

Sermon Notes
“God the Holy Spirit”

Material for this message was drawn from a series of sermons by Dr. Calvin Wittman (2009)

Focal Scripture Reference: Ephesians 5:18

If I were to ask you to form a mental picture of God the Father, what would you imagine? Perhaps you would picture Him dressed in robes of white with a face shining like the sun. Likewise, if I were to ask you to think of Jesus, what would you see in your mind's eye? You might think of an image from a painting or some other artist's portrayal of Jesus. But what would come to mind if I asked you about the Holy Spirit? Not as easy? If so, you are probably not alone. That is why we are going to concentrate our thoughts on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 says this about the Holy Spirit:

"The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the body of Christ.

He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism and service."

The fact of the matter is that many Christians know a little about God the Father and a lot about Jesus, but the Holy Spirit is largely a mystery to them. We have heard about Him, sang about Him and read scriptures that mention Him; but often our understanding of His person and His work remain unclear.

The goal of our study is to come to a better understanding of how the Holy Spirit reveals Himself to us through the Bible. We will examine several things about the Holy Spirit every believer needs to know. Let's begin by saying a word about the person and nature of the Holy Spirit. From there we will cover some of His major activities outlined for us in Scripture, and finally we will consider how you and I are to respond to Him.

1. The Person and Nature of the Holy Spirit

In every way, the Holy Spirit is equal with God the Father and God the Son. He possesses their attributes and character. He is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and holy. He is eternal, immutable, righteous, just and loving.

And, as the third person of the Holy Trinity, He is a person. This is an important point to understand. When Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit in **John 14:26**, Christ says, "**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**"

Remember, our understanding of God is that He is one God who expresses Himself in three equal and yet unique persons. One can be in tune with the Holy Spirit or one can be out of tune with Him. One can allow Him to be front and center in his or her life or one can force Him into the background.

We find that the Holy Spirit is active in the Old Testament and active in the New Testament. At Pentecost He came upon believers in a new and powerful way to indwell them and enable them to accomplish the work of the kingdom that Jesus had begun. That brings us to our second consideration.

2. The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God present and active in the life of every believer. While the whole work of the Holy Spirit is far beyond our ability to examine in this study, allow me to share with you ten things the Holy Spirit does.

A. He is the Spirit of Revelation

The Bible is filled with instances where the Holy Spirit is actively working. In fact, one of the key roles the Holy Spirit played was that of revelation.

2 Peter 1:21 assures us that "**... prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**"

The Holy Spirit inspired the scripture; so everything the scripture tells us about the work of the Holy Spirit is self-revelation.

B. He Brings Conviction

John 16:8 tells us that the Holy Spirit convicts the world about sin, righteousness and judgment. God the Holy Spirit, reveals our sin to us and convicts us of it, shows us how unrighteous we are and warns us of the coming judgment because He loves us and wants us to be in fellowship with the Father through Jesus the Son.

C. He Extends an Invitation

The Holy Spirit is actively involved in inviting people to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It is through the Holy Spirit that people are able to see their sin for what it is and are invited to respond to the offer of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

The Bible assures us in **Romans 3:10-11**, “**There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.**”

It is the Holy Spirit Who invites us to come. The Holy Spirit enables us to see ourselves for what we are and invites us to allow Jesus to change us.

D. He Affects Regeneration

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit regenerates us or makes us new in Christ. The Holy Spirit affects new birth in the life of the one who believes. In fact, the Bible tells us in **Romans 8:10** that the Holy Spirit brings life. The Spirit of God gives life. He regenerates.

E. He Indwells Believers

Contrary to what some may teach or believe, there is no second blessing where you have to beg or seek to get the Holy Spirit after you are saved. **Ephesians 1:13-14** tells us that at the moment of salvation God puts His Spirit in us as His seal of ownership and as an assurance that We are His and that He will never forsake us. From the moment of salvation, forward, we have God present with us through His Spirit.

F. He Teaches Believers

The Holy Spirit is a teacher. He shows us truth and helps us understand why we should obey it and how to implement it in our lives. He enables us to discern truth from falsehood and teaches us the ways of God. He teaches truth to God's people as they seek to study and apply God's word to their lives.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit in **John 16:13**, “... **he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**”

G. He Makes Intercession for Believers

One of the most reassuring ministries of the Holy Spirit is that of intercession.

Romans 8:26-27 says, “²⁶ **In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.** ²⁷ **And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.**”

That is an incredible verse! It does not say that sometimes we don't know how to pray. It clearly says that we do not know how to pray as we should, but God has made provision for us. His Spirit intercedes, that is, He goes to God on our behalf, asking God for what we need, even when we don't know we need it. He makes intercession for us.

H. He Brings Unity to God's People

2 Corinthians 13:14 speaks of the unifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit for all believers when it mentions the "fellowship of the Spirit." The idea here is that through His Spirit indwelling His people, God wants there to be unity in His body. Whenever the Spirit of God is in control, people who are under His control will be unified in love, in purpose and in the grace that gives evidence of His presence.

I. He Empowers God's People for Service

In **Acts 1:8**, the disciples were told that they would receive a special anointing of power to carry forth with the work of the kingdom of God. Jesus said that without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing, which is to say, without His Spirit working in us and through us, without the supernatural empowerment that He alone can give, we cannot accomplish anything of eternal consequence. The Holy Spirit empowers God's people for service.

J. He Equips Believers with Spiritual Gifts

The Bible also tells us that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every believer to equip them to be a functional and productive part of the body of Christ.

1 Peter 4:10-11 tells us this, **“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you, as faithful dispensers of the magnificently varied grace of God. If any of you is a preacher then he should preach his message as from God. And in whatever way a man serves the Church he should do it recognising the fact that God gives him his ability, so that God may be glorified in everything through Jesus Christ.”**

Now, if every believer has a spiritual gift, the obvious question is, why isn't every believer using them? The problem, you see, is not with the Spirit who gives the gifts, but with the believer who has buried their talent instead of investing their life in the work of the kingdom of God. The Church will grow or diminish based on the active work of the Holy Spirit as He flows through the people of God to accomplish the will of God on earth.

Now, understanding something of the work of the Spirit of God, let's talk for a moment about our response. How do we as believers respond or interact with the

Holy Spirit? A better question might be, "How does the Bible tell us we are to respond to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit of God?"

3. Our Response to the Holy Spirit

Allow me to suggest three things we should do in response to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

A. We Are to be in Fellowship with Him

Being in fellowship with the Holy Spirit means walking in fellowship with God, it means practicing the presence of God in your life. Let me explain what I believe that means.

Awareness

When was the last time God's presence was so real, so powerful, and so vivid that you were aware of His presence? Now, don't think I am saying we should live by feelings, but we are not to act as though we don't have them either. We know, at least in our heads, that God's Spirit is with us. After all, the Bible tells us this and thus we can live with that assurance. But knowing something in our heads and experiencing something in our hearts are two different things.

James Dunn said this, "The experience of the [Holy] Spirit is like the experience of breathing: one is not conscious of it all the time, but if one is not conscious of it at least sometimes, something is wrong." Practicing the awareness of God's presence through His Spirit involves being aware that He is personally with you. It means speaking to Him and knowing that He hears you. It means sensing the joy of the Lord.

Do you enjoy the presence of someone you love? Does it bring you delight to be with them? Does it not stand to reason that since the Holy Spirit is a person, and that if you love Him, you will find pleasure in His presence?

That's why the Psalmist could say in **Psalm 16:11**, "**You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.**"

Attentive

But not only is it an awareness, it also involves being attentive to His voice. This means that we are sensitive to His voice when He speaks to us. God is always about the business of speaking to His people. The problem is that we are not always about the business of listening.

There is a variety of reasons we don't hear His still small voice when He speaks. Sometimes His voice is drowned out by other voices that compete and vie for our attention. Being in fellowship with Him, and thus being attentive to His voice not only means that we must be intentional about listening for His voice, it means that we must be positioned to be able to hear. Wrong actions and attitudes will always desensitize us from being able to hear His voice. That's why we must make sure we are right with Him. Being attuned to hear His voice means making sure our life is cleared of all impediments and that we are actively listening.

B. We are to be Filled by Him

Ephesians 5:18

At the end of the day, the Spirit filled life is about surrender. It is about surrendering to Him. It is about surrendering your agenda, your will, your desires and the totality of your life to Him so that He can live through you. To be filled with the Spirit means that you are not filled with self. This is a major problem with many Christians – they are too filled with self and not filled enough with the Spirit of God.

The degree to which God will direct you, use you and conform you to the image of Christ, will always depend upon the degree to which you allow the Spirit of God to fill you. Let's be clear, this doesn't mean you are getting more of God. It means God is getting more of you.

Thus, when Paul says in **Galatians 2:20**, "**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**"

Paul is talking about the Spirit filled life. The sealing or indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is a onetime thing but the filling is something that continues to happen over and over and over again.

C. We are to Produce His Fruit

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Fruit trees don't decide to produce fruit, it is the natural result of them being what they are and doing what they were created to do. As a Christian, you should not have to struggle and strain to be loving, peaceful, joyful or patient. If you have His Spirit living in you, if you have exchanged your life for His and you are allowing Him to live in and through you, the fruit will come naturally.