

The Person of the Holy Spirit (an overview)

Romans 8:1-6

- The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the Christian life—it is ‘life in the Spirit’

Today we are going to talk about **The Person** of the Holy Spirit (the who)

- Next week we will talk about **the work of** the Holy Spirit (the what)
- But, it is important that we begin to understand **Who** He is—not just **what** He does
- Think of yourself and our culture
 - We have a tendency to value **what** over **who** (“Nice to meet you, **what do you do?**”)
 - What we do is important and may reveal much about us—but it is not **the whole story**
 - “**I dig ditches**”—so is that the end of story? Or are you **a person**—with hopes, dreams, fears and loves, gifts received and things to give, wounds and grace?
 - And which tells the **true story**—“**I dig ditches**” or the deeper revelation of **who** you are—who you love and are loved by, what you are passionate about and what drives you and what holds you back?
 - But, we can be a painfully self-oriented culture at times and so we often wonder first, “**What do you do?**” **Because** in that question we are seeking **what we all want to know**: “**What can you do for me?**”
 - And there in lies the problem with much of how we approach the Holy Spirit—“**What can He do for me?**”
 - **Individualism and consumerism | The wrong approach to God**

It is much easier to talk about **what** the Holy Spirit does than **who** He is—That is a bit more difficult to get at

- Because who really understands what ‘**Spirit**’ is? I mean really. Oh, and the King James version is super helpful—‘**Holy Ghost**’
- Who really understands things like ‘**Ghost**’ and ‘**Spirit**’?
- These are ethereal, mysterious, hard to pin down
- **We do not really know what our own spirits are—how much less capable are we of comprehending the Spirit of God**¹
- At least in comparison to the other members of the Trinity, for whom we have referents or points of analogy that make sense—‘**Father**’ and ‘**Son**’ (maybe broken)
- Compared to these familiar and familial terms –‘**Ghost**’ or ‘**Spirit**’ seems **remote, removed maybe even cold**—at least on an emotional or psychological level they can be **a bit distant and intimidating**

What adds to this mystery is the adjective ‘**Holy**’

- In reference to God, what does ‘**holy**’ mean?
- The root significance of the word in Scripture has to do with being **separate from, placed at a distance, and set apart**
- **Spatial language** that gets at the point of ‘otherness’
- And the core of this otherness is **moral**—God has ‘**moral distance**’ (holiness)
- This ‘**moral distance**’ illustrated by ‘**spatial language and imagery**’ is seen well in the classic encounter of the Prophet Isaiah with the Holy God of Israel in **Isaiah 6:1-5**
 - God is ‘high’ and ‘exalted’ and ‘lifted up’
 - Isaiah is pictured as ‘low’ and ‘thrust down’
 - God’s presence (‘the train of His robe’) fills the temple with glory
 - While Isaiah shrinks back in a corner
 - God is being declared to be “**Holy, Holy, Holy**” by the seraphim
 - The Prophet discovers himself to be sinful, unclean and undone—“I am doomed”
 - “**God’s holiness is the searing purity of His eternal infinite being.**” -Ferguson²

So, the Holy Spirit of God is this **searing, pure, morally distant, high and exalted other**—**holy, holy, holy**

- But so are the Father and the Son—such is God
- **So what is unique about Spirit?**

When we think ‘**spirit**’ or ‘**ghost**’ the sense that comes to mind most quickly is perhaps that of ‘**immaterialism**’

- But that is **not** what the biblical words are getting at—
- **Spirit is ruach in Hebrew and pneuma in Greek.** These terms are onomatopoeic terms.

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, tr. H. De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 118.

² Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 16.

- Onomatopoeia: **The formation of a word from the sound associated with what it is named** (e.g., sizzle; squish, boom, bang, pow)
- **Cf. *ruach* and *pneuma* = the expulsion of wind or breath; the idea of air in motion**
- ‘Spirit’—as a referent to God—expresses in it’s most fundamental form (‘the breath of life’)—**power, energy and life**³

The point of Spirit is not ‘immateriality’ but rather **the presence of energy and activity**

- Energy **rather than** immateriality is in view—action **not** absence—power not impersonality
- To say ‘Holy Spirit’ is **not** to say ‘**morally removed immaterial**’ but rather to say ‘**The Searing Purity and Active Power of God**’

But we must remember: The Holy Spirit is not merely energy or an impersonal ‘it’

- Scripture teaches that **the Holy Spirit is a person. (A ‘who’ not an ‘it’)**
 - Not in the way that you and me are persons, but in the way the Father and the Son are Persons.
- We must not say that the Holy Spirit is merely the “**exerted energy of God**” manifested in the world⁴ or “**the eternally proceeding energy of God**”⁵ (Classic Heresy—Not historic Christian orthodoxy)
 - To believe the Holy Spirit to be an ‘it’ is to truly deny Scripture, malign God and be guilty of heresy
 - A denial of His personhood is a denial of the Trinity (a tantamount and distinctly Christian doctrine)

- The Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the Trinity

- **An excerpt (3^b-18) from The Athanasian Creed (fourth-fifth centuries A.D.)**

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.

The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.

And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.

As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty.

And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;

And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.

- The Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture to have the same essential deity as the Father and the Son and is to be worshipped and adored, loved and obeyed as God.⁶

The idea of *Ruach Qodesh* is **not simply energy from God**, but rather it describes “**God extending Himself in active engagement with His creation in a personal way**”⁷

- The holy extending of the power and love of God to creation in Himself

One of the things we understand about God from Scripture is that God is **omnipresent**

- We also realize that there is a difference between the omnipresence of God and **the manifest presence of God** (Cf. Moses, Daniel, Isaiah)
- **It is the Holy Spirit who seems to be the member of the Trinity that manifests the presence of God in creation**
 - “**I will no longer hide *my face* from them, for I will pour out *my Spirit* on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.**” (Ezekiel 39:29)
 - “**Where can I go from *They Spirit*? Or where can I flee from *Thy presence*?**” (Psalm 139:7)
- **The person of the Holy Spirit is the extending of God’s holy presence into creation**

³ Ferguson, 16.

⁴ Arius

⁵ Socinius and his followers in the 16th c.

⁶ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), 5.

⁷ Ferguson, 18.

But also of His *loving* presence—for God is Holy, yes, *and*... **God is love** (1 John 4:8)

There is a **deep and unique connection of love** with the Holy Spirit

- Even in His very essence as the third person of the Trinity
- St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) called the Spirit “**the kiss of the Father and the Son**”
- When **great theologians** have tried to describe the Holy Spirit they often **resort to this language and imagery of Trinitarian love and delight** in eternal relationship
- Jonathan Edwards said: “**The Holy Spirit is the delight that the Father and the Son have in each other, and He carries in Himself so fully the essence of the Father and the Son that He Himself stands forth as a third Person in His own right.**”⁸
- C.S. Lewis said: “**Christians believe that the living dynamic activity of love** [between Father, Son and Holy Spirit] **has been going in God forever and has created everything else... In Christianity God is not a static thing... but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. The union between the Father and the Son is such a live concrete thing that this union itself is also a Person.**”—the Holy Spirit⁹

To know who someone loves and who loves them is to get to know who they are—we start to see **who** the Spirit is as we begin to see **whom** He loves and **who** loves Him

- The Spirit loves the Father. The Spirit loves the Son. The Father and the Son love the Spirit.
 - Cf. Looking for references (job or boy/girlfriend)
 - Ask those closest to Him:
 - How does the Father feel and think about the Spirit?
 - “**The promise of the Father...**” (Luke 24:49)
 - How does the Son feel about the Spirit?
 - “**It is to your advantage that I go...**” (John 16:7)
 - The Father and the Son see the Person of the Holy Spirit as a tremendous **love gift** to humanity
 - A sense of **protection** (Cf. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in **Luke 12:10**)
 - Both the Father and the Son **send** the Holy Spirit to us—**as a gift!**
 - It is almost as if there is this beautiful, loving **co-claiming** by the Father and the Son of the gift of the Holy Spirit
 - **The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name He will teach you all things** (John 14:26)
 - **When the Helper comes whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth...** (John 15:26)
 - “**The most precious gift of the Father’s love in Christ is the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and lead us.**” —Andrew Murray¹⁰

There is this thing of wonderful, Trinitarian, love—some sort of special endearing quality (*kiss, delight, union*)

Look at the **sweetness** of the Holy Spirit hinted at in Scripture:

- ... **Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.** (2 Cor 3:17, NLT)
- ... **the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.** (Romans 8:6, NASB)
- ... **You will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.** (Rom 15:13^b, NLT)
- **For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** (Rom 14:17, NLT)
- ... **The Holy Spirit gave you full assurance** that what we said was true... **So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit** (1 Thess 1:5-6, NLT)
- ... **You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba, Father”** (Romans 8:15, NASB)
- **So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.** (Acts 9:31, NASB)
- **Freedom, hope, goodness, peace, joy, full assurance, comfort, life**—all of these are associated with the Person of the Holy Spirit
- Far from there being sort of **distant, mysterious cold connotations and feelings**—there is **an incredible sense of warmth and tender care** for the believer and the church that is the Person of the Holy Spirit
 - Jesus uses the term **paracletos** to describe or name The Holy Spirit
 - **Paracletos** is translated: **Helper; comforter; advocate; intercessor**
 - That tells us so much about the Spirit
 - The Holy spirit is the One who is always ready to **help, comfort, advocate for** and **intercede for** the Christian

⁸Treatise on Grace, 63

⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 151 and 175.

¹⁰ Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ* (Minneapolis, Minn., Bethany House, 1979), 6.

This **sweetness is combined with tremendous holiness** and this tells us more about the Spirit

- Knowing someone's dislikes (what bothers them) and wounds (what hurts them) tells us much
 - The Holy Spirit cannot be wounded per se, as we are
 - But Scripture does tell us that the Holy Spirit can be **grieved** (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19)
 - There is a tremendous sensitivity to sin (hence the name—Holy)
 - There is a tremendous sensitivity to **lies** and **untruths**
 - **"The Spirit of Truth"** (John 15:26)
 - **"Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit?"** (Acts 5:3)

Honesty is one of the best qualities in a friend (**Proverbs 27:6**)

- Jesus calls us friends in **John 15:15** and **Abraham was called the friend of God** (okay for the Spirit too!)
- If we **press into** the person of the Holy Spirit we will discover Him to be a very good friend
- The Holy Spirit will always tell us the truth
 - About **ourselves, God, our sin** (Cf. **Jn 16:9—sin, righteousness and judgment**)
 - The Spirit will, though so sweet and tender, **never make you feel okay about your sin** (Cf. **John 16:8**)
 - About **life** (Cf. **Acts 20:23**)
 - Any friend will tell you **"everything is going to be okay"**—a great friend who truly loves you will tell you **"things are going to be hard"** (**But take heart...**)

When I really want to get past what someone *merely does* and get down to who they are, I sometimes ask them, **"what are you passionate about? What drives you? What gets you out of bed in the morning?"**

- Three things the Holy Spirit is passionate about:
 - 1. Jesus (He is Christ-centered and humble)
 - 2. Holiness (He is pure and undefiled)
 - 3. Mission (He is active and compassionate)
- If we are seeking the Holy Spirit, really wanting to pursue Him and get to know Him, he will always be **introducing** us to and **pushing** us toward and **taking** us deeper into:
 - (1) Jesus (2) Holiness (3) Mission
 - Where these 3 things are valued, esteemed and practiced the Spirit will be found
 - The Spirit is most present where Jesus is most central
 - The Spirit is most present where holiness is being pursued
 - The Spirit is most present where mission is being accomplished

And though all of this is an attempt to sort of bring things down to our level with the guidance of Scripture to help us grasp the Person of (the who of) the Holy Spirit—we can only go so far

- For at the end of the day, there is a **tremendous amount of mystery** surrounding the Holy Spirit
- Even Scripture begins to lose language when describing the Holy Spirit and employs imagery by telling us he is like: **Fire and water and oil and wind**
- When the *ruach Yahweh* come on individuals **"they are caught up in the thrust of an 'alien' energy and exercise unusual powers: the faint are raised into action; exceptional human abilities are demonstrated; ecstasy may be experienced. Yahweh's ruach is, as it were, the blast of God, the irresistible power by which He accomplishes His purposes... Those who are the subject to the activity of the divine ruach act in supernatural ways, with supernatural energy and powers."**¹¹
- **And yet**, in gentleness, submission (Cf. the fruit)
- **Like Jesus** who could calm the raging sea **and** cradle the little child—expel a legion of demons **and** embrace the suffering leper—fiercely overturn the tables of the corrupt **and** mercifully pardon the woman caught in adultery

What does this mean for the Christian?

- God has made Himself available to you—His Spirit is in you!
- **The Spirit displaces our life and replaces it with the life of Christ in power, to make the Son of God divinely and consciously present with us always.** —Andrew Murray¹²

So, here we are... attempting to gain a little understanding of who the Holy Spirit is

- With this in mind—we want more of God
 - **"Besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** (Psalm 73:25^b-26)

¹¹ Ferguson, 17.

¹² Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ* (Minneapolis, Minn., Bethany House, 1979), 5.

Let's begin to make it our goal and effort to get to know the Person of the Holy Spirit—there is so much to Him.

He is:

- The Spirit of God 1 Cor 3:16
- The Spirit of Christ Rom 8:9
- The Spirit of Jesus Acts 16:7
- The Spirit of the Lord 2 Cor 3:17
- The Holy One 1 John 2:20
- The Eternal Spirit Heb 9:14
- The Spirit of Truth John 16:13
- The Spirit of Grace Heb 10:29
- The Spirit of Glory 1 Pet 4:14
- The Spirit of Faith 2 Cor 4:13
- The Spirit of Life Rom 8:2
- The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation Eph 1:17
- The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding Isaiah 11:2
- The Spirit of Counsel and Might Isaiah 11:2
- The Spirit of Knowledge and the Fear of the Lord Isaiah 11:2
- The Spirit of Grace and Supplication Zech 12:10
- The Comforter, Advocate, Counselor and Helper John 14:26
- The Witness Rom 8:16
- The Intercessor Rom 8:26-27
- The Dove Luke 3:22
- The Promised Gift of the Father Acts 1:4-5
- The Living Water John 7:38
- The Spirit of Adoption Rom 8:15
- The Spirit of Holiness Rom 1:4
- The Author of Scripture 2 Peter 1:22
- The Convicter of Sin John 16:7-11
- The Seal and Guarantee of our Salvation 2 Cor 1:22
- The Teacher of All Things John 14:26
- The Power of God Acts 1:8
- The Fire of God Rev 4:5
- The Rushing Wind of God Acts 2:2
- The Outpouring of God Joel 2:28
- The Oil of God 1 Sam 16:13
- The Anointing of God 1 Jn 2:20, 27
- The Believer's Guide John 16:13
- The Indwelling Presence of God in every Believer Rom 8:9-11