

What We Believe: The Holy Spirit

Text: John 14.15–31

Theme: God's gospel is applied by the power of the Holy Spirit

Introduction — teaching on Holy Spirit either most neglected or most abused

- those who focus on Christ & salvation so much, barely touch doctrine of Holy Spirit
- others spend much of their time & energy on trying to “capture” Spirit
- use Him like some energy force to empower their life, grant them favors
- some entire church denominations go off the rails entirely, nearly forgetting about Christ
- and in doing so, Christ faith becomes all about them, the people, rather than truth

So, as with our other statements so far, vital that we know what God gives us

- necessary to know what we believe
- gravely important to hold to what stands written in God's holy & inspired Word

With this in mind, let's read Article #6 of the EFCA Statement of Faith together...

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

Let's begin our look at this by asking:

I. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- almost all modern translations of God's Word refer to third member of Trinity as Holy Spirit
- KJV when active title attached refers to Him as “Holy Ghost”
- this isn't exactly helpful, especially to modern mind
- conjures up some impersonal power, specter, phantom and the like
- but Holy Spirit is a Person, one and equal with God
- here is how one great historical confession of faith puts it:

This divine and infinite Being consists of three persons, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three have the same substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence without this essence being divided. The Father is not derived from anyone, neither begotten nor proceeding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. All three are infinite and without beginning and are therefore only one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being. Yet these three are distinguished by several distinctive characteristics and personal relations. This truth of the Trinity is the foundation of all of our fellowship with God and of our comforting dependence on him.

- so Holy Spirit has and exercises power but is not simply powerful energy
- He has attributes of God, seen as He is sent forth from Father to apply life & work of Christ
- as Jesus said in John 14, He is another advocate, Helper, Comforter

This helps us be able to answer well the next question:

II. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

- again, let's go to Scripture to get truth from its pages
- **John 16:6-7 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 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 go, I will send him to you.**
- Jesus must go so Spirit may come
- this was God's plan of salvation all along, from before foundation of world
- Jesus would come, taking on human flesh, suffer & die, rise again
- when He ascended Holy Spirit came upon all His believers and has ever since

1. All about pointing to glory of Christ

- once Jesus was glorified in suffering, death, and resurrection, Spirit would come
- and He would live within heart of every believer
- **John 14:17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.**
- Spirit's role is to assure each Christian that God in Christ lives within them
- **John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.**
- Holy Spirit brings this tremendous assurance to you
- **1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.**
- in this, He brings glory to Christ, points to Christ, helps us live in Christ
- **John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**
- **John 16:14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**
- all about the gospel
- God's gospel originates in eternal decree of Father
- this good news is accomplished by earthly work of Jesus Christ, which we saw last week
- but not enough for it to simply be finished in that way; must be applied
- this is what Holy Spirit does: applies the gospel to us

2. Convicts world of sin

- **John 16:8 And when [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment**
- we see this happening soon after Holy Spirit comes upon disciples in upper room
- day of Pentecost, Peter preaches the message of Jesus Christ
- Holy Spirit then did His work
- **Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"**
- Spirit then gives new birth so they may believe, trust, and be saved
- **Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.**
- this work will take place in three ways
- **John 16:9-11 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.**
- concerning sin: this is how we know we are sinners under God's wrath, needing deliverance
- concerning righteousness: this is regards to our disobedience & Christ's active obedience
- we are sinners because we break God's law constantly; only Christ held to it perfectly

- Holy Spirit makes sure we see this
- then, concerning judgment: here is where those guilty feelings come from
- Spirit has now opened our eyes so we see that apart from Jesus we are all condemned

3. He gives us the new birth

- Scripture teaches us this is the act of regeneration: being born again as Nicodemus learned
- sadly, in our modern day, Christianity is too often presented by preachers as self-help
- we cannot do it all on our own, so we need to add Jesus to our lives
- but self-improvement, self-help, self-fulfillment—all therapeutic, unbiblical terms—useless
- in our state of sin, we are helpless, even lifeless—dead in our trespasses and sins
- we need more than help; we need God’s life-giving power working within us
- this is why we rejoice in words of new birth and Spirit’s power...in the OLD Testament
- **Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah...For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”**
- Ezekiel, another OLD Testament prophet spoke of Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration
- **Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**
- this is promise of God in new covenant: power of God bringing you, once dead, to new life
- when we use word “conversion” this is what we mean
- without this right understanding of what Scripture teaches, we miss the gospel; get it wrong

4. He baptizes us in union with Christ

- we can study life of Jesus, understand His work in obedience, suffering, death, & resurrection
- but if we do not know how this is made effective in our lives, are we truly saved
- union with Christ is one of most glorious truths of Bible & Christian living
- this is what Paul loved and proclaimed it: we are “in Christ” & He is in us by Holy Spirit
- in Christ we are chosen, called, regenerated, justified, sanctified, redeemed
- assured of resurrection, given every spiritual blessing in heavenly realms
- it is Holy Spirit who baptizes us into this union with Christ
- oh, that we could spend many Sunday mornings just basking in glory of union with Christ
- let this sink in over time because it is a weighty thing
- all Christ’s work transcends space and time
- it happened in the past, but comes to you & me now, and will be with us forever
- when Spirit baptizes us—puts into Christ—all this takes place, no matter the space & time
- we are joined in this working of Spirit’s power

5. So much more

- time does not permit me to go into each of these, but each could take at least one Sunday
- Spirit adopts us in family of God

- **John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**
- He indwells each believer
- **Romans 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.**
- Scripture's light shines on & in our hearts through Holy Spirit
- **1 Corinthians 2:10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.**
- **1 Corinthians 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.**
- He guides us, equips us with gifts to serve the church, and empowers us to live for Christ

Conclusion – hope you see how vital, important, necessary & empowering this is

- one of most distinctively unique features of New Covenant
- instead of only speaking thru law, God now works by Spirit IN our hearts
- we are Christians by God's grace, Christ's life & obedience, and Spirit's working power
- this is our God
- this is our Savior, Jesus Christ
- this is our Holy Spirit
- embrace this truth and let it set you free