is that our lives were dead prior to God's Spirit breathing the life of Christ within us! We were walking zombies, so to speak, until newness of life came in. This newness is the motivation to live for Christ and not for self.

6. He performs miracles like casting out demons.

Matthew 12:28

28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

7. He moves upon the hearts and consciences of men to speak and to see visions.

Acts 2:17

17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

Isaiah 32:15

15 Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field And the fertile field is considered as a forest.

8. He convicts of sin.

John 16:8

8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.

9. He gives testimony to Christ.

John 15:26-27

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me,
27 and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

The Controversy of the Spirit

1. Did the Spirit prevent the authors of Scripture from erring?

PP#31

Answer: Of course He did by guiding them in all truth.

John 16:13

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth , comes, He will guide you into all the truth ; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- If God's Spirit is the One mind behind Scripture, then it stands to reason that His Spirit would prevent error; otherwise, we would have confusion over the supreme reason for Scripture, which is found in verse 15 – “and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”
- “Sacred Writings” refers to Old Testament, but sacred means “holy” and “set apart.”
- The word for “inspired” is *theopneutos*, which means God breathed. It is composed of *theo* (God) and *pneuma* (wind or breath). Could translate God's Spirit, God's wind, or God's breath. In any case, it indicates that God breathed over the writers causing Scripture to be written, not in a dictation pattern, but in a way that would use the personality, idiosyncrasies, opinions, and talents of the individual writer.
- So, if the God of Truth is the writer of Scripture, then what is proclaimed as true must in fact be true! Although the Bible was not written as a history book, it does contain accurate historical accounts. Although the Bible is not a science book, it does contain scientific information. What may appear as contradictions or inconsistencies must in fact be something else. To say that God accommodated Himself in different generations to communicate to specific cultures and therefore could have Scriptural differences is to say that God could not transcend time and bring order to all generations, but in fact would allow errors, causing confusion to newer generations.

2. What is the filling of the Spirit?

Answer: In contrast to unbelievers being filled with dissipation, believers are to be filled with the Spirit by demonstrating who they belong to. They should be acting out of devotion and love of God.

Ephesians 5:17-21

17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,
19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Answer: Being filled with the Spirit would be showing forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

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

- There evidently is a difference from just living by the Spirit – a mundane Christian existence – and walking by the Spirit, which has something to do with producing the fruit of the Spirit.

3. What is the Baptism of the Spirit?

Answer: it is being identified with the Spirit of God. In order not to be an exclusively Jewish experience, God gave a similar experience of Pentecost to Gentiles and Samaritans. Simultaneously with regenerating him the Spirit baptizes the believer into union with other believers in the Body (1 Corinthians 12:13) and into union with Christ Himself (Romans 6:3-4).

Acts 11:15-17

15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning.

16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

Acts 8:14-17

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

15 who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.
16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:44-46

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.
45 And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.
46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.

4. What is being born of the Spirit?

a. It is being breathed with the life of Christ, e.g. being saved.

John 3:3-6

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"
5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

b. It is being identified as children of God.

Romans 8:16

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

c. It is having the Spirit dwell perpetually within every believer (John 14:17;

Romans 8:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and sealing every believer for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

5. What is the anointing of the Spirit?

Answer: Two fold (1) like being born again, the Spirit is resident within a believer as an anointing oil; and (2) a special setting apart of believers to accomplish specific tasks.

As to (1):

1 John 2:20

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

- This Scripture indicates that the anointing is equated with one's election.

1 John 2:27

27 And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

- John was writing to say that if a person is a true believer, then he has the anointing of God abiding in him, which should keep him alert to the false teachers that would seek to lead them astray.

As to (2):

Acts 13:2

2 And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

- The Spirit's anointing is the setting apart of a person for a special task. To have the anointing of the Spirit is to have a special calling for the moment. It doesn't necessarily mean that this anointing will always be upon the person.

6. What are the gifts of the Spirit?

1 Corinthians 12:4-13

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

- The greatest gift is the Spirit Himself (verse 7) who is manifested in believers by the exercise of gifts given to them, but always for the common good because all are baptized into one Body (verse 13).
- If the Spirit is the Giver of gifts, then one gift should not be considered any greater than another.
- All gifts are to be exercised for the edification of the Body (1 Corinthians 14:12, 26).

7. What is blaspheming the Spirit?

- a. If the Holy Spirit is God, then as the Second Person of the Trinity, he is due homage. Lying against the Spirit is the opposite of giving homage to Him, which in turn may have dire consequences.

Acts 5:3

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?"

- b. What blasphemy is so great that it leads to the unpardonable sin?

Matthew 12:31

31 Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

- Note the context. Christ was answering the accusations about casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. The sin of blaspheming the Spirit was to attribute to Satan what God is doing; and possibly the reverse, attributing to God what Satan is doing.
- In the end, blaspheming is not believing the testimony of the Spirit, which gives witness to the truth (John 16:13), especially the truth that Christ is our Savior.

8. What is grieving the Spirit?

Ephesians 4:30

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- The word used here - *lupeite* – means to afflict with sorrow; to make sad or sorrowful. Hence, grieving the Spirit is to act in ways inconsistent to one's election as to cause grief to God.

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