

Work Of The Holy Spirit

Rightly Dividing The Word: Shelf 5 — Volume 45

The Holy Spirit is the only one of the Godhead who did not take a unique name in the Bible. There is “God, the Father” and “God the Son,” but the Holy Spirit is simply the “Spirit” who is holy, and thus the Scriptures refer to this personality of the Godhead only as the “Holy” Spirit (See Mt 28:19).

In His ministry of moving inspired writers to write accurately and record historical events in the Bible, God, the Holy Spirit, simply decided that He did not need a unique name, lest He distract from the work of the Father and Son in the gospel plan of redemption. So as one with God, He simply “named” Himself in Scripture as the Spirit who is holy, and thus, the Holy Spirit.

A. The Spirit Continues Work Of Jesus

God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are working in their creation through the representative of themselves, the Holy Spirit. In this way, the Holy Spirit works in the affairs of our world as a representative of the fullness of God (See Cl 1:19). When the Son of God ascended to assume headship over all things, the Holy Spirit was sent in order to continue the work of the Son on earth. He came in order to continue to deliver all the truth unto the inspired speakers and writers of the New Testament documents (See Jn 16:13,14; 14:26). Once all truth concerning the mystery of the gospel was verbally delivered, **the Holy Spirit continued to do His work by inspiring the written record of the gospel and the truth that He recorded as the New Testament documents** (See 2 Tm 3:16; Jd 3).

There is no specific name for the Holy Spirit.

B. Spirit Finalizes The Word Of Jesus

Once the historical events of the gospel were accurately recorded for posterity, with all the revealed mystery of our redemption that had been in the mind of God from the beginning, then the Spirit finalized His revelation to those who had responded to the gospel (See Ep 3:1-5). Once the Spirit concluded the recording of the word of God, He empowered to word of God to continue with the people of God until the coming of the Son of God.

Though God is reflected in the personalities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we must not conclude that there are three Gods simply because we do not understand the complexity of that which is beyond our experience.

C. The Spirit's Work Beyond Words

Regardless of all the confusion today concerning the work of the Spirit, one thing is certain: **The Spirit will do His work among God's saints regardless of their understanding of either His presence or work.** The Spirit's work is not controlled by our knowledge of His work. Neither is His work limited by our limited knowledge of how He does what He does.

If it were true that the work of the Holy Spirit was limited to what Christians understand about His work, **then Christians would become somewhat arrogant.** We would because some might think they are more "spiritual" because they supposedly have a greater understanding or insight into what the Spirit does in their lives. (In the second century, this belief was central to the theology of **Gnosticism**, which arrogant theology greatly divided the church in the latter part of that era.)

Add to this the fact that some might become somewhat judgmental of those who supposedly are not "experiencing" the fullness of the Spirit in their lives. The hypocrisy of such self-righteous judges is in the

claim that the Spirit somehow exalts them to be the judges of those they deem to be unwilling to allow the Spirit to take control of their lives. In such cases, we can be certain of one thing, **self-righteous “spirit judges” do not have the unifying Spirit we read about in the Bible.**

In all our arrogance and judgmental thinking concerning the work of the Spirit, we also might become idolaters. If the Spirit’s work is either controlled or limited to what we can imagine He does, then we are in danger of becoming idolaters. We would be creating the behavior of God, the Holy Spirit, after our own behavior, or how He should behave according to our human understanding. Or even worse, we might come to the conclusion that our emotions should become the standard by which we would judge the behavior of the Spirit. This is indeed, the spirit of idolatry.

Any effort on our part to determine the behavior of the Holy Spirit on the basis of what we experience or know is an effort on our part to exalt ourselves above others.

D. The Spirit’s Work To Unify Saints

We know that the Spirit works to produce unity among believers. He works to produce unity among those who have obeyed the gospel, for obedient believers have all received the same Spirit. The Spirit works today through those who are in a covenant relationship with God in order to accomplish God’s work of preaching the gospel to the world. However, we must keep in mind that the unity that is produced among believers is the result of their common obedience in response to the gospel of the incarnate Son of God.

It is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, that is the foundation for our unity in Christ. It was the work of the Holy Spirit to originally produce an inspired record of the gospel of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of the Son of God (See 1 Co 15:1-4). Once these historical

events of the gospel were recorded, then the unity of obedient believers was established on the basis of our common acceptance of and obedient response to these historical events that God revealed as His eternal plan for the redemption of mankind.

Since those who obey the gospel receive the same Spirit, then it is only logical to assume that the Spirit works to maintain unity among all those who have obeyed the gospel.

E. Spirit's Work To Glorify The Son

It is in this context that we must never forget what Jesus promised the twelve apostles soon before His departure from this world:

When He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you [apostles] into all the truth. For He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, that He will speak. And He will declare to you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will declare it to you (Jn 16:13,14).

Regardless of what we believe in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit—which understanding can only be acquired through the word of God—we **must never come to any conclusion that the Holy Spirit is to be exalted above Jesus, or even glorified in worship.** Jesus made this perfectly clear in the preceding statement.

It has always been the “job description” of the Holy Spirit to work in a way that will glorify the Son of God, not Himself.

F. The Spirit's Work To Lead By His Word

In order to prevent confusion through our misguided emotions, **we look to the Spirit-inspired word of God for an explanation of how the Holy Spirit says He works in our lives.** We must keep in mind that our emotions can be deceived by our own desires. And for this reason, the Spirit seeks to lead us through the

written word of God that He inspired to be produced for our direction and understanding of those things that are beyond our human experience.

Since Christians have been invested with the Spirit, they desire to work to the glory of the Son. In doing this, they desire to work according to the direction of the Spirit-inspired word of God. Knowing the word of God, therefore, is our opportunity to know where the Holy Spirit wants to lead us.

The word of God keeps us going in the right direction. It is obviously, therefore, that those who do not know their Bibles will always be going in the wrong direction in reference to what God would want in their lives. A religionist is defined as one who would determine his or her own faith by what one feels.

The inspired word of God is the Spirit's road map to keep us on the road to unity and understanding concerning things that pertain to living the gospel.

G. The Spirit's Work Through Words

Christians must understand that God is still at work today among His people and in the world as a whole. He has not left us alone in a troubled world. Though we may not understand all the suffering that is caused by so much evil in the world, **we conclude that we live in the best of all possible environments for the existence of a truly free moral being who can make choices.** It has always been the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, to reveal the standard upon which right choices can be made.

The Spirit will not violate our freedom to choose by suggesting, or directly moving us, to make choices in a subjective manner. He has provided the moral standard of the word of God as the opportunity for us to make the objective choices in a world of struggle.

If we would be guided by what the Holy Spirit would have us do as the people of God, we must study His inspired word, the Bible.

H. The Spirit's Work In Eternity

God the Spirit manifested Himself in the history of man to accomplish the work of the Godhead in the world. The Holy Spirit is thus referred to in the Bible to be one with God.

1. As one in essence with the Godhead, God the Spirit was in existence before the creation of the world (Gn 1:1,2,26 —notice that the pronoun “Us” in verse 26 is plural, and thus, includes God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).
2. The eternal Spirit was working in the beginning of creation as a part of the Godhead (Gn 1:1,2; Jb 26:13; Ps 104:30; Hb 9:14).
3. If one lies to the Spirit, he or she is actually lying to God the Holy Spirit (At 5:3,4).

Though there are different missions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who work on our behalf, all work as one.

I. The Spirit Is God At Work

The one true God manifested Himself to man through the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God, the Spirit, works as one with the Father and Son in order to take the children of God unto the consummation of all things when Jesus comes again.

1. The Spirit worked through the Son while the Son was on earth (Mt 3:16; 4:1; 12:28; Lk 4:1,14,18,21; Jn 3:34).
2. The Spirit glorifies the Son, not Himself (Jn 16:13,14).
3. The Spirit gives testimony to God the Son (Jn 15:26).
4. The Spirit was first sent by the Father and Son in the first century to the twelve apostles (Jn 14:26; 15:26).
5. The Spirit revealed all truth to the apostles that He received from the Father and Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14).
6. The Spirit revealed the mind of God to the first century apostles and prophets (1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Pt 1:20,21).
7. The word of God was written by guidance (inspiration) of the Spirit in order to continue the work of God among men (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21; see At 20:32).

Unless we understand that the Holy Spirit had a unique relationship with the Christ-sent apostles, we will not be able to rightly divide the word of

God in reference to the application and meaning of passages that explain the work of the Spirit in our lives today, in comparison to how He worked directly in the lives of some of the first century Christians.

J. Attributes Of The Holy Spirit

Since the Holy Spirit is God, then He has the same attributes as God the Father and Son. Though His attributes have not been revealed through an incarnation as the Son, He has revealed them through written words of revelation. Therefore, in order to understand the nature and work of the Holy Spirit we have only the source of the Bible as our dictionary to understand that the Spirit has the nature and attributes of God.

Since our understanding of God is always limited to the definition of our words, then we must always conclude that when words of our dictionary are used to define the Holy Spirit, we do not have a complete understanding of the Spirit and His work.

1. The Spirit is **eternal** (Jb 26:13; Hb 9:14).
2. The Spirit is **all-powerful** (omnipotent) (Gn 1:2; Lk 4:1,14).
3. The Spirit is **all-knowing** (omniscient) (Rm 8:26,27; 1 Co 2:10-13).
4. The Spirit **searches all things** (1 Co 2:10).
5. The Spirit **loves the saints** (Rm 15:30).
6. The Spirit is a personality that can be **grieved** (Is 63:10; Ep 4:30), **lied to** (At 5:3), **resisted** (At 7:51; 1 Th 5:19), **despised** (Hb 10:29), **blasphemed** and **sinned against** (Mt 12:31,32; Mk 3:28,29; Lk 12:10).

K. The Christian And The Holy Spirit

When the prophecy of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4, the Holy Spirit was poured out to empower the apostles on the day of Pentecost. It was then that the Spirit's work on earth began among those who responded to the gospel. Though the work of the Holy Spirit with different individuals, both in the first century and today, may be different, **all the work of the Holy Spirit among the people of God must find its origin in the initial outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2.**

In the beginning, the confirming miraculous work of the Spirit continued with the early disciples until the spoken word of God's messengers was eventually written and confirmed as the word of God. Upon reception of the Spirit when one is baptized, the Spirit continues His presence with gospel-obedient Christians unto this day. He continues to lead the obedient disciple through His written words of instruction, as it has always been since the first century. The Spirit never revealed any respect of persons by God by directly taking control of one disciple over another. Every disciple has the same opportunity to be led by the Spirit's inspired word.

1. Spirit & Christian In The 1st Century

It is very important to understand that in some ways the Holy Spirit worked differently in the first century among the apostles, prophets and early Christians than He does today. He works today in a **providential** way to lead Christians. For example, the early disciples functioned as **the church in the absence of any written New Testament documents**. In the absence of the New Testament documents for at least two decades after Acts 2, it was necessary that the Spirit work more directly in the lives of certain people who led the church as inspired teachers (prophets). If we do not understand this recorded difference in the ministry of the Spirit, **then we will misapply many Scriptures that refer specifically to the early work of the Spirit in the first century, but do not refer to how He works today.**

It is important, therefore, that we rightly divide the word of truth on this matter (See 2 Tm 2:15). Those who do not make a separation in the ministry of the Spirit in the first century from how He works today, will often deceive themselves into believing the self-righteous declarations of certain individuals who make outlandish claims concerning the work of the Spirit in their lives (See 2 Tm 4:2-4). It is for this reason that we must always allow the teaching of the Bible to be the final authority in all matters of faith.

1. In the first century, the inspired spoken word was **miraculously confirmed** before unbelievers by the Spirit (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). The Spirit does not need to do this today because we have His confirming work of the word recorded in the Bible.
2. In the absence of the written word in the first century, **the Spirit guided specific Christian teachers** in the first century, whose teachings were inspired by the Spirit (See 1 Co 12 – 14). The Spirit does not need to do this today because every disciple has the opportunity to study the Spirit-inspired Bible.
3. In order to mature the early church, **miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands** (At 8:18; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6). The Spirit does not do this ministry today because there are no Christ-sent apostles to lay hands on possible recipients. Hands, today, pass out Spirit-inspired Bibles, not administer the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.
4. The work of confirming the spoken word of the Spirit before unbelievers **ended with the completion of the written word in the first century** (1 Co 13:8-13).
5. All necessary confirmed truth was revealed in the first century (2 Tm 3:16,17; Jd 3). **We have today the confirmed word of God that reveals the gospel.**
6. Christians must now **rely on the written word of God** for instructions from God (At 20:32; Ep 3:3-5; 2 Tm 3:16,17; see Gl 1:6-9; Jd 3).
7. Christians are warned **not to change, add to or subtract from the Spirit-inspired written word of God** (Pv 3:5,6; Gl 1:6-9; Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19).

Since the revealed word of God was originally confirmed and written by the direction of the Holy Spirit in the first century, then the Holy Spirit does not need to miraculously confirm again the word of God in this century.

2. The Spirit & Christian Today

When we compare the work of the Holy Spirit in the first century with how He works today, **we must not steal from the Spirit His opportunity to work differently today than when He worked in the first century.** When the early church was established, the Spirit had to work more directly in the infancy of the early Christians than when He worked after He had delivered to them the complete written “instruction manual” on how to live the gospel. This was neces-

sary in view of the fact that **the first Christians had no written New Testaments as a record of the events of the gospel until the middle 50s and early 60s.**

The written New Testament letters came at least two decades after the establishment of the church in Acts 2 in A.D. 30. But when the New Testament letters were eventually transcribed, copied and circulated among the early Christians, the Spirit did not have to work directly through inspired apostles and prophets (teachers) in order to reveal instructions and correct dysfunctional living in the lives of the early Christians.

Once the New Testament instructions were written, then there was a change in how the Spirit ministered God's instructions to the early disciples, as well as He instructs us today.

The Spirit continues to work powerfully today through His inspired word in the following ways:

1. The Spirit **indwells** the Christian (1 Co 3:16; 2 Co 6:16; Ep 2:22; 2 Tm 1:14).
2. The Spirit **sanctifies** through obedience to the recorded gospel (2 Th 2:13,14; see Jn 17:17; At 15:8,9; Ep 5:26; 1 Th 5:23).
3. The Spirit **strengthens** (At 20:32; Ep 3:16,20; Cl 1:10,11).
4. The Spirit **comforts** (At 9:31; see Rm 15:4; 2 Co 1:13; 2 Co 7:6,7,13; 2 Th 2:16,17).
5. The Spirit **leads** (Rm 8:14,17; Gl 5:18,25; see Is 48:17; Ps 119:105; 2 Th 3:5).
6. The Spirit **seals** the Christian (2 Co 1:21,22; Ep 1:13,14; 4:30).
7. The Spirit seeks to **produce the fruit** of the Spirit in our lives (Gl 5:22,23).
8. The Spirit causes **thanksgiving** as people respond to the gospel in their lives (2 Co 4:15).
9. The Spirit works today through the impact of the word of God on the heart of the gospel-responsive person to produce **faith** (Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17), **convert** (Js 1:18; 1 Pt 1:22,23), **save** (At 11:14; Js 1:21), **cleanse** (Jn 15:2,3; Ep 5:26), **quicken** (Ps 119:40,93; Jn 6:63), **give understanding** (Ep 3:4; 2 Tm 3:15), **admonish** (1 Co 4:14; 10:11), **guard** (2 Tm 3:13-15), **exhort** (1 Pt 5:12), **instruct** (2 Tm

3:16,17), **stir up** (2 Pt 1:12,13), **purify the soul** (1 Pt 1:22), and **enlighten the mind** (Ps 19:8; 119:130).

The Holy Spirit would minimize or marginalize His inspired recorded word today by granting us directly those instructions He promised would come to us through our response to His word.

L. Work Of The Holy Spirit Today

The Spirit works today in ways that are beyond our complete understanding. However, He does explain in the Bible that He desires that Christians maintain a life of self-control and dignity. He explains such while we diligently study the word of God He inspired to be written, which word has been preserved for instructions in gospel living. In order that we live according to His instructions, the Spirit teaches us the following:

1. Maintain emotional control of our free-moral choice, because we will give account of our behavior before Christ (2 Co 5:10).
2. Maintain unity upon the foundation of the gospel, because we must speak the oracles of God in reference to the gospel (1 Pt 4:11; see 1 Co 1:10; Gl 1:6-9; Ep 4:23-25; 1 Jn 4:1-4).
3. Maintain unity in purpose and work, because we must work as one body (1 Co 12:12-31; Cl 3:12-17).
4. Maintain control of our speech in order to speak with grace in our hearts, because we will give account before God of every idle word we speak (Mt 12:36,37; Cl 4:6).
5. Maintain a studious life of the Bible because we are responsible before God to know the Scriptures (At 17:11; 2 Tm 2:15; see 2 Pt 3:15-18).

Since God knew that we could not direct our own paths, He commissioned the Holy Spirit to inspire a spiritual road map for our direction in this life.

One **blasphemes the Spirit** by saying that the Spirit's instructions for our salvation are not from God, but are of human ingenuity. One **sins against the Spirit** by rejecting the Spirit's instructions in the Bible as to how one must respond to the gospel (Mt 12:31,32; Mk 3:28-30; Lk 12:10). The Spirit seeks to convert people today through the preaching of the

inspired message of the gospel (See 1 Co 15:1-4), by which one is born again in obedience thereof (See Jn 3:3-5; 1 Co 4:15; 1 Pt 1:22,23). And one is born again when he or she obeys the Spirit's written instructions as to how one is saved by responding to the gospel (See Mk 16:16; At 2:38).

Since the Holy Spirit has recorded the gospel, and the manner by which one can obey the gospel, then we must assume that the Spirit would not in some way bypass His instructions concerning obedience to the gospel that are recorded in the Bible. The Spirit would not save by leading one to ignore the gospel that is recorded in the Bible.

Obedience to the gospel is an **objective response** to the instructions that the Spirit has revealed through the written Scriptures. We would certainly be deceiving ourselves to think that the Spirit would work in any **subjective** manner in order to bypass His centuries of work that He put into inspiring faithful writers to transcribe the written instructions in the Bible concerning one's salvation in response to the gospel. Therefore, no one has a right to subjectively declare his or her own salvation apart from obedience to the gospel. **Our salvation is objectively declared by the Holy Spirit through His word. Salvation does not come by setting aside the declaration in the inspired word. Salvation is not by any a subjective emotional impulse on the part of excited people.**

We can objectively discover the Spirit's declaration concerning our salvation when we read in the Bible that we are saved when we follow His instructions on how we should obey and live the gospel (See At 2:38; Rm 6:1-6; 1 Pt 3:21).

We must be very clear in reference to the power of the gospel unto salvation, and the word of God that is the Spirit's report to us concerning this gospel. The gospel is what causes salvation (See Rm 1:16). It is the inspired word of God that reveals the gospel events of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and coronation of the Son of God (See

1 Co 15:1-4). It is the word of God that reports to us these gospel events, which events cause a living thanksgiving of the gospel (2 Co 4:15; see Ph 2:5-11).

It is the gospel, therefore, that is the power of God unto salvation. **It is the inspired written word of God that reports this gospel to us.** Therefore, when we say there is power in what the word of God can do in our lives, we mean that as the inspired report of the events of the gospel, the word of God, that reports the gospel, **changes and directs lives.** One can live the gospel only by growing in grace and the knowledge of the Son of God (See 2 Pt 3:18). **The written word of God, therefore, is the medium through which the life-changing gospel is reported to us today** (See Rm 1:13-16).



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Why would the Holy Spirit not assign Himself a unique name?
2. Why must the inspired word of God be the Christian's single guide for salvation and gospel living?
3. Why must the work of the Holy Spirit **not** be controlled by our limited knowledge of how He works?
4. How can people become arrogant in claiming that the Spirit specifically works in their lives in contrast to others whom they claim "do not have the Spirit"?
5. How does one become idolatrous in reference to our understanding of who the Spirit is and how He works?
6. Why is the gospel the only foundation upon which the saints are united?
7. In reference to bringing glory to the Son of God, what would the Spirit never do in reference to Himself?
8. Why is it impossible for us to understand the full nature of God?
9. When considering the work of the Holy Spirit, why can we not separate His work in the affairs of this world from the work of the Father and Son?
10. Why must all work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians originate in Acts 2 with the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles?
11. What was the difference in the Spirit's work in the early church between the time the New Testament documents were not written, and the time when they were eventually written and circulated among the early disciples?

12. Why does the Spirit no longer need to miraculously confirm the word of God?
13. In what ways does the Holy Spirit work in the life of a Christian through the influence of the written word of the Spirit?
14. Why would a direct work of the Holy Spirit on the moral behavior of the saint marginalize His work through the saints' voluntary response to the gospel?
15. How can one sin against the Holy Spirit today?

ABREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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