

Steve Whitacre
**SESSION 1 | The Holy Spirit In Us,
With Us, and For Us**

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” *Galatians 5:25*

“But it is a great mistake to suppose that our whole duty lies in passive submission to the Spirit’s control, as if all we had to do was to surrender to His leading. On the contrary, we are ourselves to ‘walk’, actively and purposefully, in the right way. And the Holy Spirit is the path we walk in, as well as the guide who shows us the way.” John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, 153.

I. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Colossians 3:8: ⁸*But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath,* A very basic doctrine of the Trinity:

1. God exists eternally as three persons.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is only one God.

The Holy Spirit is fully God. Two important implications for the purpose of this class:

1. **The Holy Spirit is personal**, so we refer to Him and not to It. Easy for our thinking about the HS to drift towards impersonal ideas. Easy to think of the Father and Son as personal.
2. **Christians can expect to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.** John Owen: we have communion with each member of the Godhead.

The members of the Trinity are equal in fundamental essence and nature but distinct in the roles they play in creation and in redemption.

- The Father plans and wills salvation
- The Son makes salvation possible
- The Spirit applies salvation in the hearts of Christians.
 - Regeneration, illumination, sanctification, empowers for ministry.

II. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

1. The Holy Spirit Exalts Christ

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (John 16:13–15; see also 1 Cor 12:1-3).

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them... This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:3).

"When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God" (Jonathan Edwards, "Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God," 109).

2. The Holy Spirit Regenerates, Fills, and Empowers Believers

The Holy Spirit regenerates Christians. How does a person actually become a Christian?

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'" (John 3:5–8).

The Holy Spirit is also a seal and a guarantee.

"And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (2 Corinthians 1:21–22).

3. The Holy Spirit Comforts Christians

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 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.” (John 14:15–17).

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.” (Acts 9:31).

John Owen comments on this verse, and argues that the consolation (or comfort) of the Holy Spirit is:

- Abiding. “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us *eternal* comfort and good hope through grace,” (2 Thessalonians 2:16).
- Strong. “...so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have *strong* encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.” (Hebrews 6:18).
- Precious. “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” (Philippians 2:1–2).

Furthermore, the comforting work of the Holy Spirit brings about:

- Peace. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Romans 15:13).
- Joy. “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,” (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
- Hope. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” (Romans 15:13).

4. The Holy Spirit Edifies the Church

Unity: “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3).

Presence via spiritual gifts: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

III. CONCLUSION

"We are not left on our own as far as our relationship with God is concerned; neither are we left on our own to "slug it out in the trenches," as it were, with regard to the Christian life. Life in the present is empowered by the God who dwells among us and in us. As the personal presence of God, the Spirit is not merely some "force" or "influence." The living God is a God of power; and by the Spirit the power of the living God is present with and for us." Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 8.

"This is the sum:—the presence of the Holy Ghost with believers as a comforter, sent by Christ for those ends and purposes for which he is promised, is better and more profitable for believers than any *corporeal* [bodily] presence of Christ can be, now he hath fulfilled the one sacrifice for sin which he was to offer." John Owen, *The Works of John Owen, Vol. II: Communion with God*, 226.