

What Is  
the  
Holy Spirit?

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## What Is the Holy Spirit?

The doctrine of the Trinity has been linked historically to the explanation of the Holy Spirit. "Trinity" is a term used to express the belief that in the one God there are three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*World Book Encyclopedia*, article, "Trinity"). Yet, the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, article "Trinity" admits that most theologies and Christian teachers consider the Trinity to be a mystery, its nature not fully understood or known by human intelligence.

An examination of the Apostles' Creed, the earliest and most simple of the orthodox statements, does not include any reference to the Trinity. The Apostles' Creed, current before A.D. 150, was believed to have been used by the Apostles, though this is doubtful. The Nicene Creed, formulated in the fourth century, attempted to explain the nature of Christ; it did not attempt to explain the Trinity. The Athanasian Creed adopted during the fifth century did attempt to explain the Trinity, asserting that Jesus Christ is one of three persons of the Holy Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

E. J. Newman tells us in a pamphlet entitled *The Doctrine of the Trinity* that the Athanasian Creed in particular reflects the doctrinal controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries and is essentially made up of logical and intellectual statements with all the dangers which appeal to the head and not the heart. Newman adds, the creeds were written for the times in which they were formulated and are difficult if not impossible for modern readers to understand. Many who subscribe to them do so solely on the authority of the church and have long given up any attempt to understand them—a situation which Newman describes as most unsatisfactory (Newman, p. 9).

The language and form of expression used in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds do not reflect that of the Bible. Nevertheless, it is asserted they do justify the Bible teaching. Newman quotes a Dr. Matthews: "The doctrine itself [Trinity] is no part of the original gospel. The Athanasian Creed and even the Nicene would have been strange in the ears of St. Paul and St. John. Nevertheless the experience, to preserve which the dogmas of the Incarnation and the Trinity were formulated, is plainly expressed in the New Testament" (Newman, p. 10). We shall see whether this last statement is true or not later on.

We noted that according to the Athanasian Creed, Jesus Christ is one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Newman tells us that certain terms found in the creeds are used in the technical sense, and this is particularly true of the word "person." The word "person" when used in the creeds implies something less personal than the individual but more "personal" than mere attribute; it emphasizes not the difference between the persons but their unity. The normal usage of the word "person" means an individual different from and so

distinguished from other individuals. Not so in the creeds. The creeds express philosophy and metaphysics concerning the nature and unity of the being of God (Newman, p. 10). In the pagan religions there were gods galore, and theologians were attempting to counteract the accusation that Christians believed in more than one God. Newman admits that the use of the word "person" is one of the most unsatisfactory features of the creeds because if understood in its usual sense, it makes nonsense of the statements concerning God. Also, divorced from its usual sense, it defies precise definition. Newman acknowledges that the end result of the Athanasian Creed is an unresolved opposition, caused by the inadequacy of human language as a vehicle for the expression of the mystery of the nature of God (ibid, pp. 10–11). What we see in the Athanasian Creed is the attempt to define the simple truth of the Holy Spirit by means of convoluted philosophical reasoning regarding the Trinity until it has become impossible for anyone to understand.

### **Is the Holy Spirit a Person?**

Newman tells us that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is commonly regarded as the least satisfactory teaching of the creeds. Even among those who defend the creeds, it is easy to find criticisms and admissions of the weakness of this feature of them. While Dr. Matthews (quoted earlier) is less critical, he confesses that the "personality of the Holy Spirit offers a real difficulty both theologically and philosophically" and admits that "the New Testament evidence for the personal conception of the Holy Spirit is mixed" (Newman, p. 16). Mainstream Christianity is convinced the Holy Spirit is a person. Paul Benware in a book entitled *Ambassadors of Armstrongism*, page 43, tells us, "The theologians have long taught that the Holy Spirit is a person." Indeed so, going back at least to the Athanasian Creed. But as we have already seen, theologians of the time could not really define the Holy Spirit in the Godhead and neither can anybody today. Formulating the Athanasian Creed was a grand exercise to silence the pagan advocates, the end result requiring Christians to accept the Holy Spirit as a third person of the Trinity by an act of faith.

Benware in an attempt to support the belief that the Holy Spirit is a third person in the Trinity goes to some length. He tells us that the usage of the masculine pronoun "he" in John 14:16, 17; 15:26 proves that the Holy Spirit is a person. Benware is unable to comprehend the simple truth that the "he" in each of these instances refers to the *word* "Comforter." Comforter in the Greek is *Paraclete*, a masculine noun. The pronoun that must be used with this Greek masculine form is "he," according to the rules of Greek grammar. It is the *word* "Comforter" that is masculine; so far as the Bible is concerned there is no proof that the Holy Spirit is masculine. In fact, the word "spirit" (Gk. *pneuma*) is neuter and requires a neuter pronoun when called for. Benware refers to Ephesians 1:14 for proof that the Holy Spirit is masculine. He says the masculine relative pronoun "which" is used for the neuter word

"spirit" in the previous verse. Not so, according to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, page 588. This authoritative source tells us that the antecedent of "which" is "earnest." "Earnest" (*arrabon*) is masculine in the Greek. This text gives no proof that the Holy Spirit is a he.

According to Trinitarian thinking the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally ranked within the Godhead. Setting aside the Holy Spirit for the moment, what is obvious is that the Father and the Son are never in the New Testament ranked as equals. Jesus Himself said, ". . . my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). Furthermore, the New Testament states that ". . . Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:23). Paul tells us ". . . the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). When God's plan has been completed Paul also tells us "Then cometh the end, when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:24). Where, then, does the Holy Spirit fit into the Godhead? Is it a third person, co-equal with the Father and the Son as Trinitarians would have us believe?

For Benware, page 101, the Holy Spirit is a person because the Bible attributes actions to him that cannot apply to anything other than a person. He participated in the creation (Gen. 1:2). He teaches and brings truth to remembrance (John 14:26). He guides (Rom. 8:26). He prays (Rom. 8:26). He guides into all truth, and hears, speaks, and shows (John 14:26). He spoke to Philip (Acts 8:26). He gives authoritative commands (Acts 13:2, 4). The Holy Spirit has intelligence (1 Cor. 2:10, 11); emotions (Eph. 4:30); and will (1 Cor. 12:11). The Spirit can be sinned against (Isa. 63:10); revered (Psa. 51:11); lied to (Acts 5:3); resisted (Acts 7:51); and obeyed (Acts 10:19–21). We will recall the statement by Dr. Matthews that substantiation for the third person of the Trinity is mixed as far as the New Testament is concerned. One who reads into the Bible by interpreting what the texts mentioned above seem to say—that the Holy Spirit is a third person of the Trinity—would probably agree with Dr. Matthews' assessment that the references above are mixed. In fact, Benware goes on to tell us on the same page that the Holy Spirit is God and is identified with the title of Jehovah. He compares Isaiah 6:8–9 with Acts 28:25; Jeremiah 31:31–34 with Hebrews 10:15. In these comparisons Benware is correct. But he is confused in assuming that the Holy Spirit is a third person apart from the Father and the Son. Like Augustine, modern Trinitarians view the distinction of persons as limited to their relation to one another. Augustine said that there is one substance or essence, and when we speak of three persons it is only because we lack words to express the distinction between the Father and the Son, and between the Holy Ghost and the Father and the Son. Certainly, there are three, Augustine insists, yet, when we say Three, human language labors from great poverty of speech. We say three persons not that it may be so said, but that we may not keep silence. We say of each person that He is omnipotent, but there are not three omnipotents (*History of Christian Doctrine*, by G. P. Fisher, p. 178). How would you like to support a doctrine that cannot be expressed because human languages are too inadequate to explain it?

The truth, on the other hand, is relatively simple to understand. Much of the following information was gleaned from a 1980 unpublished draft entitled "The Trinity Examined," written by Anthony Buzzard. Mr. Buzzard call attention to Alan Richardson, D.D. in his *Introduction to New Testament Theology*, who makes the following statement:

The Spirit of God has no existence apart from God, any more than the spirit of Elijah can exist apart from Elijah. God's Spirit is God acting. The spirit of a man is his '*dunamis*' (power), his person in action, and the same is true of God's Spirit. It is His '*dunamis*,' ie. it is God acting. To ask whether in the New Testament the Spirit is a person in the modern sense of the word would be like asking whether the spirit of Elijah is a person. The Spirit of God is of course personal, it is God's power in action. But the Holy Spirit is not a person existing independently of God . . . The New Testament (and indeed patristic thought generally) nowhere represents the Spirit, any more than the power or the wisdom of God, as having an independent personality (Richardson, pp. 104–105, 120).

Not all modern theologians agree with the concept of a Trinity as this statement proves, but how accurate is Dr. Richardson's view?

In 1 Corinthians 2:11 Paul draws an analogy between "the spirit of man which is in him" and "the Spirit of God." This text reveals that the spirit of man is in no sense a different person from the man himself than the Spirit of God is a different person from God. This text tells us that the Spirit by which God communicates to men through Christ, far from being a third person, is at the same time the principle of His divine self-consciousness. The Spirit that resides in man as the conscious mind is akin to the Spirit that resides in God which proceeds from Him as His divine activity. The Spirit of God was the active power and life of God residing in His disciples through Jesus Christ. Paul affirmed "Now the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). The book of Acts describes the direct guidance Christ gave to His church by means of His Spirit. The texts cited by Benware in the second paragraph above simply confirm that the Spirit (the Lord) guided, spoke, showed, and commanded. The Holy Spirit is clearly revealed to be the Spirit of the Lord directing His church. After the resurrection, the Spirit became the power of God as well as the presence of Christ Himself (*New Testament Theological Wordbook*, article "Spirit," p. 238). It is in this sense that "the Holy Spirit spoke" and "was lied to" (Acts 5:3). In Acts 5:4 lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God. Jesus is God and He is the Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaking is the equivalent of Christ speaking. This same analogy is seen in the gospels. Mark 13:11 and Luke 21:15 state that it is not you speaking but the Holy Spirit, that will give you a mouth and wisdom. There is no differentiation here between the activity of the Spirit or the operation of the risen Christ (Richardson, p. 109).

## About the Trinity

In the creeds the language of co-eternity and co-equality are applied to the Holy Spirit. This idea is indissolubly associated with the concept that the Holy Spirit is a person. But, as Newman points out on page 22, a couple of questions need to be asked: (1) Why should the attempt be made to conceive of distinctions within the Godhead at all and why should these be three in number? (2) How can we conceive of these distinctions and yet preserve the essential truth of the unity of God? It has already been noted that the concept of the Trinity finds itself within the realm of philosophy rather than Scripture. Various analogies have been postulated to support the Trinitarian view. It is stated, for example, that since Christ sought, found, and did His Father's will, so does the Christian. Thus, the Christian shares His Lord's relationship to the Father and the Spirit. Hence the doctrine of the Trinity is the formal statement of the divine setting in the Christian life. The threefold aspect of the Christian life (seeking, finding, and doing the Father's will) accounts for the presumed trinitarian passages of Scripture. Because there is a threefold element in the believers experience, there must be the same threefold element in the eternal personality of God. But, as Newman points out (p. 23) the doctrine of the Trinity, as set for the creeds, is a statement concerning the nature of the Godhead and not an analysis of the Christian life and experience.

Another analogy is that to think of God as one single isolated being is to think of Him as static and inactive. The doctrine of the Trinity enables us to think of Him as dynamic and active, enjoying the activity of the divine fellowship of one throughout all ages (Newman, p. 23). Then, there is the analogy of Augustine, who referred to John's statement concerning the love of God, and said that God is love. Love, he argues, must have an object and the object of the Father's love is the Son and love unites them in the Spirit. Newman concludes that the objection to this identification of the love uniting the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit is artificial. Furthermore, it does not address the kind of love John was declaring. John was defining the kind of love God has shown to man by the gift of His Son. In reality, these last two concepts emphasize the separation and mutual exclusiveness of the persons of the Godhead and makes it difficult to retain the idea of mutual inclusiveness which is essential to the unity of the Godhead. Newman points out all these analogies fall short of what they are intended to accomplish and we are driven back to the unresolved tension of the creed itself. Thus, the problem which is created by the creed's insistence that the unity of the Godhead is comprised of three persons is left unresolved (*ibid*).

If the Godhead were a Trinity surely the Apostle Paul would have acknowledged it. Yet, as Newman points out, Paul recognizes the gifts (of the Spirit) as the manifestation of the power and presence of God and Christ without attributing to the Spirit anything in the nature of personality. Paul refers to God and Christ indiscriminately as the source of the Spirit and actually identifies Christ with the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). In seventeen epistles

opening with an invocation of grace and peace, thirteen of them attribute these to God and Christ without any reference to the Holy Spirit. In only one other (1 Pet. 1:2) is the Holy Spirit mentioned and there as the means of sanctification, not the source of grace. Furthermore, in the thanksgiving or blessing of eleven epistles which follow the opening salutation not one contains any mention of the Spirit. The conclusion is simple. Paul's broad trend of thought follows that of the gospels which represent the Holy Spirit as the active power and presence of God, the Father and Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and not as a third person in a triune Godhead (Newman, p. 18).

What is obvious from this is that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament support the notion of a Trinity. As far as the Bible is concerned there are only two personalities revealed in the Godhead—God, the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. Jesus Christ was the YHVH of the Old Testament (1 Cor. 10:1–4). He prayed to the Father, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). Jesus Christ was the Spokesman, the Logos, the One under the authority of the Father who created the world. "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 any thing made that was made. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:1–3, 10).

If the Bible does not support the notion of a Trinity where did the concept originate? A look at history gives the answer. Alexander Hislop states in his work entitled *The Two Babylons*:

So utterly idolatrous was the Babylonian recognition of the Divine unity, that Jehovah, the Living God, severely condemned his own people for giving any countenance to it: 'They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens, after the rites of the ONLY ONE, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together' (Isa. 66:17). In the unity of that Only One of the Babylonians, there were three persons, and to symbolize that doctrine of the Trinity, they employed, as the discoveries of Layard prove, the equilateral triangle, just as it is well known the Romish Church does at this day. . . . The Papacy has in some of its churches, as, for instance, in the monastery of the so-called Trinitarian of Madrid, an image of the Triune God, with three heads on one body. The Babylonians had something of the same. Mr. Layard, in his last work, has given a specimen of such a triune divinity, worshipped in ancient Assyria. . . . All these have existed from ancient times. . . . While overlaid with idolatry, the recognition of a Trinity was universal in all the ancient world, proving how deep-rooted

in the human race was the primeval doctrine on this subject. . . . showing, though blasphemously, the unity of Father, Seed, or Son, and Holy Ghost. While this had been the original way in which Pagan idolatry had represented the Triune God . . . yet there is evidence that, at a very early period, an important change had taken place in the Babylonian notions in regard to the divinity; and that the three persons had come to be, the Eternal Father, the Spirit of God incarnate in a human mother, and a Divine Son, the fruit of that incarnation (pp. 16–19).

Some may say 1 John 5:7–8 supports the doctrine of a triune Godhead. The text reads: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." The truth is this Trinitarian statement was added to the text and is not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century (see *Companion Bible*). It was first seen in the margin of some Latin copies and from thence crept into the text. Modern translators omit it as a flagrant interpolation as it forms no part of the original Greek text. Any commentary will clearly demonstrate this. The text should read: "For there are three that bear record, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." It should be called to the reader's attention that in the corrected text the Spirit is placed in a trio of which the two other elements (blood and water) are not personalities.

### **What Is the Holy Spirit?**

Previous statements in this article have maintained that the Holy Spirit is the power of God in action. In order to ascertain this more clearly let us examine the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Trinity insists that the Spirit of God is a person distinct from the Father and the Son. To be consistent, then, Trinitarians would have to admit that the spirit of man is a separate person from man himself. This would mean that when Elizabeth said her spirit rejoiced (Luke 1:47) a person other than herself was rejoicing. In the case of Elizabeth her spirit simply meant herself or her mind. Take the Old Testament for example. In it the primary meaning of Spirit of God is the power of God in action. New Testament writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, took over this concept from the Old Testament and equated "spirit" with "divine power." We find Jesus casting out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28) which means by the divine power of God (Richardson, p. 107). In Luke's account we find the expression "by the finger of God" (Luke 11:20) which means the power or energy of God. In Luke 1:35 we read: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Here again the Holy

Spirit is likened to the power of God unless we, like many, assume that the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity. If this is the case Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and not the Father. How could God then be His Father as the Bible states many times?

In Luke 1:17 we read "And he [John] shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The same spirit that inspired and motivated Elias was to be in John the Baptist. In Luke 24:49 the Holy Spirit is equated with power from on high. That Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost and was defined as power coming upon the disciples (Acts 1:8).

After the resurrection there was a concept added to the understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit became invested with a more personal meaning. It now became represented as the personal power of Christ. After the resurrection the distinction between Christ and the Holy Spirit became blurred and New Testament writers did not attempt to distinguish between the operation of the risen Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself comes in the gift of the Spirit. John wrote that the Paraclete would come in the same manner that Jesus said, "I will come to you," as if both expressions had the same meaning (Richardson, p. 121). That the Paraclete refers to Christ as manifested in the power of the Holy Spirit is made clear in 1 John 2:1 where we read, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have a [Paraclete] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This text flies in the face of Trinitarians who maintain that the Paraclete is some unknown person, distinct from Christ, who was mysteriously introduced by John and was unknown to the other apostles who did not use the term Paraclete. 1 John 2:1 clearly states that Christ *is* the Paraclete manifested in the Holy Spirit. While Christ is absent from the earth, He is present in His church in spirit. This is why the Apostle Paul could say, "Now the Lord is the Spirit . . ." (2 Cor. 3:17). The Holy Spirit is no third person; it is the Lord Himself in spirit presence. John did not introduce any concept of a Trinity. The writings of John illustrate one fact clearly; they dwell on the relationship between the Father and the Son without any thought of a third person (*The Fourth Gospel*, by E. F. Scott, D.D., p. 341). For John, the Spirit is represented by the divine breath. "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy [Spirit]" (John 20:22).

The Bible likens the Spirit to various things which could not denote a person. It is likened to wine (Eph. 5:18); to living water (John 7:37, 39); to divine breath (John 20:22); it is poured out (Acts 2:17); it can be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19); given in different portions and measures (John 3:34). The book of Acts describes the direct guidance Christ gave to His

church. There it is said the Spirit "spoke," "forbade," "permitted." See, for example, Acts 16:6, 7. What is clear from Acts is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Lord directing the church. "The Spirit said" is synonymous with "Christ or the Lord said." Since Christ was personally absent, direct communication was imparted by His Spirit residing in and united with the mind of the disciples. "After the resurrection, the Spirit is known henceforward as God's gracious power and equally as the presence of Christ Himself" (*New Testament Theological Wordbook*, article "Spirit," p. 238). Thus, when the Holy Spirit speaks we have the precise equivalent of "Christ speaks." The fundamental idea associated with the Spirit is that of divine power. The expressions "Holy Spirit" and "power of the Highest" are precisely equivalent (Luke 1:35). To be "in the spirit" is to be under the divine impulse. This is the entire New Testament view. In the Epistles of Paul, the Holy Spirit is mentioned almost 120 times. He said his ministry had been accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13–19). He called the Spirit the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8). He said, "the Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). He stated, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). When the book of Revelation says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" it is the risen Christ who speaks.

Trinitarians read into the Bible texts their interpretation—the notion that the Holy Spirit is a person. The texts that follow in this section lend credence to the fact that the Holy Spirit is not a person but rather the working of the mind and power of God as He deals with His creation. In Psalm 139:7 we read, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" God's Spirit is ubiquitous. If it is a person how could it be everywhere at once; one would have to assume this text states that the third person of the Trinity followed David around everywhere he went. The fact that the Spirit of God is the power and mind of God is seen in a number of Scriptures. In Genesis 6:3 God's Spirit strove with man in the pre-Flood world, acting as a counter-influence to the evil of that world. Nehemiah 9:20, John 14:26, and 16:13 show the influence of the Holy Spirit in instructing men. In 1 Corinthians 2:10, 12 the Spirit of God reveals the secret things of God. Matthew 10:20, Mark 13:11, and Luke 12:12 illustrate the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in specific times of need. In Exodus 31:3 and James 1:5–6 the Holy Spirit grants wisdom, as well as other attributes. The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit. 2 Peter 1:21, Isaiah 61:1, and Joel 2:28–29 reveal how the Spirit of God inspired holy men of old to record God's words. God's Spirit also inspires men to obey God (Ezek. 36:27). It is the Spirit of power (Micah 3:8; Luke 24:49; Judg. 14:6, 19). It gives the ability to judge properly (Isa. 28:6). It makes ministers overseers in the Church of God (Acts 20:28). It places various administrations in the church (1 Cor. 12). It directs the ministry (Acts 13:2; 16:7). And it grants the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). These texts and more all reveal the same thing—God's Spirit is the power, the mind, the character of God as God works to fulfill His plan in the lives of men.

## **False Spirits**

In spite of the Biblical proof defining the function and nature of God's Spirit some people are deceived by false spirits. Notice what John wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:1–3). John clearly defines the test. The Spirit of God inspires men to confess that Jesus Christ comes in the flesh; those who are led by a false spirit refuse to acknowledge this. There is a dual meaning to this confession. Gnostics refused to believe that Jesus Christ came in the literal flesh and died for mankind. They insisted that His appearance was in the form of a phantom and that His death on the tree was an illusion. They refused to confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and died for the sins of mankind. The second meaning of this confession John refers to is found in the words stated earlier in this article. Jesus, just prior to His crucifixion and resurrection, told His disciples that after His ascension He would send them the needed help—the Paraclete—which would enable them to carry on the work He commissioned them to do. Notice in 1 John 4:3, ". . . Jesus Christ [comes] in the flesh. . . ." How does Jesus Christ come in the flesh? By means of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us! The Holy Spirit dwells in the bodies of those so empowered. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19) The proof of this Spirit dwelling within is revealed by the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). Those who fail to live up to this expectation have failed the test. Paul writes, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5) They are the ones who often profess they have the Spirit of God but as Paul wrote, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). A false spirit has deluded these people into believing they are doing the will of God when in reality their works "confess" Jesus Christ is not living in them.

## **What the Holy Spirit Accomplishes in Our Lives**

Near the end of His earthly sojourn Jesus told His disciples, ". . . All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus said He would share this power with them. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That power, as we have seen repeatedly in this article, is the Holy Spirit. It is so described in Acts 1:8, "But ye

shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] 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." Apart from the Holy Spirit man has no righteous power within him. Man must be changed from the present state he is in, from being carnal, and must grow toward his true potential. That potential is described in John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Man is engaged in a spiritual struggle and eternal life is at stake. Paul wrote, "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4–5). Men must be delivered from the power of darkness. It is God alone, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). What is the power of darkness over the hearts and lives of men? Notice this description:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would . . . . Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:16–17, 19–21).

These lusts and emotions literally control men and the only way to freedom is by means of the Holy Spirit.

What are the fruits of God's Holy Spirit? Notice, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:22–24). Faith is one of the fruits of God's Spirit. What is faith? "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Without faith it is impossible to please God. Paul wrote, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). The Bible tells us the just shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17). That faith comes by means of God's Holy Spirit that dwells in us. Notice its manifestation in the lives of the righteous men of old:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Heb. 11:33–38).

That is a series of examples of living faith, given to those righteous men and women of old to overcome the world by means of the Holy Spirit.

Peace is another of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Man by nature is not peaceable. Paul admonished the Romans, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:17–21). The human tendency, as we can see by this text, is to forgo peace for the sake of revenge. God's Spirit is not a Spirit of contention and violence. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Peace is a gift of God's Spirit. Without it there can be little peace in the world.

Jesus told His disciples, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). When it comes to spiritual power men indeed are weak. Man must have help to live up to what God requires. Paul wrote, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for the sins of the world so that man could receive forgiveness for his sin and receive the help he needs from God's Spirit. Paul described the weakness of the flesh in detail. He said:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do

I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:14–25).

God's Holy Spirit is the power by which we can overcome the weaknesses of the flesh and become the sons of God. Man must rid his nature of hate and replace it with love. This love is a gift of God by means of the Holy Spirit. What is this love? Paul wrote, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). This love of God is described in 1 Corinthians 13:

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing. [Love] suffereth long, and is kind; [love] envieth not; [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (1 Cor. 13:3–8).

This kind of love can be manifested in the lives of men by the Holy Spirit only. This description of love should tell all of us how far we have yet to go to reach the kind of behavior God wants to see manifested in His children. This love of God, Paul tells us ". . . is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). Yes, indeed, man is sown in the weakness of the flesh, but is raised in power by means of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 15:43).

Jesus spoke frequently about love during His ministry. He said, ". . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:19). He added, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies,

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven . . . For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:43–48). Now, that is quite an order! An impossibility without the help of God's Spirit. Notice what Jesus said about loving God and our fellow man. ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37–39). The application of this principle was emphasized even more when it came to loving the brethren. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35). How can this be done humanly unless one has God's Spirit dwelling within? With respect to love for God, notice this statement by Christ: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). No doubt, this is why John wrote later, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Notice again the brotherly love requirement. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12–13). Within the Church of God love must be continually manifested. Paul insisted, "I [therefore], the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1–3). Peter added, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). When it comes to love, how can we know God's Spirit dwells within us?

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso

hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. . . . Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 3:10–24; 4:7–8).

Patience and longsuffering are further attributes of God's Spirit. So is gentleness. This is God's instruction:

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Col. 3:12–13).

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men (Titus 3:1–2).

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace (Jas. 3:14–18).

What about goodness, meekness, and temperance—other attributes of God's Spirit? Paul told the Gentiles at Rome that they were basking in God's goodness, but unless they continued in goodness themselves they would be cut off (Rom 11:22). He wrote the Thessalonians, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you

worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). Meekness is a requirement. "I [therefore], the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1–2). "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11). "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). By a continual attitude of meekness we will be ever ready to hear God's word and to be instructed: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). We all must recognize that without the help of God's Spirit meekness would not be an aspect of our fundamental attitude. Temperance means exercising control over all aspects of our lives. Scriptures that admonish us to be temperate include 2 Peter 1:6; 1 Corinthians 9:24–25; and Titus 1:8–9; 2:2.

One of the most important attributes of God's Spirit is unity. God's Spirit is a Spirit of unity. Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13). Jesus said that He and the Father were one (John 10:30). Jesus prayed that this unity would be extended to include His church. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20–21). "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). Later on, the Apostle Paul wrote, "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). It is the Spirit of God that joins the Father with the Son, and the Father and the Son with the church. It is called the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy [Spirit], be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14). Christian believers are baptized into this fellowship (Matt. 28:19)—baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). It is completely contradictory to the unity of the Spirit to suggest that the Church of God is made up of different organizations, all believing in Christ, yet all differing doctrinally. Paul asked, "Is Christ divided?" The answer is a resounding no! The church that Jesus built is not made up of differing groups who disagree doctrinally. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith [belief, doctrine], one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4–6).

## Character Building Process

Man was placed on this earth for a purpose. He was placed on the earth in order to build the necessary character to qualify for salvation. The notion that man is already saved by simply professing the name of Christ is a fraud of the greatest dimension. Man's nature is basically evil and simply professing the name of Christ will not alter that nature. Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21–23). Paul wrote the Ephesians, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:1–3). These Ephesians had been converted. They had changed from a carnal orientation to a spiritual one. This is what conversion is. This is what the character building experience is all about. Holy, righteous character is the ability to recognize right from wrong and then always to choose the right instead of the wrong. The calling God gives the Christian, enlightening the mind, gives him the ability to recognize right from wrong. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the Christian is able to choose right instead of wrong. This is a life-long process and is not accomplished by merely accepting the name of Christ. As John wrote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). By means of a lifetime of struggling to overcome the human nature with which we were born, we build holy, righteous character and qualify to enter the Kingdom of God.

John wrote, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:25–27). One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to convict or reprove us of sin. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). This serves to impress upon us the need to correct the sins and mistakes in our lives and to change from the carnal man to the spiritual. There is a vital need to destroy the sinful nature that is within us. Paul wrote that it was necessary to rid the self of the old man:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness (Rom. 8:4–10).

Paul here describes the character building process.

### **Must Receive the Holy Spirit**

The Apostle Peter, in responding to the penitent Jews said, "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 [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38–39). Baptism is a requirement for salvation, but it must be predicated upon a previous requirement—repentance. Repentance simply means to turn around and go the other way. Man's wrong conduct toward God and his fellow man is defined as sin. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Repentance is a change in mind as well as a change in conduct. This change must be heartfelt and it must be sincere. Paul wrote, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10). After meeting these conditions the repentant sinner receives God's Holy Spirit—the power of God now residing within. He becomes the temple of God's Spirit. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19) The Christian is the habitation of God through the Holy Spirit. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:18–22). He is baptized into *one* body—the church. "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" (1 Cor. 12:13). As a Christian he is led by the Holy Spirit. His life takes on a new meaning. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:13–14). Christ is now working His purpose in our lives. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my

absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12–13). "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

It is absolutely necessary to receive the Holy Spirit in order to be saved. In fact, we cannot be resurrected unless we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Notice, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11). The only assurance of the resurrection is that the Christian have God's Spirit dwelling within him. It is the only means whereby we can be saved. This is why receiving the Holy Spirit is so important.

But, after receiving the Spirit, can we lose it if we are careless? Yes, indeed! Here is what Paul warned the Hebrews:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:23–31).

It is possible to insult the Holy Spirit by refusing to use it as a power of influence for doing good and changing our personal lives. Jesus warned the Jews in His day, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy [Spirit] shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy [Spirit], it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31–32).

It is the responsibility of each Christian to use the Holy Spirit appropriately. Paul told Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:6–7). It is up to each Christian to stir up the Spirit of God and to strive with the power it gives us to overcome the pulls of the flesh and to someday qualify for the Kingdom of God. The acceptable use of the Holy Spirit is proven by personal overcoming and the manifestation of the fruits of God's Spirit. Anything other than this denies Christ.