

I believe in the Holy Spirit

Introduction

Series on what we believe. Incarnation, atonement, resurrection ascension.

Fixing the effects of the past, sorting out our future. The role of Jesus in 'salvation', the role of the Father.

How do you get to know God? how are we to enjoy this new relationship with the risen Christ, with the Father who we can finally get to know because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice?

I'm still by nature and choice a sinful human, and can't, even by trying really hard, correct my life and live sinlessly.

So when [the disciples] had come together, they asked [Jesus], "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(Acts 1:6-8 ESV)

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God.

In the NT called 'Holy Spirit' (Luke 11v13) and 'Spirit of God' (Rom 8v14). In Acts Peter accuses Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit and then says "You have not lied to men but to God".

In the 'Great Commission':

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

Notice how Jesus says he will be with them, identifying himself with the one who was yet to come and empower them?

The Holy Spirit is personal.

He's a 'he' not an 'it'. The NT writers referred to the Holy Spirit as 'he'. They write about his intelligence, his will and his emotions.

This is important because it means we can know the Holy Spirit personally. He's not just a conscience, a feeling, he's relational. He's given the title 'paraclete', which means 'counsellor', 'instructor' or 'helper'. (Only in John's writing is he given this as a title. Islam acknowledges that Jesus said he would send a paraclete, although they largely believe that this refers to Mohammed)

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 14:16-17 ESV)

So the Holy Spirit dwells with us, and lives in us. He is at work in us in a number of ways:

1. He reveals
2. He changes
3. He unites

He reveals

Previous passage - Holy Spirit revealing the glory of Christ to us. He's more involved in the salvation story even than that.

The bible is the very words that God wants to speak to us. How did he go about speaking to us so clearly? 1 Peter talks of how prophecy comes only through people being led by the Holy Spirit. The apostles were told by Jesus that they would be guided into truth by the Holy Spirit. Some passages of the bible contain words spoken or songs sung by people as they were full of the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit has been at work revealing the words of God to the people that wrote the bible.

Question - how did you know that you were a sinner in need of a saviour?

But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 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. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 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.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 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 16:5-15 ESV)

This passage reveals a lot about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives before our salvation.

1. He brings conviction of sin (only sinners realise the need for a saviour).
2. He reveals the righteousness of Christ. He makes Jesus attractive. He confirms in the hearts of people the truth of who Jesus is.
3. He guides us into truth, glorifying Jesus. He confirms in our hearts the truth of the message about Jesus being Christ, confirming that he is who he says he is, and bringing faith that he is able to save.

He makes the gospel effective in the hearts of people that hear it.

He changes

The gospel is not simply about what happens to us when we die.

How do we maintain a relationship with God? [Church subculture and it's rules.]

Atonement - nothing we do can make God love us any more than he already does. NT speaks often of grace, the free gift of salvation that we receive from God.

Good works are not the *means* by which we maintain our relationship with God; they are the *result* of dependence on the Holy Spirit

John Wimber, 'The dynamics of spiritual growth'

Only when we admit that we are actually a bit rubbish at running our own lives, that our decision-making is corrupted by sin, that we are selfish and sinful, only when we recognize that there is a problem can we admit that we need help.

Gospel works out as good news to all we come in contact with.

Why is it good news for people? Because of transformation. Improvement (?!).

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

(Galatians 5:16-26 ESV)

Christian - acknowledgement of my failure to be able to live my life well. I can acknowledge that I need outside help. I can't improve my life (become less sinful, more righteous) with the help of the Holy Spirit. And he won't help me unless I ask. Transformation is a partnership between me and God, and a further demonstration of his faithfulness and patience.

When we humbly say to God 'you know better than me, have your will in my life', so then the transforming power of the Holy Spirit starts in our lives. Big lie we hear is that we need to be holy to come to God (which is true), and so we should try to sort out our lives before we go to him (which isn't).

You don't have to do it in your own strength, there is another, a 'paraklete', counsellor, helper, instructor, who is constantly at work revealing God to us. The more we see of God, the less we have a desire to sin.

His transforming power doesn't just work in us to turn us from sin. The Holy Spirit also empowers us to do the things of God. Acts passage, Jesus said 'you will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you'. In the NT the apostles were empowered by the Spirit to perform miracles, to cast out demons to see the sick healed, to see buildings fall down. The Holy Spirit also empowered them to preach the gospel. So, in effect, he was working both in the lives of those speaking and in the lives of those hearing the message.

The Holy Spirit is doing the work of revealing (or manifesting) the identity and reality of God and his Kingdom to the world. This is why we sometimes see 'manifestations' of the Spirit, for example 'spiritual gifts' like prophecy, tongues, words of knowledge; he is revealing God to the world, manifesting, making known his presence and identity, drawing attention to himself and his glory.

He unites

We can think of the Holy Spirit as not just being at work in us as individuals, but also at work in us as a community of believers, at work in his church.

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

(Acts 2:16-21 ESV)

The emphasis here is that the Holy Spirit comes not just on leaders, not just on people that are in some way 'special' but all flesh; young and old, influential and lowly.

The end of this passage in Acts tells of the result of the Holy Spirit being poured out on new believers - they 'had all things in common', they gave to the poor, they shared their homes and lives with one another. This is supernatural, and is the work of the Holy Spirit changing the hearts and lives of those who live in co-operation with him.

When Paul writes about spiritual gifts in Corinthians, it's in 1 Corinthians 12. The bit before is about unity, the bit afterwards is about unity.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

(1 Corinthians 12:7 ESV)

The reason for the manifestation of the Spirit that is Spiritual gifts is mutual benefit. It's about building community.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

(2 Corinthians 13:14 ESV)

Notice how the connection with fellowship and the Holy Spirit is seen here?

The truth is that in order to live in community with people that aren't like us, that previously we wouldn't get to know or even wouldn't like, we need to be living in the Spirit, we need his transforming power at work in us. This is not just a community built on human effort or on clever thinking, it's a community of the Spirit. If he is all we have in common, it's enough.