

- ***READ Romans 8:24-27*** One of the, if not the, most controversial subjects found with Christianity is that of the Holy Spirit. Questions about concerning what He is, what He does, and what He is continuing to do today. I don't think it is as if men are dumb when it comes to understanding God and His nature, but with the Spirit specifically, we have trouble because He is quite different from the Father and Jesus the Son. For starters, we never see the Holy Spirit speak a word throughout the Scripture as we do see God the Father and Jesus speaking words. Further, the fact that He is Spirit makes things difficult because He is quite different from what we understand in our existence as physical beings. There is a lot of mystery that surrounds the Holy Spirit and portions of the Bible that speak about Him. Consider the text that we read just a moment ago. In these verses, Paul speaks specifically about the Spirit and how he intercedes for us, but he doesn't go into much detail to explain how exactly He does such a thing. Again, we are left a little in the dark, and because of this sense of mystery and unknown the Holy Spirit is often relegated to the back burner, and He is often becomes the Forgotten God.
- This morning, I don't want us to focus on the mysteries of the Holy Spirit, but I want us to look at what we can know for certain about the Holy Spirit. While much of what and who He is and how He does can at times be a mystery, I do believe there are some things that we can look to the Bible to see that can create within us some rock solid knowledge concerning this portion of the Godhead. I hope that what we consider this morning will strengthen our faith in God and increase or sharpen our knowledge of and appreciation for the one whom we serve, the great God of heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I. He is real, He is a person, and He is God.

A. Again, some of the mystery surrounding the Holy Spirit is the fact that He is a Spirit and/or a Ghost as the KJV refers to Him as. This is so different from what we see and experience today that some can't seem to wrap their hears around the fact that He is real and that He is a part of the Godhead. In fact, there are some religious groups who teach that the Holy Spirit is not God, but just some sort of force associated with God.

1. The Jehovah's Witnesses "*Watch Tower*" publication says this, "*God's holy spirit is not a God, not a member of a trinity, not coequal, and is not even a person...it is God's active force...may be likened to a radar beam.*"
2. To this group, the Holy Spirit is not a person or individual being, He is not deity, and frankly He is not worthy of any adoration that we would be willing to render to the God of heaven. These are strong claims, but we must see whether or not the Bible would support such claims.

B. The truth is that the Holy Spirit spoken of in Scripture does posses everything necessary to be understood to be real, to be a person, and to be God.

1. The simple fact that the Spirit is expressly mentioned in Scripture ought to be enough to show us the truth that He truly exists and plays a key role in the workings of this world and God's plan for man kind. Then beyond this, we conclude that He is an individual person or existing being because He possesses the attributes of such.
2. Jesus specifically mentions the Holy Spirit by name and speaks of Him as if He is a literal being that exists and is able to operate. **(John 14:26)** Now, while He might be a literal being, that again does not demand that He possess a body as we do, but it simply means that He possess all of the characteristics of a person.

- He has knowledge. (I Corinthians 2:11)
- He loves. (Romans 15:30)
- He has a will. (I Corinthians 12:11)
- He speaks. (I Timothy 4:1)
- He teaches. (I Corinthians 2:13)

- He guides. (John 16:13)
- He is grieved. (Ephesians 4:30)
- He is lied to. (Acts 5:3)
- ★ He is eternal. (Hebrews 9:14)
- ★ He is all-knowing. (I Corinthians 2:10,11)
- ★ He is all-present. (Psalms 139:7-10)

3. These first eight characteristics simply show that the Holy Spirit is indeed a person and exists as we do to some degree, but then the last three show His divine nature as God. Through these writings of Scripture, we can know for certain that the Holy Spirit is a true person, but that He is more than that...He is God.

II. He has always been present in Scripture.

- A. What I mean by this is that just as God the Father and God the Son have always been present and on the scene...so has the Holy Spirit been present and active throughout the Big Picture of the Bible and the story of creation and man's existence from then on. You might point out that while this might be true, the Old Testament doesn't speak much concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that would be true especially considering how much He is mentioned in the New Testament. However, that does not mean that He isn't still there. Consider the following two ways in which we see the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.
- B. Firstly, consider creation and the work of the Holy Spirit in it. We know well **Genesis 1:1** and how it states that God created the heavens and the earth. But notice that **v.2** goes on to tell us that the *"Spirit of God"* was moving over the surface of the waters. Some would claim the Holy Spirit doesn't make an appearance in the Bible until the New Testament, but we are only two verses into Genesis and we already see Him on the scene. Further, consider what is said in **1:26** when God says, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* Who is the "Us" in this text? I'm pretty sure all people would recognize the Father being present. Then we can also conclude that Jesus was present according to what we read in **John 1:1-3**. And then I would say that we can be confident of the Holy Spirit playing a part in creation based upon what we see in **Job 33:4**, *"The Spirit of God has made me, and he breath of the Almighty give me life."*
- C. Then secondly, consider that we possess the Old Testament because of the work that was done by the Holy Spirit to inspire its writing. When we consider texts such as **II Timothy 3:16,17** & **II Peter 1:20,21**, we must come away with the understanding that it was the Holy Spirit who was working doing these times in order for the people involved to record what was taking place or what had happened. But it wasn't only that this was spoken about after the fact, but those who were being inspired could recognize what was taking place. Consider what David wrote on his deathbed in **II Samuel 23:1,2**. *"Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high declares, the anointed of the God of Jacob and the sweet psalmist of Israel, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me and His word was on my tongue."* David knew that his words were not ultimately of himself, but they were a result of the mind of God's Spirit. We can know that He has certainly always been present and active from before creation, in creation, and beyond creation.

III. He played a major role in the beginning of the Church and the spread of the Gospel.

- A. It is at this point of the Bible story when we most quickly identify the Holy Spirit as being on the scene and being active. We are well familiar with what takes place in **Acts 2:1-4** when the Holy Spirit comes upon the Apostles, and they are given the ability to speak in languages that they did not previously know. This ability not only allowed for many people to hear the Gospel message, but it showed that the power of God was with these men as they spoke.

- B. However, it wasn't as if the Holy Spirit came out of nowhere. In actuality, this occasion had been foretold of by Jesus during His last intimate sit-down with His Apostles in **John 13-17**. We see specifically in **John 14:26; 16:7-14** that the Holy Spirit, the Helper would be coming to them after Jesus was gone so that He could guide them into all truth. These are the promises that are fulfilled in **Acts 2**. The Holy Spirit comes to the forefront of the action and allows the Apostles and others to show the power of God through the signs and wonders that He empowered them to do. Both Mark and the Hebrew writer make acknowledgement of the Lord using the Holy Spirit's miraculous power to confirm the message that the earliest Christians possessed. (**Mark 16:20 & Hebrews 2:4**) We can know for certain that the Holy Spirit was integral in the early success of the church and the Gospel being spread.

IV. His miraculous work through men has finished.

- A. While we can know that the Holy Spirit was a major force and extremely hands on in the beginning years of the church and as the Gospel spread, we must take a moment and recognize that His work in this way wasn't something that was going to last forever. Notice again what was said in **Mark 16:20**, *"The Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed."* It was at this point that the signs were necessary because they didn't have this inspired Word, the Bible, to carry around with them to show people the truth. It was imperative that the Lord show that these people were actually speaking in His name by showing the miraculous power that they possessed through that which the Holy Spirit gave them. But now that we have this completed Word to look to as an objective standard of truth, the miracles are no longer needed.
- B. Remember that the Christians in Corinth had problems with putting a lot of stock in their own miraculous abilities. They tried to exalt themselves up because they had these great powers, but Paul knocks them down a notch by telling them that those things would be done away with at some point. (**I Corinthians 13:8**) Because this was to be the case, Paul emphasizes that they focus on excelling in love because that would always be needed and powerful. Now, when exactly would they be done away with...If we're following the logic of **Mark 16:20**, then I think we can come to recognize that the miracles ended when people could look to the written word and see what it was that God desired for them to know and do. Remember **II Timothy 3:16,17**...We know that the Holy Spirit worked miraculous among men, but we can also know that those times have passed. We have the completed revelation of God that can lead men to God.

V. He continues to be alive and active, today.

- A. If we're having this conversation with someone then often we get the response along the lines of, *"You don't believe in the power of God or His Spirit, today. You're speaking as if the Holy Spirit is dead and not active, today!"* I'm sure I'm not the only one that has heard something along these lines, so what is the truth? Do we not believe the Holy Spirit is alive, today? I don't know about you, but I certainly believe that the Holy Spirit is alive and active today! However, if I don't believe that He is active in the same way He was in the first century...then how is He working?
- B. Let's begin by addressing the misnomer that the Holy Spirit only worked during the first century through miraculous means. Many people want to act as if the Holy Spirit only works in flashy and incredible ways, but we see in **Revelation 1:11; 2:7** that even in the first century the Holy Spirit worked through the written word. We can know that the Holy Spirit works through this Book, today. He doesn't have to do something miraculous to be active. He inspired this book, and He continues to work through it, today. Consider these texts that show that the Holy Spirit works in the same way that this book works.

Action	Holy Spirit	Word of God
Teaches/Instructs	John 14:26	II Timothy 3:15-17
Saves Man	Titus 3:5	James 1:21 & Acts 11:14
Cleanses Man	1 Corinthians 6:11	John 15:3 & Ephesians 5:26
Dwells In Man	Romans 8:9	Colossians 3:16
Leads/Guides	Romans 8:14	Psalms 119:105
Gives Life	John 6:63	John 6:68 & Psalm 119:50,93
Bears Fruit	Galatians 5:22,23	Luke 8:11,15

C. The evidence for this work can be seen in our lives. Think about how the Holy Spirit is working through our lives through us reading this Book and living it out to where His fruit is seen in our lives. That is exactly what Paul speaks of when he writes about the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-25**. We can know that the Holy Spirit is alive and active today when we see these attributes on display in the lives of disciples.

Sure, there is plenty about the specific working of the Holy Spirit that leaves us with more questions than answers. Sure, it could be discouraging to be left wanting to know more, but not having any solid answers. Sure, this could cause us to not give the Holy Spirit the respect and appreciation that He deserves as God, but I hope that we have been reminded this morning of the power that the Holy Spirit has even today in the lives of all of God's people who are committed to the Word that He inspired men to write. May we not allow our questions to fuel doubt, but may what we know about the Holy Spirit motivate us to be committed to Him as God. May He strengthen us to live righteous lives day by day.

PRAYER