

Weekly Reflection – Who is the Holy Spirit?

There is a war going on.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12 ESV I believe there are two places or two ways this war is being fought. There is a war going on within believers and there is a war going on over nonbelievers. I think one primary way the enemy fights the war over nonbelievers is by fighting the war within believers. Here is what I mean.

“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.”

Galatians 5:17 ESV The main thing to learn from this verse is that Christians experience a struggle within, there is a war going on. A war between our flesh, our ego that wants to do everything in our own strength, and the Spirit. A Christian is not a person who experiences no bad desires. A Christian is a person who is at war with those desires by the power of the Spirit.

But why would the enemy keep fighting against people who have been saved by God? When we are saved by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we know that we have victory over sin, over death, over the enemy. So why does the enemy keep fighting against us? Primarily to do everything he can to make us ineffective for the mission we have been given. The mission we have been given is to go and make disciples of all nations, in other words to save other people from the enemy, to save other people from the kingdom of darkness and bring them into the Kingdom of Light. Satan also is aware that God's plan to save unbelievers is through believers, followers of Jesus.

Back to the question, why does the enemy keep fighting against believers? The enemy knows that if he can keep believers living by the flesh, unable to overcome sin in our life, comfortable with sin in our life, ignorant of how to overcome sin in our life then we will be weak and ineffective soldiers in the war for the souls of people.

So what do we do? How do we win the war, how do we win the war over our flesh, and how do we win the war over unbelievers and save them from the enemy? There is only one way to win the war, and that is by the Holy Spirit. ***“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:13-14 ESV***

Days of the Holy Spirit

John Owen in his work on the Holy Spirit points out something so obvious we may overlook it. The Bible portrays for us a history of redemption with three major divisions that reveal progressively the three persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Before the first coming of Christ, the great testing truth was "the oneness of God's nature and His monarchy over all," especially with respect to the person of the Father. When Christ came, the great question was whether a people orthodox on the first point would recognize and receive the incarnate Son of God in whom all the fullness of deity dwells. Then, after the Son had gathered a people who received Him, He was put to death, raised up, and exalted to the Father's right hand, from which He sent the Holy Spirit with new prominence upon the church. Before Christ's coming . . . the prominence of God the Father; during the days of Christ's earthly life . . . the prominence of God the Son; and since the ascension of the Son . . . the prominence of God the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we live in a unique, climactic period of redemptive history, the days of the Spirit. Just as Israel of old had a special responsibility to know and honor God as Father in the oneness of His nature, and just as the people of Israel had a special responsibility to know and honor Jesus as the Son of God in

the days of His flesh, so now we have a special responsibility to know and honor the Holy Spirit. "The sin of despising His Person and rejecting His Work now is of the same nature with idolatry of old and with the Jews' rejection of the Person of the Son" (Owen). How thankful we should be that we were born (owing to no virtue in us whatsoever!) in a day when the fullness of God's nature as three in one has been revealed and when the various ministries of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have been displayed and offered for our experience.

The Holy Spirit Is a Person

First of all, the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. Not power.

- ***"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***
 - This is important to grasp. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit is a He. "He" is a personal pronoun. He is knowable. He is just like Jesus.
- ***"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acts 13:2 ESV***
 - Did you notice what that said? According to this passage, the Holy Spirit speaks. He talks. He says something and gives instructions for what he wants to be done with Saul and with Barnabas.
- ***"these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 ESV***
 - The Holy Spirit knows things. He has a mind.
- ***"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30 ESV***
 - This passage tells us that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, which is an emotion. So, the Holy Spirit has emotions.
- ***"All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." 1 Corinthians 12:11 ESV***
 - Now, this term for "will" is the Greek term "boulomai." It's only used of persons in the entire New Testament, and, interestingly enough, in Matthew 11:27, it tells us that Jesus has a "boulomai," a will, and in Hebrews 6:17, it tells us that the Father has a "boulomai." The Father has a will. The Holy Spirit has a will, He makes decisions.

The Holy Spirit has the attributes of God.

- ***"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2 ESV***
 - The Spirit is a Spirit of life. Only God is the giver of spiritual life, abundant life, eternal life. That comes from God, and the Spirit is said to be a Spirit of life.
- ***"Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?" Isaiah 40:13-14 ESV***

- o According to this passage, the Holy Spirit is omniscient, all-knowing, just like the Father and the Son.
- ***“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!” Psalm 139:7-8 ESV***
 - o The Holy Spirit, according to the psalmist, is omnipresent. He’s everywhere at once. The psalmist cannot escape the Spirit no matter where he goes.
- ***“You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.” Nehemiah 9:20 ESV***
- ***“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!” Psalm 143:10 ESV***
 - o According to these two passages, the Holy Spirit is good.
- ***“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Hebrews 9:14 ESV***
 - o The Holy Spirit is said to be eternal. Now, nothing is eternal except for God.
- ***“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?” Hebrews 10:29 ESV***
 - o He is the Spirit of grace.
- ***“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 ESV***
 - o The Holy Spirit gives gift for the GOOD of the church.
- ***“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***
 - o The Holy Spirit is and only speaks truth, just like Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life; and just like the Father who cannot lie. So, the Spirit is truth.

The Holy Spirit is God

Not only is the Spirit described as a person who shares in the attributes of God, but the Spirit is also identified with God and specifically called God by the New Testament writers.

- ***“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 ESV***
 - o Multiple times in this passage, the Holy Spirit is called “the Lord.” In the Septuagint, which was translated by Jewish scholars even before the time of Jesus, the word “Yahweh,” which is the name God used of Himself with Moses at the burning bush, was translated with the Greek word “kyrios.” The New Testament writers identified Jesus as “kyrios” in multiple places, but in 2 Corinthians 3:17–18, the word “kyrios” is used of the Holy Spirit. This signifies that the Holy Spirit is Lord, is “kyrios,” is Yahweh, is God.
- ***“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” 1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV***
 - o The Spirit indwells you. God is in you. “Spirit” is defined as “God.”

- ***“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”” Acts 5:3-4 ESV***
 - You see, the Holy Spirit is called “God” by Peter in this passage. Peter said that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and thus lied to God. Peter equates the Spirit with God Himself.
 - He’s not merely the force or power of God. He is a person distinct from the Father and the Son who exhibits the attributes of God and is called “God.”