

Study 5 – God the Holy Spirit

He is called the neglected Person in the Godhead. He is more than someone merely tagged on to the end of a prayer: without Him it would be impossible to live the Christian life! So Who is the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost?)

The Holy Spirit is a Person

He is the Third Person of the Trinity. This does not mean that He is inferior to the Father and the Son. Each had a part in Creation and our salvation. We can say “The Father planned it; the Son purchased it; the Holy Spirit brings the reality of that salvation to us. Some (e.g. Jehovah’s Witnesses) believe the Holy Spirit is a force (an ‘it’) but the Bible clearly teaches He is a Person. We usually think a person needs a body but personality has more to do with mind, will and emotions. The Holy Spirit is referred to as ‘He’ in John 16v7-14 and throughout Scripture He has personal characteristics e.g. He knows (1 Corinthians 2v10-11), He wills (1 Corinthians 12v11); He thinks and feels (Romans 8v26-27); He loves (Romans 15v30); He grieves (Ephesians 4v30); He acts like a person; He speaks out (Revelation 2v7); cries out (Galatians 4v6), prays (Romans 8v26), teaches (John 14v26) and calls people (Acts 13v2; 20v28). We cannot have fellowship with a force or an influence — only with a Person (2 Corinthians 13v14).

The Holy Spirit is God

He has all the attributes of God (see Study 4) and is actually referred to as God (compare Isaiah 6v8-10 with Acts 28v25; Acts 5v3-4; 2 Corinthians 3v18) and is co-equal with God (cf. Jeremiah 31v32, Hebrews 10v15)

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the believer

He has always existed and is the executor (carries out) of God the Creator’s command (cf Genesis 1v2; Hebrews 11v3). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit used to come upon people for specific tasks (cf. Judges 6v34) but could leave again (Judges 16v20; Psalm 51v11). After Jesus’ resurrection the Holy Spirit indwelt every person who accepted Jesus as Saviour (cf John 20v22). Jesus, however, promised that another Counsellor would come after He had returned to His Father (cf John 16v7) who would enable His followers to do what He had done (John 14v12). It was on the Day of Pentecost that the disciples of Jesus (cf Acts 1v5ff) were anointed (or baptised) in the Holy Spirit (compare Acts 1v5 with Acts 2v4). Since this time the Holy Spirit:

- a) Indwells every believer on confession of faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord;
- b) Fills the believer whenever Jesus is made Lord.

The initial filling is usually referred to as the baptism or anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is usually a crisis experience followed by a process of being filled continuously with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2v4; 10v46; 19v6 and Ephesians 5v18). Whenever Jesus is not Lord in our lives the Holy Spirit is grieved (Ephesians 4v29-32) and His Power quenched (1 Thessalonians 5v19 R.S.V.) It is never a question of having more of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives as a Person. The question to be answered is: 'How much of my life does the Holy Spirit have?' We can, of course, have more of His power.

The present work of the Holy Spirit is to:

Glorify Jesus (John 16v14) for He never speaks of Himself.

Guide us into all truth (John 16v13)

Draw all men unto Jesus.

To do this the Holy Spirit seeks to:

Reproduce the life and character of Jesus in every believer — thus producing the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5v22-23)

Equip the Body of Christ (the Church) for ministry in the Church and the world by means of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12v1-11 and Ephesians 4v11).

So the Holy Spirit's work is broadly twofold: to develop our character and ministry. This He accomplishes through:

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

(1 Corinthians 12v1-11)

These are given to enable us to worship (Romans 8v26-27; 1 Corinthians 12v7-11; 14v26) and to work (miracles (Acts 3v8); discerning of spirits (Acts 8 v 21), etc). The gifts are given for others — either in the Church (the people) or individuals. (See Supplement 5)

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

(Galatians 5v22-23)

At conversion we receive all things with Christ (Romans 8v32) but it is as though the Fruit of the Spirit are received as seeds which we should allow to grow to fill our lives with His Character BUT in each of us there are hard areas where the seeds barely grow. E.g. you may have been very impatient as a non-Christian. Now, since becoming a Christian, you still are impatient because the 'seed of

patience' has not been able to grow in that hard area. So, break up the unploughed ground (Hosea 10v12) by repentance (2 Corinthians 7v9) and allow the seed to grow. It is well to realise that as Paul is teaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12&14) he sandwiches in the middle of it the great chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13) which is the only climate in which the gifts can operate effectively.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Unbeliever

The Holy Spirit is actively involved in restraining sin (2 Thessalonians 2v7). If He were removed there would be hell on Earth! In John 16v8-12 we see the threefold work of the Holy Spirit set out — to convince the world (society) of guilt in regard to: a) sin; b) righteousness; c) judgment. Our responsibility is to present the truth about Jesus and humanity. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to convict and convince the unbelievers.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

From even a casual reading of the Acts of the Apostles it is clear that the coming of the Holy Spirit transformed the lives of the early disciples from fearful, weak men (Mark 14v50 & 66-72) into bold preachers (Acts 2v14) and miracle workers (Acts 3v7). They received authority (Acts 4v31) and power (Acts 6v8); they became instruments through which the Holy Spirit could work (Acts 9v15; cf 2 Corinthians 4v7). The same power and authority is available to us today through the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1v6&7)

QUESTIONS

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is a Person not a force or influence?

What is the difference between the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and the "fullness of the Holy Spirit"? (cf. Acts 1v5; 2v4; Ephesians 5 v 18)

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit and quench His

power? (Ephesians 4v29-32; 1 Thessalonians 5v19ff)

What does the fruit of the Spirit produce? (Galatians 5v22-23.)

(Why not learn the fruit of the Spirit by heart?)

What is the main purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

What work does the Holy Spirit do today'? (John 16v8-11)

What do the following emblems teach us about the Holy Spirit?

Dove (Matthew 3v16)

Fire (Matthew 3v11 Acts 2v3)

Wind (John 3v8; Acts 2v2)

Oil (Isaiah 61v1-3; 1John 2v20&27)

Water (John 7v37-38; Revelation 22v17)

Does the Holy Spirit live in you? (Romans 8v9)

Have you been baptised in the Holy Spirit? (cf. Acts 19v2)

FURTHER STUDY

The book in the Bible called 'The Acts of the Apostles' has been called the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit'. Read it and see if this is true, noting down the way the Holy Spirit worked.