

Bethany Bible Church; AM Bible Study; October 18, 2017
The Holy Spirit—Our Helper; Lesson 2; His Personhood

THE 'PERSONHOOD' OF THE SPIRIT

Theme: The Bible presents the Holy Spirit as possessing all the attributes of personhood.
(All Scripture is taken from The New King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.)

*One of the most important things
we can learn about the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures is that
believers aren't indwelt by an impersonal 'force' that they can 'use';
but rather by a divine 'Person' who 'uses' them!*

Did you know that the first few words of the Bible mention the Holy Spirit?

In Genesis 1:2, we read that “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” And He’s also mentioned in the fifth verse from the end of the Bible. In Revelation 22:17, we read, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

What is the nature, then, of the “Holy Spirit” that we find at the beginning, the end, and throughout all the Scriptures?

I. HE IS SAID TO HAVE THE ATTRIBUTES OF A ‘PERSON’.

At a very basic level, something is considered to be a ‘person’ rather than a ‘thing’ if it possesses such qualities as intellect, will, and emotion. The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit displays all of these qualities.

The Holy Spirit displays intelligence. Romans 8:27 tells us that He has a mind: “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 also affirms to us that the Holy Spirit's mind is a mind that can search and know things: “For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” What's more, Scripture tells us that He is able to teach and communicate. Paul said that he and the other apostles spoke authoritatively of spiritual things, “not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Corinthians 2:13). Our Lord told the apostles, “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”; thus ensuring the accuracy of their testimony to us (John 14:26). He also told them that “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit displays a will (or volition). We're told that the Spirit makes choices. Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Also, the apostle Paul said with reference to the doctrine of spiritual gifts, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

He also issues commands and prohibitions. Acts 13:2 tells us this about a gathering of the early church: "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

The Holy Spirit displays emotions. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is impacted by feelings. Ephesians 4:30 tells us not to let unwholesome words come out of our mouths: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Pastor James urges us not too become to aligned with this world; "Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?'" (James 4:5).

II. HE IS SAID TO DISPLAY THE ACTIONS OF A ‘PERSON’.

The Spirit's actions are not those of an impersonal force; but are such as can only be attributed to ‘personhood’. For example, we're told that He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-10); or that He intercedes for believers according to God's will (Romans 8:26-27); or that He bears testimony of things, as when Jesus said, “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26). He even says 'no' to things, as only a person can do. Acts 16:6-7 tells us that the Holy Spirit guided the early missionaries through prohibitions: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them."

III. HE IS SAID TO BE TREATED LIKE A ‘PERSON’.

Not only are His actions toward others those of a person, but the actions that are said to be done to Him are of a kind that can only be done to someone possessing personhood. In Acts 5, in the incident of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?" (Acts 5:3). And then, Peter said to Ananias' wife Sapphira, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?" (v. 9). The Holy Spirit can be resisted. In Acts 7:51, the martyr Stephen told the Jewish leaders, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit ...". He can also be insulted. In Hebrews 10:29, the writer asks, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" He can even be blasphemed. The Lord Jesus warned the oppositional Jewish leaders, “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men" (Matthew 12:31). But it's not all only negative things that the Bible presents as being done to the Spirit. Just as the apostle would do in response to hearing a command from a person, Peter received a command from the Holy Spirit—“the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them'" (Acts 10:19-20)—and Peter rose up and obeyed!

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In closing, consider this wise insight from a Plymouth Brethren writer and Bible teacher of another era. He wrote that God is

revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We must tread softly here, for we are on holy ground. There are depths which we cannot fathom, but we can at least look and wonder, and confess and worship. A denial of either of these divine Persons is a denial of God. If it is shocking for a person to deny the divinity of Christ, it is none the less so for him to deny the personality of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, you will frequently find these two forms of unbelief together” (Samuel Ridout, The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit [Published by John Richie, n.d.], p. 8).