

Spirit of God Indwelling • 1 Corinthians 6:19

On board the plane comes an announcement from the flight deck. The voice identifies itself as that of the “first officer”. Those in the back of the plane pay little attention sensing it’s not a particularly urgent announcement. But the passenger in 22C knows very little about airplane crews and assumes from the announcement that if there is a first officer there must be a second and perhaps a third officer as well. On his way out of the plane he looks into the cockpit and sees that there is a captain in the left seat as well as two other uniformed pilots. He asks a few questions about how the system works and learns that each one is fully qualified to fly the aircraft. He is told that usually titles are based on seniority although that is not always the case. The numbers and titles are more a matter of function than anything else. There is a division of labor and different pilots have different responsibilities. All are qualified. All are pilots. The numbers and names are mostly to help tell people apart.

In a similar sense, someone long ago started to refer to the first, second and third Persons of the Trinity. They are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three are fully and equally God. The Father gets most mention first in the Bible, the Son gets center stage in the opening books of the New Testament and the Spirit is featured more toward the end. One is not better than the other. One is not the boss and the other the servant or employee. All are fully and equally God. Each has different functions. Any one of them can do and does do whatever God does. The numbers really don’t mean all that much. They are simply a system for identifying who is who and who does what.

In other studies we have dealt with God the Father and God the Son. In this study our at-

tention is drawn to the least known and understood third Person of the Trinity, God the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit could be studied for a lifetime. We are, therefore, obviously inadequate in attempting a brief study, but let’s try.

First, and most important of all, we need to know that the Holy Spirit is God. That fact is more important than anything else.

There is an interesting dialogue that takes place in the New Testament in Acts 5 where a man named Ananias has lied rather blatantly to all of the other people who are a part of the Jerusalem church. He is then publicly confronted about that lying by St. Peter who says to him in verse 3, “You have lied to the Holy Spirit.” And then in the very next verse St. Peter says, “You have not lied to men, but to God.”

As God, the Spirit is all that God is and does all that God does.

The Spirit is eternal. He never had a beginning and will never have an end. The Spirit is omniscient; he knows everything. The Spirit is omnipresent (everywhere at the same time). The Spirit is holy and loving and righteous and more.

The Holy Spirit is also a distinct person. A person is someone who has rational intellect, emotion and will. The Spirit of God thinks for himself, has his own feelings, makes his own choices. All these are distinct from the intellect, emotion and will of the Father and of the Son.

This is seen numerous places within the Bible but it is especially clear in the baptismal formula found in Matthew 28:19: “Baptize . . . in the name (singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” One name because there is one God yet three distinct Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Throughout the New Testament this

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“personhood” of the Spirit is often described. He exercises his intellect when he teaches Christians. His emotions are strong when he is grieved. His choices are clear in the decisions he makes.

The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as “he”, not “it”. The New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word for “spirit” is “pneuma”. We use that when we say that someone has pneumonia. It refers to breath or spirit. All Greek nouns have grammatical gender and “pneuma” is a neuter noun. So, by the rules of grammar, pronouns referring to the Spirit are supposed to be neuter pronouns. However, the Bible authors break the rules of Greek grammar and use masculine pronouns when referring to the Holy Spirit. It is another reminder that the Spirit is not some impersonal “it” but that HE is a Person.

When Jesus talked about the Spirit in John 14:16-17 he said that he is our Counselor. The actual word in the Greek is “paraclete”. A paraclete is someone who comes alongside to help. It was a name for a lawyer in court, a nurse in sickness, a friend in practically any situation.

The Spirit of God is the one who comes alongside Christians to give us whatever help we need. He is with us wherever we go. He encourages, assists, helps and heals. The Spirit is our primary day-to-day experience of God. When people say they have experienced God, it is most likely the Holy Spirit they have experienced. When Christians describe God’s goodness in their lives, it came through the Holy Spirit. Often when modern Americans give angels credit they really should be crediting the Holy Spirit of God himself.

Throughout the Bible there is far more emphasis on what the Spirit does than who the Spirit is. While Christians should learn the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it is also important that we experience what the Spirit does.

In the movie *FOREST GUMP*, one of the most repeated lines is that a person is what a person does. Sometimes we balk at that no-

tion. Some people say, “I may have murdered someone, but I’m not really a murderer.” “I drive trucks, but I’m not a truck driver.” “I teach kids, but I’m not a teacher.” Except what a person does says a whole lot about who a person is. And what the Spirit does is fabulous.

One of the activities of the Spirit is that he confronts and convicts people about guilt and sin. In other words, a primary job of the Spirit is to convince people what is right and what is wrong. It is an extremely important function. We can’t change from doing what is wrong unless we are convinced we are wrong. We can’t be saved from sin until we believe we are sinners who are lost. The Spirit uses many different means to do this, including our own consciences. He works hard at helping us to know what is wrong with our lives so that he can help us get straightened out. And sometimes that’s painful.

While most of us don’t like pain, we realize that pain is the signal that something is wrong with our bodies and we need help. Pain is a pain, but pain saves our lives.

The next time you sense that “this is really wrong, I shouldn’t be doing this,” you are probably experiencing what the Spirit does when he confronts sin.

Another activity of the Spirit is that he regenerates. Jesus called it being “born from above” or “being born again”. It is this wonderful act of the Spirit of God whereby he gives to a person eternal life. He changes us into Christians, from sinners to saints. He starts us all over again so that the past is erased and we have a new beginning with God in our lives. It is the single biggest miracle a person can ever experience.

God knows we can’t fix the sinful self inside of us so he gives us a “reborn” self. Jesus called this being “born of the Spirit”. We can’t give spiritual new birth to ourselves any more than we could give physical first birth to ourselves. So it is the Spirit that does that.

We usually think of becoming a Christian in two parts: Jesus’ part and our part. Jesus’

part was that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for human sin. Our part is that we believe in Jesus and what he did and accept him as Savior and Lord. But who actually does it? Who makes the supernatural change in our lives? Who guarantees that we will go to heaven when we die? It is the Holy Spirit - - he is the one who brings it all together and makes it happen.

Another activity of the Spirit is that he baptizes Christians. I

Corinthians 12:13 says that “we were all baptized by one Spirit into the one body.” This is not referring to baptism with water the way many usually think about it. While water baptism is important, it is not nearly as important as Spirit baptism.

Baptism means to “identify with”. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the identification of Christians with Jesus Christ and the connection of that Christian to the worldwide body of Jesus Christ called the Church. Water baptism is an outside public demonstration of what the Holy Spirit has already done on the inside at the moment we are born-again.

Think of it this way. If you were born in a foreign country, you can become a citizen of the United States and never get a United States passport. But you must first become a United States citizen before you can get a United States passport. The passport is the outside evidence of your American citizenship.

Baptism is the outside evidence, or testimony, that a person is a Christian and has been baptized (identified) into an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Throughout the New Testament there are references to the Holy Spirit living inside of the Christian. Romans 8:9 says that if the Spirit does not live in a person that person is not a Christian. You can't be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit inside of you. If you're a Chris-

tian you have the Spirit. If you don't have the Spirit you're not a Christian.

I Corinthians 6:19 calls our bodies the temple (or church building) of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Christian's physical body is where the Holy Spirit lives. That is amazing and life transforming - - the Spirit of God lives inside of the body of every Christian. He goes wherever we go. He is constantly whispering to us what we should do. He never quits. He never moves out. If we sin, we make him

sad. If we obey him, we make him happy. But God is in us!

One of the favorite activities of the Spirit is to teach us. Jesus explained in John 14:26 that the Spirit is our primary Teacher. He particularly teaches us about God and reminds us about everything Jesus said.

How does the Spirit teach? His main means is through the Bible, which he wrote along with 40 human co-authors. He also teaches through other Christians, through the church, through Christian teachers and preachers and through a direct link with us on the inside.

Often after sermons people say something to me that really catches me by surprise. I'll finish talking about some part of the Bible for half an hour and a person will tell me that the best thing they learned was something I never said. I've actually reviewed my notes and listened to the tape. They learned a significant spiritual truth that I never thought of before. I believe that is the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Another translation of “paraclete” is “Comforter”. You might say that part of the Spirit's counseling to Christians is giving comfort when we are upset or afraid or discouraged.

You've probably seen this work of the Spirit. I've seen it and experienced it. Some great difficulty comes to a Christian's life. That person is really upset, maybe distraught. No

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words from friends seem to help. Counselors don't work. But then comes a supernatural peace and comfort that settles the most disturbed heart. That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit who is the Christian's comforter.

The empowering of the Holy Spirit is different. This is his super activity of bringing the power of God into our lives so that we can do things for God and others that we are too weak to do by ourselves. It is this power of the Holy Spirit that was given to the first Christians in Acts 1:8, but it has also been given to Christians ever since. It is the power to speak courageously for Jesus Christ at work. It is the power to stand up against what is wrong when the normal tendency would be to shrink back and stay silent. It is the power to pray for sick people so that they get well. It is the power to live Christianly in a world with unchristian values.

We all know what it is like to feel totally drained and weak and that we can't go on. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us supernatural strength to do what God wants us to do in every circumstance of life.

All this barely scratches the surface of the many ways we can experience all the Holy Spirit does. But let me add one more to this particular list.

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit." Filling up on wine causes us to think and behave in bad ways. Filling up on the Spirit causes us to think and behave in good ways. The way we fill up on the Spirit is much like the way we fill our lungs with air. Simply breathe him to capacity. Pray to the Spirit. Read in the Bible about the Spirit. Tell the Spirit you want him to have complete control of your life. Enjoy all the good things the Spirit constantly does for you

Several years ago our family was vacationing on the Hawaiian island of Maui. While there we went scuba diving for the first time. I really wasn't very good at it. One time I got a little panicky because I was afraid I was getting too

deep. I started to kick my feet and my foot went out of the water. I wasn't as deep as I thought I was.

The instructor gave some simple advice. He said that if you want to go down, breathe out as much as you can. If you want to go up, breathe in and fill your lungs with air and you will rise. I tried it and it was amazing how well it worked.

The same goes for the Spirit of God. When we breathe him out of our lives, we always go down. When we breathe him into our lives, we are filled with the Spirit and we always rise.

May you be filled full with the wonderful Holy Spirit of God!

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