

## The Holy Spirit

We've been talking about the ministry and the person of the Holy Spirit. Today we want to talk about the relation between the Holy Spirit and Christ, the second person of the Trinity. What you find is that the ministry of Jesus was empowered and permeated by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

### C. Relation to Christ

For example, the Holy Spirit is responsible for the virginal conception of Jesus. Look at Luke 1:35. Here Gabriel the angel says to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." So the Holy Spirit is responsible for the virginal conception of Christ right at the very beginning.

Also in the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry we find the Holy Spirit present and active. Turn over to Luke 3:21-22. This is the public baptism of Jesus at which he begins his public ministry. We read, "Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son, with thee I am well pleased.'" Here all three of the persons of the Trinity are present at the baptism of Jesus: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who descends upon the Son at his baptism to empower him for the public ministry to which God had called him.

The miracles and the exorcisms that Jesus performed during his earthly ministry were done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Look at Acts 10:38. This is Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his household. Peter speaks of "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. How he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Here it is through the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is able to carry out his miraculous healing ministry.

As for the exorcisms, turn over to Matthew 12:28. There Jesus says, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." So his power as an exorcist came through the anointing of the Holy Spirit that was upon him.

Not only his miraculous activity was empowered and anointed by the Holy Spirit but also Jesus' preaching. Let's go back to the Gospel of Luke 4:14-21:

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant,  
and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed  
on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this scripture  
has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Wow! Here Jesus says that the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in his  
ministry. So his preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God  
was also empowered and driven by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the continuance of Jesus’ ministry after his resurrection  
and ascension to heaven is carried on by the Holy Spirit. John 16:7,  
13-15:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I  
go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come  
to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

...

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. He will glorify me, for he will  
take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father  
has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine  
and declare it to you.

So after Jesus is risen and ascended into heaven, during his  
absence from this space-time universe, it is the Holy Spirit who  
carries on and extends the ministry of Jesus during the church age  
until he comes again.

So I think you can see in the person and the work of Jesus the Holy Spirit is very actively involved. Certainly if Jesus himself needed the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the ministry which God had called him to do, how much more do we fallen and sinful people need the anointing power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the work that God has given us to do?

### III. Work of the Holy Spirit

Let's turn now to an examination of some of the prominent ministries of the Holy Spirit. I think what we will find is a rather startling long list of ministries that the Holy Spirit has.

1. *Old Testament Activities.* There are many passages in the Old Testament referring to the Spirit of the Lord or the Spirit of God. For example, Genesis 1:2-3 says, "The Earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." So right at the beginning of creation the Spirit of God is involved. But we should not assume that passages like this are referring to the Holy Spirit because in the Old Testament the person of the Holy Spirit had not yet been differentiated. Indeed, the name "the Holy Spirit" does not yet occur. So while God's Spirit is very active in the Old Testament, we cannot confidently say that such passages are referring to the third person of the Trinity.

But when we come to the New Testament, now that the Holy Spirit has come to be distinguished, we may say pretty confidently that passages about the Spirit are referring to the Holy Spirit. Hermann

Kleinknecht observes that the concept of a *pneuma hagion* is unattested in secular Greek literature. He says, “Here biblical Gk. has coined a new and distinctive expression for the very different, suprasensual, supraterritorial and in part personal character and content which πνευμα has in Judaism and Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> By contrast, “Profane Greek knows no hypostatic person of the Spirit understood as an independent divine entity.”

2. The Holy Spirit is involved in *divine revelation*. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 12-13. Paul says,

But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love him,”

God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Then verse 12:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.

Here God, through the Holy Spirit, is revealing to us divine truths and enabling us to understand them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume VI: ΠΕ-Ρ, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, s.v. “πνευμα, πνευματικος,” by Hermann Kleinknecht, Friedrich Baumgärtel, Werner Bieder, Erik Sjöberg, and Eduard Schweizer (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 338.

3. The Holy Spirit is responsible for *the inspiration of the Scriptures*. 2 Peter 1:20-21, “First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” Here it describes the sustaining and moving power of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of Scripture. If you’re interested in looking at that in more depth, I refer you back to the earlier lessons in Defenders when we talked about the doctrine of inspiration in our section on the Doctrine of Revelation.

4. The Holy Spirit is involved in *the conception of Christ*. Look at Luke 1:30-31, 34-35.

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. . . . And Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”

So the Holy Spirit is involved in Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus.

5. The Holy Spirit is *responsible for the regeneration of believers*, that is to say, for the new spiritual rebirth that we experience. John 3:5-7,

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’”

Here Jesus describes the new birth – and the theological term for this is regeneration. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes a person spiritually alive, when before there was simply spiritual death. So it’s through the Holy Spirit that we are regenerated and thereby made fit for the kingdom of God. Apart from that regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, no one can enter God’s Kingdom.

6. *Indwelling and baptizing of the believer.* Romans 8:9. Here Paul describes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that every believer enjoys. He says, “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” What Paul says is that it is the Holy Spirit within you that makes the decisive difference whether one is truly a Christian or not. Anyone who does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit is not a Christian. He is unregenerate. But anyone who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him is a regenerate believer and therefore belongs to Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 makes the same point. It says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” Paul here says that it is through being baptized in the Holy Spirit that we are placed into the body of Christ. The reason that we are members of the body of Christ is because of this baptism of the Holy Spirit which has identified us with Christ as one of his members. Through the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit we believers belong to Christ and are part of his body.

7. The Holy Spirit *gives us assurance of salvation*. Romans 8:14-16. Paul says,

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 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 . . . .

So how do you have assurance of your salvation? How do you know that you’re a child of God, born again? It is because of the witness of the Holy Spirit with your spirit. This is the source of your assurance that you are a regenerate and redeemed Christian.

8. The Holy Spirit *gives enablement for spiritual living*. Galatians 5:16-18, 25. Here Paul says,

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

So it is through daily walking in the Spirit – walking in the power of the Holy Spirit – that we can combat and live above the desires of the flesh which would pull us down and mire us in sin and stain our lives with unholy living. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to live the Christian life. The Christian life cannot be successfully lived in the power of the flesh. That’s why Christians who are not walking in the power of the Holy Spirit are so miserable and so defeated in their Christian walk because in



the power of the flesh you cannot successfully live the Christian life. You need the power of the Holy Spirit.

9. The Holy Spirit is *the source of spiritual gifts for building up the body of Christ*. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Here Paul describes some of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives. He says,

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. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

According to Paul, the Holy Spirit has gifted the church with all of these special spiritual abilities distributed according to his will to operate for the building up of the body of Christ. That means that you have a spiritual gift that the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon you which you are to be exercising in the context of your local Christian community.

10. The fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *produces spiritual fruit in our lives*. Galatians 5:22-24. After listing the works of the flesh, Paul then goes on to say in verse 22,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

So the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is not, properly speaking, the spiritual gifts. Everyone is given a spiritual gift for serving the body of Christ, but the way the Holy Spirit is manifested in the life of someone who's walking in the Spirit is the production of these character qualities, these virtues, that are produced in the person, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and so forth. These are the real fruit or signs of the filling of the Holy Spirit in a person's life.

You look at this list of prominent ministries of the Holy Spirit and I think you can't help but ask yourself, how in the world could the Holy Spirit have ever become the forgotten person to the Trinity? He's there right from the beginning and is absolutely vital in every respect of the Christian life.