

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In studying what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, the first thing to be grasped is His personality. The chief doctrine of Christianity is its doctrine of God, and this is the doctrine of the Trinity. God has revealed Himself as one God in three Persons, and of these Persons, the Third is the Holy Spirit.

One of the most fundamental things in an appreciation of the Holy Spirit and His work is a recognition of the fact of His personality. A person is one who possesses life, thought, volition, action, individuality, character, and influence. These characteristics pertain to God the Father. He lives, He thinks, He wills, and He acts. He has a separate individuality; He has a particular character; and He possesses influence. These characteristics also pertain to the Son. And the same characteristics pertain to the Holy Spirit.

It is not necessary that we should see a person, or hear him speak, or look upon the immediate products of his actions, in order that we may be assured of his personality.

A person is a being who knows, feels, and wills. A person can be approached or shunned, trusted or doubted, adored or insulted, loved or hated. The doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit is of the highest importance to those of us who are Christians from the standpoint of:

1. Worship.

If the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, and He is, and we think of Him as a force, an attribute, or as an impersonal influence, then we are robbing a divine Person of the worship which is his due. We are also robbing Him of the confidence, the love, the surrender, and the obedience which rightly belong to Him. Do you worship the Holy Spirit? "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." It is one thing to sing words, and another to realize the meaning and the force of them.

2. Experience.

Have you made that all-too-common mistake of feeling that the Holy Spirit is only a divine influence in the world rather than a divine Person? If you are to be an effective Christian worker, you must discard the idea that He is only a divine influence in the world. He is a living Person in whose very presence you are every minute. He is just as much a person as is God the Father, or as is God the Son. He both hears and sees you in every word you speak and every move you make. A full realization of this will mean a transformation in your life and in your Christian service. The Holy Spirit is not a mere "Something", but a divine "Someone". Once the truth of His personality and work are realized, there opens up to one a life of blessedness and power.

3. Practice.

If you think of the Holy Spirit as a mere influence or power, then your thought will be, "How can I get hold of that influence or power and use it?" If you think of the Holy Spirit as a divine Person, then your thought will be, "How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?" Thinking of Him as an influence leads to self-confidence and self-exaltation. Thinking of Him as a Person leads to self-renunciation and self-abnegation and self-humiliation.

Why is the word, Holy, applied to the Spirit? There must be a reason for this adjective's being applied to Him some 100 times. Why is the Spirit thus described? He is essentially Holy in character. Holiness is not only one of His attributes as a member of the God-Head, but it is a part of His very being. He is Holy. He came from a Holy God. He is in the world to represent the Holy Saviour. "He shall glorify me." John 16:14. He strives to transform us into holy people and advance all holy living through His indwelling and dominion.

The Holy Spirit is the "Third Person of the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, of the same substance and equal in power and glory, and is, together with the Father and the Son to be believed in, obeyed, worshiped throughout all ages." The Holy Spirit is spoken of as being "Third" not in any sense of inferiority, for no one Person in the Trinity is inferior to another. All Three are coequal and coeternal. He is spoken of as being "Third" because of His manifestation and work. The order of divine performance is, from the Father—through the Son—by the Holy Spirit. He is just as real, as loving, as wise, as tender, as strong, as faithful, and as worthy of our love and service as Christ. He is here to be to us what Christ was to the Apostles.

I. The Holy Spirit Is Referred to As A Person.

Personal pronouns are used in speaking of Him. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you" John 16:14. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" John 15:26. "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" John 16:7. "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" John 16:8. "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 show you things to come" John 16:13.

II. The Holy Spirit Possesses Personal Characteristics.

1. He Has Life.

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the face of the waters" Gen. 1:2.
"He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" Galatians 6:8.

2. He Has a Mind.

The Holy Spirit knows the Father and His will; He knows the Son and His love; He knows us and our needs. "And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit for He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" Romans 8:27. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the Spirit of man which is in Him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" I Corinthians 2:10-11.

3. He Has a Will.

According to I Corinthians 12:11, it is the Holy Spirit who determines who shall receive His gifts. He is sovereign in their bestowment, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will".

III. The Holy Spirit Performs As A Person.

1. He Hears.

"Whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." John 16:13.

2. He Speaks.

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." Acts 8:29. "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them doubting nothing: for I have sent them." Acts 10:19-20.

3. He Prays.

"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" Romans 8:26.

4. He Teaches.

"For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" Luke 12:12. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" John 14:26.

5. He Guides.

"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth" John 16:13.

6. He Comforts.

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied" Acts 9:31.

7. He Witnesses.

"The Spirit Himself Beareth witness with out spirit, that we are the children of God" Romans 8:16.

8. He Strives With Men.

"And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man" Genesis 6:3.

9. He Calls to the Ministry.

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" Acts 13:2.

10. He Sets Pastors Over Churches.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood". Acts 20:28.

IV. The Holy Spirit Can Be Treated As A Person.

1. He Can Be Lied To.

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" Acts 5:3.

2. He Can Be Tempted.

"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" Acts 5:9.

3. He Can Be Resisted.

"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit" Acts 7:51.

4. He Can Be Grieved.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" Ephesians 4:30.

Language has no meaning if the Holy Spirit is not a Person, inasmuch as Christ repeatedly employed the masculine pronoun in speaking of Him.