

God the Holy Spirit

Article II

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Key Text:

Genesis 1:2: “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.”

Psalms 139:7: “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”

Joel 2:28-32: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.”

John 4:24: “God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 14-16

John 14:16-17: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:26: “But 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.”

John 16:7-11: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 2:1-4: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Romans 8:9-11: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

Romans 8:14-16: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

Galatians 4:6: “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

Ephesians 1:13-14: “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Ephesians 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Ephesians 5:18: “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

2 Peter 1:21: “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Major Theological Observations: A Narrative

This article begins where it must, by affirming that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and as such is fully divine. He is a person and not an it, thing or force. He possesses with the Father and Son the one undivided divine nature. Only because he is Himself divine, yet the third member of the Trinity, can we understand the string of activities he is said to perform.

Notice the verbs. This article says of the Holy Spirit that he “inspired,” “enables,” “exalts,” “convicts,” “calls,” “effects regeneration,” “baptizes,” “cultivates,” “seals,” “enlightens” and “empowers.” One thing is clear – the Holy Spirit is intent on and active in carrying out the will and purposes of God. The Bible is most interested in what He does.

Consider several main areas of his work noted in this article.

- 1) The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures. He worked in the minds of biblical writers and so moved in them (2 Pet 1:20-21) that what they wrote as their own words was concurrently the fully authoritative, reliable and inerrant Word of God (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- 2) The Holy Spirit illumines the minds and hearts of believers to help them understand and apply that divine word to their own lives (1 Cor 2:14). The Spirit inspired the Bible so that he might use it mightily in transforming us by its truth.

- 3) The Holy Spirit brings sinners to *salvation*. He comes most fundamentally to exalt Jesus Christ (John 16:14). This truth can hardly be overstated or over-emphasized, something too often done in Pentecostal and Charismatic fellowships. The primary way He accomplished this is as he convicts us of our sin, calls us to behold the beauty of Christ's saving work and regenerates us so that we respond now to God in hope and love, through faith in Christ Jesus. On our own, we consider the cross of Christ foolishness and weakness (1 Cor 1:18-25); but because the Spirit opens our blind eyes and enlivens our hearts (2 Cor 4:4-6), we come to faith in Christ and begin the sure and certain path to our ultimate and complete transformation in Christlikeness, which is the Spirit's goal (2 Cor 3:18).
- 4) The Holy Spirit transforms believers through empowering their ever-increasing *sanctification*. The Spirit cares more about Christlike character and conduct in God's people than any service they might render apart from these qualities. To be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) and to walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) and to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) express the internal work of the Spirit in making us wholly new people in Christ.
- 5) The Spirit is God's seal and guarantee (Eph 1:13-14) that this internal work will continue until we are fully glorified. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, we are assured the certainty of our full and final sanctification.
- 6) The Holy Spirit equips us for meaningful and fruitful *service* in the church. One of the ways in which God brings about his transforming work in our lives is through the ministry of the Body of Christ. Each member is gifted by the Spirit as He so wills (1 Cor 12:11) so that the Body may be edified. Our worship of the true and living God, our love

for one another and our service in the name of Christ – all done in the power of the Spirit – fulfill the goal God set for us to grow into Christlikeness. (Adapted from an article by Bruce Ware).

Some Further Theological Reflections

Christians reflected on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in greater depth in the 20th century than in any other era of Christian history. Some theologians refer to “three waves” of the Holy Spirit in the 20th century: the Pentecostal wave beginning in 1906, the charismatic wave starting in 1960, and the Vineyard wave in the 1980’s. Despite the emphasis given to the Spirit over the past century, 21st century Christians possess no more understanding of the Spirit than our Baptist forefathers. Four truths about the Spirit are worth our careful consideration.

First, the BF&M affirms the person of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). The term “Spirit” functions as a neuter noun in the Greek language. Grammatical rules mandate that a pronoun agree with the term it modifies in gender. The noun “Spirit” grammatically requires the neuter pronoun “it.” Jesus, however, referred to the Spirit as a “He,” that is a person. If an individual conceives of the Holy Spirit as a power, as did Simon (Acts 8:18-24), then the question becomes, “how can I get more of it?” If an individual understands the Holy Spirit as a person, then the question becomes, “how can I surrender more of my life to the person of the Holy Spirit?”

Second, the BF&M sets forth the purpose of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; 16:14). Jesus explained the role of the Holy Spirit as “testifying about Me” or “glorifying Me.” The purpose of the Holy Spirit is the exaltation of Christ.

Third, the Spirit of God places people in the Body of Christ through the act of baptism (1 Cor 12:13). The BF&M committee added the important clarification, “At the moment of

regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ.” The statement combats Pentecostal teachings that claim the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs after conversion.

Fourth, the Spirit, “bestows spiritual gifts” as the Spirit wills. Every believer receives a spiritual gift, yet the Sovereign Spirit distributes spiritual gifts without the input of human desire. The New Testament term for spiritual gift is “charisma.” The translation for “*charis*” is “grace.” “*Ma*” is a suffix indicated “result.” A spiritual gift (a charisma) is a grace gift that produces results. God gifts individual Christians for the benefit of the Body of Christ, not personal glory or benefit. (This section is adapted from an article by Mark Rathel, *Florida Baptist Witness*, 2-28-08).