

# Who is God?

## Lesson #4 – *The Spirit*

### Lesson Objectives

- Explain what is meant by the “*personality*” of the Spirit
- Understand the relationship between the Spirit and the scriptures
- Describe the work of the Spirit in man’s salvation and his service to God

### Lesson

#### 1. Attributes of the Spirit

##### 1.1. The personality of the Spirit

- Men often think of the Spirit as *it*, rather than a *he*. By doing so, they fail to recognize the personality of the Spirit. The Spirit is a person, just as the Father and the Son are individual persons within the Trinity. When Jesus referred to the Spirit, he spoke of him as a person, and not a thing.

#### John 16:13 (KJV)

**16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that shall he* speak: and he will shew you things to come.**

- As a person, the Spirit thinks and communicates with man.

##### 1.2. The Spirits equal place within the Trinity

- Related to the common misconception around the personality of the Spirit, there is also a tendency to think of the Spirit as having less standing within the trinity as the Father and the Son. However, when we are in the presence of the Spirit of God, it is as if we were in the very presence of the Father or the Son. We ought to give the Spirit the reverence and honor that is rightly His in the same way we would if Jesus Himself were present. For this cause, it’s always appropriate to be quiet, attentive, and engaged in the preaching, teaching, singing, or prayers in the church. If we would not act a certain way if Jesus Himself were present, we should consider that the presence of the Holy Spirit.

#### 2. The Inspiration of the Spirit in the Scriptures

##### 2.1. Men inspired by the Spirit

- The scriptures are the supreme standard of truth because they were ultimately written by God. Men *penned* the scriptures, but they did not *author* them. This is clearly stated in 2 Peter 1:21.

**2Pet 1:21 (KJV)**

**1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.***

- The Spirit of God Himself moved upon the writers of scripture and inspired them with the truth they were to record. There are several different opinions with regard to the exact nature of how this happened, but the important point to realize is that the Spirit wrote the scriptures. There were about 40 authors of the books of the Bible (the number varies depending on what books are attributed to each of the various writers), who wrote over a period of more than 1,500 years. That the Bible is unified throughout is only explainable through Divine inspiration. It is impossible to think that men who lived in vastly different times and places could have written a collection of books as unified as the scriptures. Most of these men did not have the writings of the other writers to consult as they wrote. Yet, it wasn't needful for them to because they were simply writing what the Spirit moved them to write. Christianity is unique with regard to the scriptures in this way. Most of the false religions of the world depend upon the writings of one primary man written within the timeframe of his own life. Islam has Muhammad, Buddhism has Buddha. But Christianity has more than 3 dozen writers who wrote over a period of one and a half millennia. The unity of the scriptures within this context is understandable only in realizing the Spirit's role in inspiring each of the men's writings.

2.2. Error of placing the Spirit and the scriptures at odds

- One of the greatest errors of religion is the placing of the Spirit at odds with the scriptures. Men are susceptible to thinking that one has greater authority than the other. Some will say we ought to follow the Spirit. Another will say we ought to follow the scriptures. The truth of the matter though is that we ought to follow both. As we have seen, the Spirit wrote the scriptures. We have also seen that God does not change. From these two facts, we can say with confidence that what God (the Spirit) wrote in the scriptures, He still says today. He hasn't changed His mind on anything He has written. What God has said in the scripture, is what He says to us today. There should never even be an implied separation

between the Spirit and the scripture in our preaching and teaching. Many false practices and ideas have come when men have separated the Spirit from the scripture and determined to follow one or the other, rather than both.

- When the Spirit of God moves upon us, that movement is nearly always accompanied by human emotion. Depending on the message being delivered by the Spirit, we may feel happy, sad, peaceful, angry, guilty, or just about any of the other emotions we are capable of feeling. It's important to remember though that those feelings are the *result* of the communication. Our feelings are not the *purpose* of the communication. The purpose of the Spirit's communication within us is *always* to communicate truth, not simply to make us feel any particular way. The truth will make us feel differently depending on the specific truth being communicated and our individual circumstances at the time.

**John 16:13 (KJV)**

**16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.**

- There is a danger of following our emotions while claiming to be following the Spirit. Much damage is done when men follow their emotions (feelings) but claim to be following the Spirit. It has often been said that we should "*follow our feelings*". That can be good advice so long as it is properly understood. Improperly understood, it can easily lead to following ourselves. Following *our* feelings can give us license to sin. Following *our* feelings can lead to hesitation in obeying the Lord's will. Jeremiah give us fair warning that we should question our hearts and our motives in Jeremiah 17:9.

**Jer 17:9 (KJV)**

**17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**

- So how do we know if we're following the Spirit or our own heart and emotions? By examining our thoughts and feelings against the scriptures. If we are following the Spirit, we will not do or say anything that is contrary to the scripture. If someone claims that they have been led to do something that conflicts with the scripture, they are calling the Spirit of God a liar. To follow the Spirit is to follow the scripture. Likewise, to follow the scripture is to follow the Spirit. While the Spirit guides us with regard to the *specific* facets of our lives, He does so within the context of the *general* guidance He has already provided us in

the Bible. One of our greatest struggles as a people is that we often make a great effort at determining God's *specific* will for our lives, while at the same time doing little if anything to discover God's *general* will which He has so carefully outlined for us in the scripture. We should be as concerned (if not more so) with God's general will, as we are with His specific will for our lives. When we spend more time asking God whether we are to sing a song on Sunday than we do asking Him to show us in His word how we are to live as husbands, wives, employees, employers, parents or children, it reveals a motivation that is more about us than God. Motivations centered on ourselves do not lead to being spiritual people. Rather, they lead to being prideful people. While it may be a difficult pill to swallow, if we aren't interested in studying and learning God's general will revealed to us in the scripture, then we aren't really interested in His specific will either. We may think we are, but deep down, God knows our hearts. He knows the hours (or lack thereof) we have spent with His word that we might hide those words in our hearts. God is not fooled by our pretenses, whether they are accompanied by great emotion or not. He looks upon the heart and sees all there is to see.

- On the other side of this issue are those that would proclaim that the scriptures are enough and there is no need for the leadership of the Spirit of God. These people turn the scripture into a dead letter. Their faith is a lifeless, emotionless, and ultimately passionless faith. They believe that an academic understanding of the word of God is sufficient to knowing God and His will. However, this idea is wrong because it leaves us helpless to determine God's specific will. Though we should not seek the Lord's specific will for our lives over and above His general will, that does not mean that we are not in need of His specific direction in the circumstances of our lives. Who should we marry? What job should we take? Where and how should I educate my children? While these questions, and many others, can be answered *generally* from the scriptures, they must also be answered *specifically* for each of us as individuals. That specific direction is given to us by the Spirit of God. As we will see later in this lesson, nowhere is the combination of following the scriptures and the Spirit more important than in salvation.
- Much more could be written about the wrong done when the Spirit and the scriptures are placed at odds with one another. It is my prayer that we diligently work to see that it does not happen in our churches, our homes, or our own hearts. If we are to become mature

Christians and build mature churches, we must see and recognize the vital place of the unity of the Spirit and the word of God.

### 3. The Work of the Spirit

#### 3.1. In salvation

- Throughout these lessons we have been considering the nature of God. When we come to the study of the Spirit's work in salvation, we need to understand a fundamental attribute of man. That attribute is that man is a fallen creature. He is completely depraved and sinful. The scriptures are very clear on this topic and a few verses are provided here that confirm this truth.

**Rom 3:10 (KJV)**

**3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:**

**Ps 51:5 (KJV)**

**51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

**Rom 5:12 (KJV)**

**5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

- Man's sinfulness separates him from God. It separates him to such an extent that the scriptures tell us in Romans 3:11 that men will not even seek after God. The question is then asked how anyone can be saved. If man will not even seek God, how can he ever find Him? The answer is that God seeks man. We have a clear example of this in the case of Adam and Eve. After their sin, we do not see them running back to God to make things right with Him. To the contrary, we find Adam attempting to hide from God. But God comes seeking after Adam. What marvelous and unspeakable grace and mercy is seen in this truth. In John 6:44, we are told that no man can come to Christ unless he is drawn. This drawing of God is accomplished by the Spirit of God. When speaking to Nicodemus, the Lord refers to this in John chapter three.

**John 3:5-8 (KJV)**

**3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

**3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

**3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.**

**3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

- When the Spirit draws us, He convinces of the truth of our sin. That convincing of sin is often referred to as conviction. Being convicted of our sin by the Spirit of God, we are left with one of only two choices. We can do as Adam did initially and attempt to hide, or we can go to Him in repentance for our sin and faith in Christ's sacrifice. If we turn to Him with true repentance and Godly sorrow, and trust in Christ as the one who has paid our penalty, the scriptures proclaim that we **will** be saved.
- I have called out the word *will*, in the last sentence of the previous point because it's vitally important to understand what is meant by the scriptures with regard to the promise of salvation after repentance and faith. Many today have claimed that if you simply repeat a prayer, or repeat a verse of scripture regarding repentance and faith that you **are** saved. But that is not what the scriptures say. Rather, they say that you **will be** saved. To say that you are saved after reading a few verses of scripture, or repeating a few sentences of someone else's prayer leaves out the vital work of the Spirit of God. That work is *regeneration*. When we repent and believe the gospel, the Spirit of God regenerates us. Regeneration makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. We aren't made a little bit better. We are made completely new. Our lives are not just *reformed*, but true life is *formed* within us by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. This work is the observable experience of the new birth. We know it has happened if it has truly happened.

**2Cor 5:17 (KJV)**

**5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

- Countless millions have likely gone to their deaths believing that salvation was a mere exercise of religion, as opposed to being an experience with God whereby we come to know Him through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. When we fail to understand this pivotal role and work of the Spirit, we will fail to understand salvation for what it actually is.

3.2. In service

- After salvation, the presence of the Spirit is as important as it was when He initially drew us to salvation. Whether intentionally or unintentionally though, we often fail to recognize this fact. There is a picture that can be drawn from the children of Israel that illustrates this point. Their deliverance from Egypt (the picture of salvation) came by crossing a river

on dry ground. Likewise, their deliverance into the Promised Land (the picture of serving God in this life) came by crossing a river on dry ground. Serving God is accomplished by following the Spirit of God, just as finding salvation came by following Him in the first place. Preachers cannot effectively preach without the help of the Spirit. Christians cannot effectively understand the scripture without the help of the Spirit. Parents cannot raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord without the help of the Spirit. We read in scripture that we don't even know what to pray for unless the Spirit helps us.

**Rom 8:26 (KJV)**

**8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

3.3. Reproving sin

- Among the other work accomplished by the Spirit is the reproof of sin. The Spirit convicts lost people of their sin and lost condition and He also convicts saved people of the sin that they allow in their lives. Many misunderstand or forget altogether the Spirit's work in reproving sin. People claim that they don't want to hear about sin in church, but would rather hear about how much God loves them and wants them to have *their best life now*. Men prefer to be told by their preachers that they are good people and that God sees worth and value in them. Songs have been written in which the songwriter marvels that God saw something in them worth dying for. We must understand that there is nothing in man that is worthy of the death of the Son of God. Nothing in the entire world is of equal value to Him. As we have previously studied, the Son is the preeminent being in all the universe. We can say with biblical certainty that if there is no reproof of sin in the church, then the Spirit is not in the church no matter how wonderful the singing, speaking, or how beautiful the building may be. If there is an absence of the reproof of sin in our hearts, then there is an absence of the Spirit in our hearts, whether or not everything looks just fine on the outside.

**John 16:7-8 (KJV)**

**16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.**

**16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**

3.4. As a guide

- In the work of the Spirit, we must understand that the work He accomplishes is a *guiding* work. The Spirit will not force anyone against their will to follow the Him. I believe that God has often used men unbeknownst to them to accomplish His will, but when it comes to our personal obedience and faith, the Spirit *guides*, He does not *force*.

**John 16:13 (KJV)**

**16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that shall he speak*: and he will shew you things to come.**

- A voluntary willingness to be led is required in order to be guided. Otherwise, it isn't guidance at all. The words "...*he will guide...*" in the King James Version come from a single Greek word that means "*to show the way*". The Spirit shows the way, but there is a need for man to obediently follow in the way they are shown. There is something of an apparent paradox when we consider this thought. On the one hand, we have stated that man is completely sinful and unable and unwilling to seek God without God first seeking man. Some then have taken that truth and stated that God has predestined some to salvation and others to eternal damnation (*Calvinism or Predestination*). Their logic is that if man will not seek God, then man's choice cannot have anything to do with his salvation. In this view, man is provided irresistible grace that cannot be turned away. This view does not keep the guiding property of the work of the Spirit in mind. It is true that unless God seeks us first, we will never seek Him. However, that does not mean that once God seeks us, He leaves us without a choice to obey or reject Him. Indeed, the very work of the Spirit as a guiding work makes it clear that God shows us the way, but we must choose to follow.
- There is another view among men that is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Calvinism. That view is referred to as the Armenian view. Where the Calvinist misunderstands that man does have a choice to make *after* the Spirit of God shows him the way (disproving irresistible grace), the Armenian makes the mistake of thinking that man can find the way *before* the Spirit of God even shows him the way (disproving the accepting Christ doctrine). Either of these opposite views, which have been argued for centuries, have a strain of error that can cause men to teach a false gospel. Satan doesn't actually care which view you prescribe to because the truth is actually between the two opposite views of the Calvinist and the Armenian. As is so often the case, man's religion often becomes the greatest obstacle to a correct understanding of the work of the Spirit.



## Conclusion

- The Spirit of God is a *person*, as are the Father and the Son. He has been given as our comfort and our guide first in salvation, and then to a life pleasing to God. His presence in our lives will reprove us of sin and draw us closer to the Father. Finally, we must understand that His *specific* guidance in our lives will always be consistent with His *general* guidance that has been made available to us in the scriptures.