

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Holy Spirit

By Hugh Fulford

Quite possibly more confusion exists with reference to the Holy Spirit than any other Bible subject. The divine personality of the Holy Spirit is not recognized by many people; how He works in the conviction and conversion of sinners and in the life of a Christian is often misunderstood. A single essay on the subject cannot answer all questions, but some basic truths may help clear the path to a greater understanding of the Holy Spirit and His work.

The Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost, King James Version) is known by various names in scripture. He is referred to simply as the Spirit (Rom. 8:26), the Spirit of God (Matt. 3:16), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9b), the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:13-14), and the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29).

Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is a divine person. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute the Godhead (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Spirit's nature comports with the Father's and the Son's. If we have no problem conceiving of the Father and the Son as divine persons, we ought not to have any problem conceiving of the Holy Spirit as a divine person.

Eight times in the space of two verses (John 16:13-14), Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as **“He”** a personal pronoun in the masculine gender and the singular number. This being the case, the Holy Spirit is not some mysterious “It” that people in their wild imaginations and frenzied, irrational behavior “get.” (Example: “I” got the Holy Spirit/Ghost! Have you ever “got it?”) The Holy Spirit is not the mind or power of God the Father. And, while the word of God is **“the sword of the Spirit”** (Eph. 6:17b), the Holy Spirit is not to be equated with the word of God—no more so than a soldier is to be equated with his sword, though the soldier uses his sword to accomplish his mission.

The Holy Spirit has a mind (Rom. 8:27) and possesses knowledge (1 Cor. 2:11). He taught the apostles of Christ and reminded them of all that Jesus had taught them (John 14:26). He guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). Note: The context of the preceding verses needs to be understood, those to whom the words were spoken need to be recognized, and no one today is to assume that the Holy Spirit is leading or guiding them or anyone else into additional truth. **“All truth”** has been revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets of Christ (Eph. 3:1-7, note especially verse 5, and compare it with 1 Cor. 2:12-13). **“The faith”** (the complete gospel system) has been **“once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3), and no additional revelations or “special leading” of the Holy Spirit are taking place today, nor have they since the completion of the writing of the New Testament documents.

The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians (1 Cor. 6:19) and in the church collectively (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-21). The Holy Spirit is given to Christians *because* they are sons/children of God, not to *make* them sons/children of God (Gal. 4:6, emphasis mine, hf). The indwelling Spirit serves as a seal (a mark) that one is a child of God (Eph. 1:13), and is the earnest (as in earnest money, i.e., the deposit, the guarantee) of the Christian's eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:14; 1 Cor. 5:5). The Spirit **“bears witness with (not to) our spirit that we are children of God”** (Rom. 8:16, emphasis mine, hf), and **“makes intercessions for us...according to the will of God”** (Rom. 8:26-27).

The child of God is to demonstrate **“the fruit of the Spirit”** and **“walk in the Spirit”** (Gal. 5:22-26). This involves walking worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1), walking in love (Eph. 5:1-2), walking as children of light (Eph. 5:8), walking circumspectly (literally, looking around, keeping oneself morally upright, being aware of spiritual threats, dangers, needs, challenges, and opportunities) (Eph. 5:15), walking in the light (of God's word) (1 John 1:5-7), and walking in truth (2 John 4).

One must be careful not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:22-32; Mark 3:28-30), lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3), resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51), grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), or do despite to or insult the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:28-29). Rather, we are to be **“filled with the Spirit”** (Eph. 5:18-19) as we **“let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly”** (Col. 3:16). (Note: These last two passages are exact parallels, and while they do not make the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ synonymous [see earlier comment on Ephesians 6:17], they are instructive as to the medium through which the Holy Spirit does His work in the conviction and conversion of sinners and in the instruction of Christians, namely, the word of God).

Much more could be said about the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this brief overview will serve as a springboard to deeper and more extensive study on the part of some. ■

“We Already Know That”

By Joe R. Price

The Scriptures warn Christians of pride’s overconfidence: **“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”** (1 Cor. 10:12). Yet, the temptation to either **“tell or to hear some new thing”** infects the thinking of some brethren, persuading them to discount the need to hear and preach the **“old paths”** (Acts 17:21; Jer. 6:16). Preaching on Bible authority, true worship, the organization and work of the local church, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the plan of salvation (faith, grace, and works), and the dangers of immorality (fornication, dancing, drinking, etc.) are deemed irrelevant by some, and too negative and harsh by others. Instead of these topics, the common urge is for a message more palatable to the tongue and pleasing to the ear (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A rationalized defense is offered for this shift away from preaching the old paths of God’s word: **“We already know that.”** Maybe so. Yet, the Scriptures are full of exhortations reminding us of things we know (Luke 17:32; Gal. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:1-2; 2 Pet. 1:12-15). We must couple knowledge with love, or our knowledge only puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1-3). And, knowledge must be coupled with discernment to make wise, righteous choices (Phil. 1:9-11).

Growing to spiritual maturity does not mean we abandon the first principles of the gospel. The problem of immaturity in Hebrews 5:12-6:3 resulted from a failure to use **“the word of righteousness”** to discern good and evil. Without properly using the word of God, we will not grow in Christ (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15). If we conclude **“we already know that,”** we are setting ourselves up to eventually neglect that part of God’s word **“we already know,”** thereby hastening the erosion of our faith.

Leaving does not mean forgetting (Heb. 6:1). An adult does not live on milk, but he does drink it. Or, again (using the figure of construction), a foundation must be laid before constructing a building. The **“elementary principles of Christ”** must be implanted in our hearts for us to **“go on to perfection”** (maturity, Heb. 6:1-2; James 1:21). Spiritual maturity does not dismissively say, **“we already know that,”** and now we want something else. Maturity sees the value of maintaining a solid foundation to build strong faith (Heb. 11:1).

A balanced diet of gospel teaching is essential. We must preach and consume the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). We must always teach holy living that identifies sin and warns of sin and death (Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 6:23). We must always teach and **“hold fast the pattern of sound words,”** honoring Christ’s authority in everything while rejecting every innovation and error (2 Tim. 1:13; Col. 3:17; Matt. 15:7-14). We need reproof, rebuke, and exhortation **“in season and out of season”** (2 Tim. 4:2).

Preachers and brethren, continue to preach and demand God’s word on every subject. Never say, **“We already know that,”** lest you develop **“an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”** (Heb. 3:12).

“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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