

## BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

A Study by Paul E. Brown

The reason that so many of us Christians live mediocre, or even defeated, lives is that we know so little of the Holy Spirit (sometimes called the Holy Ghost in the KJV--but literally the Greek words--*pneuma to hagion*--mean "the Holy Spirit"). Perhaps some of us neglect the truth about the Holy Spirit for fear of being looked upon as fanatics. But the fact is that none of us will ever rise to our potential until we get serious about the Holy Spirit--that is, until we understand more clearly who the Holy Spirit is and the role God intends that he play in our lives, and then respond accordingly.

So, with the prayer that God will help us apply these truths to our lives to our good and God's glory, let's look at some basic Biblical teachings about the Holy Spirit. First of all, let's consider...

### I. THE IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### A. The Holy Spirit is a **PERSON**.

The late Ralph Herring, a prominent Southern Baptist pastor, told of a visit he made early in his ministry to a home that had just been gladdened by the arrival of a new baby. Herring had been told the gender of the new addition, but it had slipped his mind. So, during the course of his conversation with the parents he used the only term he could think of to ask about their new arrival. He said, "How is it getting along?" That mother looked sternly at that preacher, and then said very indignantly, "I'll have you to know, young man, my little son is no 'IT.' He is the finest little boy in all the world!"

Well, in like manner, the Holy Spirit is no "IT." The Bible makes it crystal clear that the Holy Spirit is a PERSON--not a mere force, or influence, but a real person.

1. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, in **John 16:7**, that "if I depart, I will send him unto you." In that same chapter, the masculine pronoun "*he*" or some variant is used 12 times.

2. Throughout the Scriptures, *traits of personality* are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

a. He has *intelligence*. **Romans 8:27** speaks of "the mind of the Spirit." In **1 Corinthians 2:11** we are told that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

b. The Holy Spirit *hears, speaks, and acts*. In **John 16:13** Jesus said: "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." In **Acts 13:2** we read: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,

the Holy Ghost [literally, the Holy Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”

c. The Holy Spirit exercises *volition*--he has a *will*. **1 Corinthians 12:11** says, “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

d. He has *emotions*. He *loves*. **Romans 15:30** speaks of “the love of the Spirit.” He *can be vexed*. **Isaiah 63:10** says, “But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit....” He *can be saddened*. **Ephesians 4:30** exhorts us to “grieve not the holy Spirit of God....” He *can be pleased*. In a letter, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem said, in **Acts 15:28**, “...it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.”

e. As a person, he *can be resisted*. **Acts 7:51** Stephen said to a group of unbelieving Jews, “...ye do always resist the Holy Ghost....”

All of the passages I have referred to, which are representative of many other similar passages, make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a conscious, intelligent, feeling, active personality.

## B. The Holy Spirit is **GOD**.

Again, we are confronted with the profound, unfathomable mystery of *the Trinity*--that is, the Biblical teaching that God is one, yet expresses himself in three distinct, equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Deuteronomy 6:4** says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” **Isaiah 45:22**: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

But the Bible also identifies three distinct persons as God. (1) In **John 6:27** Jesus spoke of “God the Father.” (2) In John, chapter one, Jesus is referred to as “the Word.” In **John 1:1-3** we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” (3) The Holy Spirit is also identified as God. Let’s look at *some passages of Scripture that so identify him*.

1. In **2 Corinthians 3** the inspired writer speaks of Israel turning to the Lord, and **verse 17** says, “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

2. **Ephesians 2:22 (NIV)**: “And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” That verse tells us that God dwells in the lives of believers, and that he does so in the person of the Spirit--meaning, obviously, the Holy Spirit.

3. One of the real “clinchers” is found in **Acts 5:3-4**: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” Peter said that in lying to the Holy Ghost [or Holy Spirit] Ananias was lying to God.

4. The Bible clearly attributes to the Holy Spirit *characteristics that are possessed only by God*.

a. In **Hebrews 9:14** he is spoken of as “the *eternal* Spirit.”

b. He is omnipresent--everywhere at the same time--as described in **Psalm 139:7 (NIV)**: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” Only God can be everywhere at the same time.

c. Just as in the case of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as creator in **Job 33:4 (NIV)**: “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” In **Genesis 1:2** we are told that the earth, when God created it, was “without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” But that verse continues: “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Holy Spirit brought order out of chaos.

d. The Holy Spirit is omniscient--all-knowing. **1 Corinthians 2:10** says that “the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

e. As in the case of the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is referred as the source of eternal life. **Galatians 6:8**: “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

## II. THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### A. In relation to Christ.

1. The Holy Spirit was active in connection with *the virgin birth of Jesus*. In **Matthew 1:20** the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “...fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”

2. He was present at *Jesus’ baptism*. **Matthew 3:16-17**: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

3. The Holy Spirit was active in connection with *Jesus’ entire life and ministry*. **Acts**

**10:38** says that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

4. Our Lord was *filled with, and led by, the Spirit*. **Luke 4:1** says, “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” **John 3:34** says that “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

5. Jesus was *empowered by the Spirit to do miracles*. In **Matthew 12:28** Jesus said, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”

6. It was through the enabling of the Holy Spirit that *Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross*. **Hebrews 9:14** says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

7. The Holy Spirit was active in *the resurrection of Jesus*. **1 Peter 3:18** says: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened [literally, made alive] by the Spirit.” **Romans 1:4** says that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

8. It was through the Holy Spirit that *Jesus gave commandments* to the apostles, and through them to us. **Acts 1:2** speaks of “the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.”

9. The primary work of the Holy Spirit, in relation to Jesus, is *to make him known and exalt him*. In **John 15:26** Jesus said, “...the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”--and in **John 16:14** Jesus said, “He shall glorify me....” Peter and certain other apostles gave this testimony to a group of unbelieving Jews in **Acts 5:30-32**:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

## **B. In relation to lost people.**

1. He *draws* lost people. **Revelation 22:17**: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

2. He *convicts* lost people. Jesus said, in **John 16:8**, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

One example of how that promise is fulfilled is seen in **Acts 2**. Peter preached about the crucified Jesus, and **verse 37** says, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” **Verse 38**: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

A certain lady had been greatly concerned for a long time about her lost husband. She was perplexed about his continued unresponsiveness to the gospel, and she said to her pastor, “I just can’t get him under conviction.” The pastor said, “Lady, I see the trouble right now.”

God uses believers to witness to non-believers, but all we can do is deliver the message. Only the Holy Spirit can bring conviction to that non-believer. We can tell him that **Romans 3:23** says that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” but only the Holy Spirit can make drive that truth home to his heart.

How is conviction manifested in a human heart? Paul Shepherd, a preacher on WCRV, says that people get under conviction in two ways: (1) Sometimes they catch a vision of what their life ought to be, and can be, like with God’s help--and (2) sometimes they get so totally miserable with the way they are living that they want to be changed. I believe that both of these manifestations are often present simultaneously.

**3.** Then, when a person realizes that he is lost in sin and doomed to eternal hell, and turns to Jesus in repentance and faith, it is the Holy Spirit who works *the miracle of regeneration* in that person’s heart. Jesus spoke of this transformation from spiritual death to spiritual life as being “born again.” He said to Nicodemus, in **John 3:5**, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” In that context, being “born of water” apparently refers to physical birth, which involves the breaking of the mother’s water, and being born “of the Spirit” refers to that miraculous change that the Holy Spirit brings about. In **Titus 3:5-7** we read:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In **John 6:63** Jesus said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing....”

**1 Corinthians 12:13** says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” In that verse the word “baptize” does not refer to immersion in water, but, rather, to the experience of conversion, by which we are spiritually immersed into the family of God.

The late Dr. Herschel Ford, in his book, *Simple Sermons on the Great Christian*

*Doctrines*, made this appeal to those who are lost:

To the sinner I would say, Don't trifle with the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy against the Father and Son may be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven. I don't know what all this means, and the great theologians do not know, but I do know this: If the Holy Spirit calls you, you are not to go on in your sin--you are not to reject his call. If you heed not his call, you are treading on dangerous ground. If the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, I urge you to listen to him and to turn to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

### **C. In relation to Christians.**

1. The Holy Spirit carries out multiple ministries in the life of the believer.

a. At the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit *enters the believer's life and dwells with him forever*. In **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** we read: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Jesus said, in **John 7:38-39**: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive....)"

b. The Holy Spirit *seals* the Christian. In **Ephesians 1:12-14** we read these words:

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

A seal in ancient times had two purposes: to identify as to its owner, and also to make secure. So, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives shows that we belong to Jesus, and also is our guarantee that we are secure in Christ--that we'll never be lost again.

c. The Holy Spirit *gives assurance*. **Romans 8:16** declares: "The Spirit itself [NIV, himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." **Romans 8:9** says that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." He is called the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and here the Spirit of Christ.

d. The Holy Spirit *comforts* us. Prior to his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, Jesus said, in **John 14:16-17**, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

e. The Holy Spirit *teaches* us. In **John 14:26** Jesus said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance."

f. The Holy Spirit *guides* us. In **John 16:13** Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...." One of the primary ways that he teaches us and guides us is through the Scriptures, which he inspired men to write. **2 Peter 1:21** says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

g. The Holy Spirit *imparts spiritual gifts* to believers. In **1 Corinthians 12:1** Paul wrote, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." He went on, then, to describe the various spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives--and then in **verse 11** he said, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

h. The Holy Spirit *produces spiritual fruit* in our lives. **Galatians 5:22-23**: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Then in **verse 25** we read: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

i. The Holy Spirit *intercedes for us as we pray*. **Romans 8:26-27**:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself [NIV, himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

**Jude 20 (CEV)**: "Dear friends, keep building on the foundation of your most holy faith, as the Holy Spirit helps you to pray."

j. The Holy Spirit works in the believer's *conscience*. In **Romans 9:1** Paul said, "...the Holy Spirit is a witness to my conscience." Among other things, that means that when we as Christians go astray, the Spirit convicts us by pricking our conscience.

k. The Holy Spirit gives us *strength to resist temptation*. **1 John 4:4** says, "...greater is he that in you [a reference to the Holy Spirit], that he that is in the world [a reference to Satan]."

Dr. Mike Minnix makes reference to an excerpt ("Charisma & Christian Life." Oct 1991. Page 82) from Tim Stafford's book, "Unhappy Secrets of the Christian Life." Stafford tells about the Thresher, a nuclear submarine that traveled under the Arctic ice to the North Pole. However, it went too deep and the water pressure became so great that the sub's hull collapsed and imploded. At great depths like that, even thick steel bulkheads

cannot withstand the tremendous pressure--but certain species of fish can. It would seem like these thin-skinned creatures would be crushed by the weight of the water. The reason they are not is simply because they have within themselves an equal and opposite pressure. When we face the pressure of the world and all its temptations, we don't need to try to protect ourselves with thick steel walls. We just need to have an equal and opposite pressure inside us: the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit *empowers us for witnessing*. Jesus said, in **Acts 1:8**, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Remember that we are to witness in two ways: (1) Certainly we are to verbalize our witness. **Psalm 107:2** declares, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so...." (2) But we are also to witness by our life. Jesus said, in **Matthew 5:16**, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the courage to speak, and the power to resist Satan so as to be victorious in daily living.

## 2. Now, **WHAT RESPONSE** must we Christians make in order to allow the Holy Spirit to do these things in our lives?

The answer is seen in **Ephesians 5:18**: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." When you were converted you received, that very moment, all of the Holy Spirit there is to have, in terms of quantity. So, when the Bible exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit, he is speaking of fullness of control--and notice that this is a command, which is an appeal to the will. The Lord is saying to believers, "It is up to you to **submit yourselves to the full control of the indwelling Spirit of God**. If you will so yield to his full control, he will bless you, empower you, and use you."

Major Ian Thomas, the British evangelist, used the illustration of a glove. He said: "If your glove is lying on the table, you can command it to do things all day, and it's helpless to obey. It just lies there uselessly. But when you fill the glove with your hand, that glove can do anything you can do. It can grasp a hammer, steer a car, shake a hand, or hold a Bible."

With that analogy in mind, David Jeremiah wrote:

Christ doesn't want us to do something *for* Him; He wants to do something *through* us. To be effective in His service, we need to be filled with Him. The book of Acts repeatedly describes the early Christians as being filled with the Spirit. When the apostle Paul gave reports about his missionary activities, he always talked about what the Lord had done *through* him. When we labor in our own strength, we're just jousting with windmills. When we're filled with the Holy Spirit, it's as though Christ Himself were ministering through us--which He is. We are His gloves, and we must let His hands fill us every day. (*Turning Point Daily Devotional, 8-14-07*)