

Examining Christian Doctrine

Lesson 21: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Part 3 – The Holy Spirit in Acts and the Life of the Believer

This lesson will discuss the Holy Spirit's work in the Book of Acts as well as in the life of the believer. The Holy Spirit is the 'life' source of the church and the believer for our salvation, sanctification, and power. The Holy Spirit plays a prominent role before salvation, in salvation, and after salvation in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

Pentecost and Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The Book of Acts begins with the promise of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus reiterates to His disciples before His ascension. This promise is fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the believers, empowering them to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

- **Acts 1:8:** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- **Acts 2:1-4:** "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

The Empowerment for Witness and Mission

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to proclaim the gospel with boldness, perform miracles, and grow the early church. This empowerment is evident in the apostles' preaching, the signs and wonders they perform, and the rapid expansion of the Christian community.

- **Acts 4:31:** "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."
- **Acts 5:12:** "The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade."
- **Acts 6:7:** "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

Guidance and Direction

The Holy Spirit provides guidance and direction for the early church leaders in their ministry decisions and missionary journeys. This divine guidance helps to spread the gospel to new regions and people groups.

- **Acts 8:29:** "The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'"
- **Acts 10:19-20:** "While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.'"
- **Acts 13:2:** "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

The Inclusion of the Gentiles

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the inclusion of Gentiles into the Christian faith, breaking down barriers and confirming God's acceptance of all people through miraculous signs and the outpouring of the Spirit on non-Jews.

- **Acts 10:44-47:** "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God."
- **Acts 15:8-9:** "God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith."

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer

The Holy Spirit's Work Before Salvation

Conviction of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment: The Holy Spirit actively works in the hearts of individuals before they come to faith in Christ by convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment. This conviction makes people aware of their sinful state, their need for God's righteousness, and the reality of impending judgment, leading them to repentance.

- **John 16:8-11:** "When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned."

Drawing Individuals to Christ: The Holy Spirit draws individuals to Christ, working in their hearts to open their eyes to the truth of the gospel. This drawing is a gentle and persistent call to turn to Jesus for salvation.

- **John 6:44:** "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day."
- **John 12:32:** "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Illuminating the Gospel Message: Before salvation, the Holy Spirit illuminates the gospel message to individuals, helping them understand the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. This illumination allows the gospel to penetrate the heart and mind, leading to a response of faith.

- **Acts 16:14:** "One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira, named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."
- **2 Corinthians 3:15-17:** Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

The Holy Spirit's Work in Salvation

Regeneration (New Birth): At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit performs the work of regeneration, or the "new birth." This process involves a radical transformation where the believer is brought from spiritual death to new life in Christ. The Spirit's regenerative work creates a new nature in the believer, enabling them to have a new relationship with God.

- **Titus 3:5:** "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."
- **John 3:5-6:** "Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.'"

Indwelling: Upon receiving salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, meaning that the Spirit takes up residence within them. This indwelling brings our spirits into union with God.

- **Romans 8:9:** "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."
- **1 Corinthians 6:19:** "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;"

Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The baptism in the Holy Spirit occurs at the moment of salvation and signifies the believer's identification with Christ and incorporation into the body of Christ. This spiritual baptism is distinct from water baptism and is a key aspect of entering into the new covenant relationship with God.

- **1 Corinthians 12:13:** "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."
- **Acts 1:5:** "For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Adoption into God's Family: The Holy Spirit facilitates the believer's adoption into God's family, making them heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. This adoption results in a new identity and a personal relationship with God as a loving Father.

- **Romans 8:15-16:** "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
- **Galatians 4:6:** "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

Assurance of Salvation: The Holy Spirit provides believers with assurance of their salvation. This assurance comes through the inner witness of the Spirit, who confirms the believer's relationship with God and provides peace and confidence in their salvation.

- **Romans 8:16:** "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
- **2 Corinthians 1:22:** "set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

The Holy Spirit's Work After Salvation

Sanctification: Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit works to transform believers into the likeness of Christ. This ongoing work involves growing in holiness and living out the new identity given at salvation. The Spirit helps believers develop Christlike character and empowers them to live according to God's commands.

- **2 Corinthians 3:18:** "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."
- **Galatians 5:22-23:** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Anointing: The "anointing" of the Holy Spirit refers to a special empowerment and setting apart for service that comes from the Spirit. This anointing is associated with divine empowerment, equipping for ministry, and a heightened experience of God's presence and power.

- **1 John 2:27:** "As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him."

The Gifts of the Spirit: The gifts of the Holy Spirit are special abilities given to believers for the edification of the church and the fulfillment of God's purposes. They are diverse and serve to build up the body of Christ in various ways.

- **1 Corinthians 12:4-7:** "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

The Filling of the Spirit: The filling of the Holy Spirit is an ongoing process where believers yield to the Spirit's influence and control. This continual filling empowers believers to live according to God's will and reflects in their character and actions.

- **Ephesians 5:18:** "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

Walking in the Spirit: Walking in the Spirit involves living daily under the Spirit's guidance and power. It means aligning one's actions and decisions with the Spirit's leading, resulting in a life that reflects Christ's character and purposes.

- **Galatians 5:16:** "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

Living in the Spirit: To live in the Spirit means to embrace the Spirit's presence as the defining factor of one's life. It involves a continuous relationship with the Spirit that shapes one's entire way of living, including thoughts, actions, and attitudes.

- **Galatians 5:25:** "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."
- **Romans 8:4:** "in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Being Led by the Spirit: Being led by the Spirit means following the Spirit's direction in making decisions and discerning God's will. This guidance helps believers navigate life's challenges and opportunities in alignment with God's purposes.

- **Romans 8:14:** "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God."
- **Galatians 5:18:** "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Praying in the Spirit: Praying in the Spirit refers to prayer that is empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. This type of prayer is in accordance with God's will and often involves the Spirit's intercession on behalf of the believer.

- **Jude 1:20:** "But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,"
- **Romans 8:26-27:** "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

Do Not Quench the Spirit: Quenching the Spirit refers to suppressing or hindering the Spirit's work and influence. Believers are encouraged to be receptive to the Spirit's guidance and avoid actions that stifle the Spirit's activity.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:19:** "Do not quench the Spirit."

Do Not Grieve the Spirit: Grieving the Spirit means acting in ways that cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit by living contrary to God's ways and principles. Believers are called to live in a manner that honors the Spirit and reflects the character of Christ.

- **Ephesians 4:30-32:** "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."