

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

19 The Holy Spirit

Scripture Reading

John 14:16 – 27 and 16:6 – 15

The Controversial Gifts

Of all the controversies that trouble the church today, the biggest one of all has to do with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But when it comes to controversies in the church there is nothing new and we are not surprised to find that once again that this “modern” controversy addressed in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.

Paul turns his readers’ thoughts to this subject at the beginning of chapter 12 and devotes three chapters to it and over the next few weeks we are going to look at those chapters but before we do it will be useful for us to remind ourselves of just who the Holy Spirit is.

This bit is not controversial. There are things we find hard to understand of course, for who could ever understand God, but the things He has revealed to us about the Holy Spirit Himself are clear and are generally accepted by all Bible believing Christians.

The Holy Spirit Is...

The Holy Spirit is a Person: He loves (Romans 15: 30), He is grieved (Ephesians 4: 30), He can be lied to (Acts 5:3), He reproves (John 16:8), He gives (I Corinthians 12:8 – 11), He is a witness (1 John 5:7), He knows (I Corinthians 2:11 and 12:8, John 14:26) and He can be sinned against, blasphemed (Matthew 12:31 – 33) and grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is God: He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), He knows everything (Isaiah 40:13 – 14), He is almighty (Romans 15:19), He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7 – 10), we may pray to Him, He is one of the three equal but distinct persons of the Trinity, joined with God the Father and God the Son.

What’s In A Name?

The Holy Spirit is also called the Holy Ghost. Ghost is just another translation of the word for spirit but He is given other names which are more significant because each of them tells us something about His character.

- The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2)
- The Spirit of grace and supplication (Zechariah 12:10)
- The Spirit of the living God (2 Corinthians 3:3)
- The sevenfold Spirit of God (Revelation 1:4, cf Isaiah 11:2)
- The Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9)
- The Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13)
- The Spirit of life (Revelation 11:11)
- The Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29)
- The Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17)
- The Comforter (John 14:16)

Question: What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from each of these names?

The Holy Spirit’s Work

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is compared to the wind. You cannot see the wind blowing but you can see its effects and sometimes those effects are very powerful.

The Holy Spirit was active in creation (Genes 1:2). He was active in the birth of the Lord Jesus (Luke 1: 35). He empowered the Lord Jesus Christ throughout His earthly ministry and was active in His resurrection (Matthew 12:28, Luke 4:1, Acts 10:38, Hebrews 9:14). The inspiration of the Bible is attributed to Him: holy men of old wrote as they were moved by Him (2 Peter 1:21). Today, it is He who draws sinners to the Saviour convicting them of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8 – 11) and the work of grace in every believer’s heart in His work. We know nothing until He gives us divine life, causing us to be born again

(Titus 3:5). He leads us, helps us in prayer, comforts us, teaches us and enables us to understand the Scriptures (John 16:13). Without Him we would be helplessly and hopelessly lost.

What a blessing it is that God gives His Holy Spirit to us freely, just as Jesus promised.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Luke 11:13

The Holy Spirit enters the life of every believer the moment he is born again (Romans 8:9 – 11, 2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13 – 14, 4:30) and produces evidence of His presence (Galatians 5:22 – 23). In all of this His purpose is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ who reveals the Father (John 16:13 – 15).

Next Week

Two terms used in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer are somewhat more controversial and we will consider them next time. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit and what does it mean to be baptised with the Spirit?