



The Holy Spirit

There's a lot of writing about God, Christ, the church but not so much about the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, this is why there is much misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit. Everybody has their own experiences, ideas, speculations about the Holy Spirit but most don't understand what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. The importance of this study concerning the Holy Spirit is emphasized by the fact that there are over 400 references in the Bible that teach us who He is and what He does.

WHO IS HE?

Most don't know or at least have a distorted view of who He is. Do you know who He is?

He is spirit.

Many envision the Holy Spirit as some strange force or mysterious ghost that is better felt than told. Some of this no doubt comes from the old translation, Holy Ghost, but the word is spirit.

It is no different than spirit in [John 4:23-24](#), "God is spirit." That is His nature. The angels are spirits ([Heb. 1:14](#)). We have a spirit ([Zec. 12:1](#)). So, the Holy Spirit is not a physical being but a spiritual being. He is not of this world, earthly, material or physical but beyond this world, invisible to the human eye. He is spirit.

He is a person.

The Bible uses personal pronouns to speak of the Holy Spirit...He, Him, His. He is not some glorified it. The Holy Spirit is not a mere force or power. He is not an element like vapor or water. He is not the Bible. Just like our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is a person.

He is treated as a person. Like a person, He can be blasphemed ([Mat. 12:31-32](#)), lied to ([Acts 5:3](#)), resisted ([Acts 7:51](#)) and insulted ([Heb. 10:29](#)).

He has attributes only a person could have. He has intelligence. He instructs ([Neh. 9:20](#)). He speaks ([John 6:13](#); cf. [1 Tim. 4:1](#); [Rev. 2:7](#)), teaches, reminds ([John 14:26](#)), testifies ([John 15:26](#)), convicts ([John 16:8](#)) and guides ([John 16:13-15](#)). He forbids ([Acts 16:6-7](#)). He leads ([Rom. 8:14](#)), witnesses ([Rom. 8:16](#)), intercedes ([Rom 8:26](#)) and has a mind ([Rom. 8:27](#)). He searches, knows and teaches ([1 Cor. 2:10-13](#)).

He has feelings. He loves ([Rom. 15:30](#)), grieves ([Eph. 4:30](#); cf. [Isa. 63:10](#)) and yearns jealously ([Jam. 4:5](#)).

He has a will. In [1 Corinthians 12:11](#), Paul describes the Holy Spirit's role in distributing spiritual gifts: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."

Here the Holy Spirit is seen “deciding” what gifts to give to each person. In other words, the Holy Spirit has a will.

He is one of the three divine persons of the one God.

God is much more complex than many realize. In fact, our finite minds will never be able to fully comprehend the infinite God. There is only one God ([Mat. 12:29](#); [Rom. 3:30](#); [Jam. 2:19](#)) but the one God is three persons (cf. 1 John 5:7 “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” Though this passage is not a part of the original inspired text, it does reflect the understanding of the early church).

Look how [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) speaks of God. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” “LORD” is Yahweh. This is the name used exclusively for the God of the Bible. “God” is Elohim [In Hebrew, the singular word for God is El, the dual tense is Elah, and to indicate three or more the word Elohim is used. Elohim is the word translated “God” in [Genesis 1:1](#)]. It is plural in number, indicating that Yahweh is a plurality of persons. “One” is a compound unity [The Hebrew word for God in the plural, “Elohim”, is used again in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#). The Hebrew word for “one” is “echad” which is a compound unity rather than the word “yacheed” which is an absolute one.]. Yahweh, our God, is a plurality of persons that form a compound unity (as in [Gen. 2:24](#) “the two shall become one flesh”).

We know from the Bible that God is three persons, or a tri-unity. Just as the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is one of those three divine persons. His divinity and distinct identity are demonstrated by His association with the Father and the Son ([Mat. 28:19](#); [Luke 3:21-22](#); [John 14:16-17](#); [16:7-11](#); [Rom. 15:30](#); [2 Cor. 13:14](#); [1 Pet. 1:2](#); [Jude 20-21](#); cf. [1 John 5:7](#)).

Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of God. He is eternal ([Heb. 9:14](#)), omniscient (He searches all things...He knows the things of God – [1 Cor. 2:10-14](#); cf. [Acts 15:18](#) “Known to God from eternity are all His works”), omnipotent ([Mic. 3:8](#) – “I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD”; [Luke 1:34-37](#) – speaks of the Holy Spirit as the power of the Highest, explaining “with God nothing will be impossible”; [Rom. 15:19](#) “in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God”) and omnipresent (Where can I go from Your Spirit? – [Psa. 139:7-10](#)).

There are some Scriptures in the Old Testament that refer to God. In the New Testament the same Scriptures are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit is God. [Isaiah 6:8-10](#) refers to the Lord speaking. [Acts 28:25-27](#) quotes the same verse, but says the Holy Spirit said it. In [Jeremiah 31:31-33](#) the LORD [Yahweh] made a covenant. In [Hebrews 10:15-17](#) it says the Holy Spirit made the covenant. [Psalm 95:6-11](#) speaks of hearing the voice of the LORD God. [Hebrews 3:7-11](#) refers to the Holy Spirit speaking there.

In [Acts 5](#), the apostle Peter equates the Holy Spirit with God. He said that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit but then added, “You have not lied to men but to God” (vv.3-4).

The apostle Paul simply wrote, “Now the Lord is the Spirit” ([2 Cor. 3:17](#)).

He is called the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the LORD [Yahweh], the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Truth and the Helper [Comforter].

Only a divine person could be called by these names. They reflect His spiritual nature, His person-hood and His divinity. Holiness and truth are two unique characteristics of God emphasized in two of these names. The Holy Spirit is the promised Helper or Comforter, the "parakletos", which means, "One who comes alongside of to help". The Holy Spirit is always with us, ready and able to help us.

HOW WAS HE INVOLVED IN THE CREATION OF THIS UNIVERSE?

Perhaps, you have never thought about it but the Bible does reveal the fact that the Holy Spirit, along with the heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, was Himself personally involved in the creation of this world.

He was involved in the creation of the heavens and the earth *from the beginning*.

In [Genesis 1:1](#) the word translated "God" is plural in number. This does not mean that there is more than one God. The Bible clearly teaches that "there is only one God" ([Jam. 2:19](#)), but as we have already learned the one God is a compound unity of three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. [Genesis 1:1](#) indicates that these three persons are working together in perfect unity to bring this world into existence.

Creation had only just begun. More work had to be done before it would be completed.

He was involved in *completing the work of creation in the heavens and on the earth by forming and filling them*.

[Genesis 1:2](#) tells us that "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Imagine the earth surrounded by water in the darkness of infinite space. That is what it was like in the beginning.

The Holy Spirit was "hovering" over the waters around the earth. This word is used in two other places in the Bible.

[Deu 32:11](#) *As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers [flutters – KJV] over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, Carrying them on its wings*

[Jer 23:9](#) *My heart within me is broken Because of the prophets; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, And like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the LORD, And because of His holy words.*

The Holy Spirit was there and ready to act, to move and shake, "rock n'roll", "shock and awe" – not to destroy but to form and to fill the earth, to complete the work of creation.

As we read on in [Genesis 1](#), we learn how that God turned on the light, opened the sky in the midst of the waters, gathered the waters on the earth into the seas, caused the earth to bring forth grass, herbs and fruit trees with seeds to reproduce after their own kind, set the sun, moon and stars in outer space for signs, seasons, days and years, filled the water with all kinds of sea creatures and the air with all kinds of winged birds so that they could multiply, brought forth cattle, creeping things and beasts from the earth, and finally created man in His own image to have dominion over all the other creatures of the earth.

Note [Genesis 1:26](#). Here “God” is plural as in [Genesis 1:1](#), and the plural pronouns, “us” and “our”, are used to speak of the three persons of the one God. This is not God and His angels. Humans were not made in the image of the angels but in the image of God ([v. 27](#)). The first man was made from that which already existed, the dust of the ground ([2:7](#)), and the first woman from the man (vv. [21-23](#)).

All was spoken into existence by the word of the LORD and it stood fast ([Psa. 33:6-9](#)). God created it and sustains it by His word ([Heb. 1:3](#)). This is what we sometimes call the laws of nature (like the laws of gravity, the laws of reproduction after their own kind) but they all came from God. Only He can intervene and set aside the laws of nature (e.g. flood, miracles). One day He will bring it all to an end ([2 Pet. 3:10-11](#)).

It is clear from the Genesis account that the Holy Spirit was involved in the creation, the forming and the filling of the heavens and the earth. The Bible elsewhere confirms and elaborates on this involvement of the Holy Spirit in creation.

[Job 26](#) describes the power of God. In [verse 7 and 10](#), he takes us back to creation and in [verse 13](#) tells us this was all done by His Spirit: “By His Spirit He adorned the heavens...”

In [Job 33](#), Elihu reminds Job of how the Spirit of God made him (vv. [1-4](#); cf. [32:8](#)).

In [Psalm 104](#), we read of the awesomeness of God as demonstrated in His creation (vv. [1-29](#)). [Verse 30](#) tells that it was all done by the Holy Spirit: “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth.”

Yes, the Holy Spirit was personally involved in this finishing work of creating and making the world a habitable place, organizing, arranging, beautifying, forming and filling the earth.

HOW WAS HE INVOLVED IN THIS WORLD AFTER CREATION?

The Holy Spirit did not cease to work. He had a prominent role throughout the Old Testament.

He strove with man before the flood.

- [Gen. 6:3](#)
- Christ preached to them by the Spirit who was in Noah ([1 Pet. 3:18-20](#); cf. [1:10-12](#); [2 Pet. 2:5](#)).

He enabled Joseph to interpret dreams, which played an integral part in preserving Jacob’s family from famine.

- Pharaoh recognized the Spirit of God was in Joseph because he could interpret dreams ([Gen. 41:38](#)).

He helped Israel in the wilderness.

- He was with Israel when they came out of Egypt and remained with them ([Hag. 2:5](#)).

- God gave them His good Spirit to instruct them ([Neh. 9:20](#)).
- He enabled the workers of the tabernacle in all kinds of craftsmanship ([Exo. 31:1-11](#); [35:30-35](#)).
- He was given to 70 elders of Israel to help them share with Moses the burden of the people and to prophesy ([Num. 11:16-17](#), [25-29](#)).
- He came upon Balaam with oracles from God concerning Israel and her enemies ([Num. 24:2](#)).

He was in Joshua, Moses' successor.

- [Num. 27:18](#)

He moved and empowered the judges of Israel.

- He came upon Othniel ([Jud. 3:10](#)), Gideon ([6:34](#)), Jephthah ([11:29](#)) and Samson, repeatedly ([13:25](#); [14:6](#), [19-20](#); [15:14](#); the secret of his strength).

He came upon the first kings of Israel.

- He came upon King Saul to make him a prophet of God ([1 Sam. 10:6](#), [10-11](#); [11:6](#)).
- He came upon David and departed from Saul ([1 Sam. 16:13-14](#)).
- He came upon King Saul and his messengers and they prophesied ([1 Sam. 19:18-24](#)).
- He came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, to join forces with David when he was a fugitive from King Saul ([1 Chr. 12:18](#)).
- He spoke through King David ([2 Sam. 23:2](#)).
- David pled that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him (viz. when he sinned with Bathsheba) ([Psa. 51:11](#)).
- David acknowledges the omnipresence of God's Spirit ([Psa. 139:7](#)).
- David pled for God's Spirit to lead him in obedience ([Psa. 143:10](#)).
- He gave the plans for the Temple to King David ([1 Chr. 28:11-12](#)), which he passed on to Solomon (vv. [19-21](#)).

He protected Elijah and took him into heaven.

- He would carry Elijah to some safe place away from Ahab and Jezebel ([1 Kin. 18:12](#)).
- He was thought by some to have cast Elijah on some mountain or into some valley, but he had been taken into heaven ([2 Kin. 2:16](#)).

He prophesied through many different men.

- He came upon Azariah with a message from God to encourage King Asa ([2 Chr. 15:1](#)).
- He came upon Jahaziel, a Levite, with a message from God to assure Judah in their battle against Moab and Ammon ([2 Chr. 20:14](#)).
- He came upon Zechariah, the priest, and he prophesied ([2 Chr. 24:20](#)).
- He was in the prophets to testify against Israel when they became disobedient ([Neh. 9:30](#)).

He prophesied through Isaiah and was mentioned in Isaiah's prophecies.

- He would rest upon the Rod and the Branch of Jesse with wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD ([Isa. 11:1-2](#)).
- Rebellious Israel devised plans but not of God's Spirit ([Isa. 30:1](#)).
- He would be poured out upon Israel again to bless them ([Isa. 32:15](#)).
- He would gather Edom as a possession for Israel ([Isa. 34:16](#)).
- Isaiah asked, "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has taught Him?", implying no one ([Isa. 40:13](#)).
- He would be put upon the LORD's Servant and Elect One ([Isa. 42:1](#)).
- He would be poured out upon Israel's descendants ([Isa. 44:3](#)).
- He sent Isaiah for the LORD ([Isa. 48:16](#)).
- He would raise up a standard against the enemy ([Isa. 59:19](#)).
- He was upon Isaiah and would not depart from his mouth ([Isa. 59:21](#)).
- He would be upon Jesus Christ ([Isa. 61:1-3](#); cf. [Luke 4:16-21](#)).
- He was grieved by Israel when they rebelled against the LORD ([Isa. 63:10](#)).
- He was put within the Israelites ([Isa. 63:11](#)).
- He leads the LORD's people, just as He causes the beast to rest in the valley ([Isa. 63:14](#)).

He prophesied through Ezekiel and was mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecies.

- He entered Ezekiel, spoke to him and set him on his feet ([Eze. 2:2](#)).
- He lifted Ezekiel up and took him away ([Eze. 3:12, 14](#)).
- He entered Ezekiel ([Eze. 3:24](#)).

- He stretched out the form of a hand, and took Ezekiel by a lock of his hair, lifted him up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem to the door of the north gate ([Eze. 8:3](#)), then to the East gate ([11:1](#)).
- He fell upon Ezekiel and told him words to speak ([Eze. 11:5](#)).
- He lifted Ezekiel up and brought him in a vision into Chaldea, to those in captivity ([Eze. 11:24](#)).
- The LORD would put His Spirit within the Israelites and cause them to walk in His statutes ([Eze. 36:27](#)).
- The LORD brought Ezekiel out in the Spirit of the LORD and set him down in the midst of the valley, full of bones ([Eze. 37:1](#)).
- The LORD would put His Spirit within the Israelites and bring them into their own land ([Eze. 37:14](#)).
- The LORD would pour out His Spirit on the house of Israel ([Eze. 39:29](#)).
- He lifted Ezekiel up and brought Him into the inner court of the temple ([Eze. 43:5](#)).

He was in Daniel.

- King Nebuchadnezzar said the Spirit of the Holy God was in Daniel and that he was able to interpret his dream ([Dan. 4:8, 9, 18](#)).
- Belshazzar's wife said the Spirit of the Holy God was in Daniel and that he had light, understanding and wisdom ([Dan. 5:11](#)).

He was mentioned by the Minor Prophets.

- The LORD would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh ([Joel 2:28-32](#)).
- The LORD asked the house of Jacob, "Is the Spirit of the LORD restricted?", implying they could not stop Him from destroying them ([Micah 2:7](#)).
- Micah was full of power by the Spirit of the LORD ([Micah 3:8](#)).
- Not by might nor by power but by the LORD's Spirit, Zerubbabel would be able to finish rebuilding the temple ([Zec. 4:6](#)).
- He was given rest by those who go toward the north country (viz. inflicting judgments upon Babylon) ([Zec. 6:8](#)).
- Israel refused to hear the law and the words the LORD sent by His Spirit through the former prophets ([Zec. 7:12](#)).

- “But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit?” [Mal. 2:15](#); cf. [Job 33:4](#)). [The prophet recalls them (as our Lord does in His argument with the Jews on the same subject, ([Mark 10:2-9](#) to the original institution of marriage and relation of the sexes. “Did not He (God) make one (one man, [Gen. 2:7](#) and out of him one woman, vv. [21-23](#), and the two "one flesh" v. [24](#))? And (yet) the residue of the spirit (of life, comp. [Gen. 7:22](#) "the breath of the spirit of life"; [Job 33:4](#): "The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life") was His (so that He could, had it pleased Him, have created, for example, one man and many women). And why (did He make) the one? He sought (what only by the purity and integrity of the marriage bond can be secured) a godly seed.”]

The Holy Spirit was actively involved with mankind both before and after the flood. He was especially involved in the nation of Israel from its beginning, through the wilderness into the promised land, during the days of the judges and the kings. He sent prophets to teach, to encourage and to warn them. He spoke of their captivity, their restoration and the coming of Christ.

HOW WAS HE INVOLVED IN THE EARTHLY LIFE OF CHRIST?

We learned before in the Old Testament how that the Holy Spirit would come upon Christ when He came to the earth. In the New Testament we can learn just how the Holy Spirit was involved in the earthly life of Christ.

He was involved in the birth of Christ.

- [Luke 1:15](#)
- [Mat. 1:18-25](#); [Luke 1:35](#); [John 1:14](#) (cf. [Gen. 3:15](#); [Isa. 7:14](#))
- [Luke 1:41, 64](#)
- [Luke 2:25-27](#)

He was involved in the baptism of Christ.

- [Mat. 3:16](#); [Mark 1:10](#); [Luke 3:22](#); [John 1:32-34](#)

He was involved in the temptations of Christ.

- [Mat. 4:1](#); [Mark 1:12](#); [Luke 4:1](#)

He was involved in the ministry of Christ.

- [Luke 4:14-21](#); [10:21](#)
- [Mat. 12:15-21](#) (cf. [Isa. 42:1-9](#))

- [Mat. 12:28](#)
- [John 3:34](#)
- [Acts 1:1-2; 10:38](#)

He was involved in the death of Christ.

- [Heb. 9:13-14](#)

He was involved in the resurrection of Christ.

- [Rom. 8:11](#)

WHAT IS BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

There is much confusion about this subject today. It is important that we know what the Bible has to say about baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was prophesied by John the Baptist ([Matthew 3:1-12](#)).

This passage speaks of three baptisms.

- John's baptism in water (vv. [1, 5-7, 11](#)).
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit (v. [11](#)).
- Baptism in fire (vv. [7, 10-12](#); cf. [Rev. 20:14-15, 21:8](#)).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit...

- It was a promise, not a command.
- It was administered by Christ, not man.
- It was to be received by some, but not all.

[The "Who?, How?, Why?" was revealed in the historical fulfillment recorded in the book of Acts.]

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was spoken of by Christ ([Acts 1:1-8](#)).

The apostles were to be baptized in the Holy Spirit at Jerusalem in a few days (vv. [4-5](#)).

The apostles would receive power and become witnesses (v. [8](#); cf. [Luke 24:48-49](#); [Acts 1:20-26](#); [10:38-42](#); also [Mat. 10:20](#); [Mark 13:11](#); [Luke 12:12](#)).

This is what Jesus had told them before (vv. [4-5](#); cf. [John 14:16-17, 25-26](#); [15:26-27](#); [16:1-15](#)).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was received by the apostles ([Acts 2](#)).

This happened to the apostles ([Acts 1:2, 4-5,8,26; 2:1-4, 7, 14, 37, 42, 43](#)).

- A sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind filled the house ([v. 2](#), not wind but as).
- Divided tongues, as of fire, sat upon each of them ([v. 3](#), not fire but as).
- They were all filled with [under the influence of] the Holy Spirit and spoke with other tongues.
- [languages] ([v. 4](#); cf. [Acts 2:5-11](#)). This was not gibberish, unintelligible babble but utterance (speech, words).
- The gospel was preached, and the church began (vv. [22-47](#)).

This was according to the prophecy of Joel (vv. [16-21](#)).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit was not for everyone, it was for the apostles. It did not save the apostles but enabled them to reveal the message of salvation and confirm that it was from God. As we learned from [Acts 2:38](#), salvation comes in obedience to that message of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is when the believer, repents, and upon the confession of his faith in the name of Jesus Christ is immersed in water for the remission of sins, that he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There is only one baptism today ([Eph. 4:5](#)), “the washing of water by the word” ([5:26](#)). The one baptism is the baptism the disciples of Christ were commissioned to administer to all nations until the end of the world ([Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16](#)). This is the baptism that saves us ([1 Pet. 3:21](#)).

WHAT IS THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS?

Miraculous power was not only promised to the apostles but to others as well ([Mark 16:17-18; Acts 2:16-18](#)). Such power was given to the church by the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

Only the apostles were empowered by the baptism in the Holy Spirit in [Acts 2](#), not the church ([Acts 2:43; 3:1ff; 5:12](#)).

Stephen is the first one not an apostle said to have performed miracles, but only after the apostles had laid their hands on him ([Acts 6:5-8](#)).

The second one not an apostle said to have performed miracles was Philip ([Acts 8:6](#)), and he had also received the laying on of the apostles’ hands ([Acts 6:5-6](#)).

The church in Samaria could not receive the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit until the apostles laid their hands on them ([Acts 8:5-21](#)).

The apostle Paul imparted miraculous gifts by the laying on of hands ([Acts 19:6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6](#)).

Paul lists nine different miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church at Corinth ([1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#)).

These gifts were necessary, because the NT was not yet completed ([Mark 16:20](#); [1 Cor. 2:4](#); [14:22-25](#); [Eph. 4:7-16](#); [Heb. 2:3-4](#)).

When the perfect New Testament was delivered ([2 Tim. 3:16-17](#); [Jam. 1:25](#); [2 Pet. 1:3](#); [Jude 3](#)), these gifts ceased, just as Paul had said they would ([1 Cor. 13:8-13](#)).

God did not intend for these miraculous gifts to last throughout all ages, once their purpose had been fully served. The miraculous gifts must have ceased no later than the time of the death of the last person who had apostolic hands laid upon him.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS?

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was only received by the apostles in [Acts 2](#). Others in the church received the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands as in the case of the Samaritans in [Acts 8](#). The case of Cornelius' household is exceptional, as they also received the baptism in the Holy Spirit ([Acts 11:15-17](#)).

The gospel had already been received by the Jews, Proselytes, and Samaritans, but the time had come for the gospel to be carried to the Gentiles ([Acts 2:2-9](#)).

Persecution had driven the Christians out of Jerusalem and scattered some of them even as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syria ([Act 8:1-5](#); [11:19-20](#)). Some of these would have been ready to preach to Greeks as well as Jews.

The Lord had called Saul of Tarsus, His chosen vessel for evangelizing the Gentile world ([Acts 9:1-19](#)).

A strong Gentile church was to be established in Antioch of Syria from which Saul (Paul) would soon be sent out to preach to Gentiles all over the Roman world ([Acts 15:22](#)).

God had to make the Jews and all men see that the Gentiles were also acceptable to Him ([Acts 10](#)).

An angel had appeared to Cornelius, instructing him to send for Peter (vv. [1-8](#)).

Peter had a vision revealing that no man was to be considered common or unclean (vv. [9-16](#)).

While Peter considered this vision, Cornelius' messengers had arrived, and the Spirit had revealed that he was to go with these men (vv. [17-23](#)).

When Peter began his sermon at the house of Cornelius he was convinced "that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (vv. [24-43](#)).

As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit came upon "the Gentiles" (vv. [44-46](#)).

Peter raised the question, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have

received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” and then, he commanded them to be baptized (vv. [47-48](#)).

Peter explained what happened to Cornelius and his household and the significance of it ([Acts 11:1-18](#)).

Cornelius and his household received the baptism in the Holy Spirit just as did the apostles (vv. [15-17](#)).

- Peter had to go all the way back to the beginning to find anything comparable to what happened here.
- This was not a usual or ordinary occurrence, but exceptional.

This event forever settled the question of the Gentiles acceptability to God (vv. [17-18](#)).

- To refuse baptism to the Gentiles after such a demonstration would be outright rebellion against God.
- God had removed any objection anyone might have had to the reception of the Gentiles.
- When “the Gentile question” was brought up again by the Judaizers, God did not repeat the miracle. Peter simply appealed to the case of Cornelius ([Acts 15:7-11](#)).

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not for the purpose of saving Cornelius and his household, nor to show that they were saved, but rather to show that they could be saved.

- Cornelius and his household were to be saved by the words spoken by Peter ([Acts 11:14](#)).
- Peter promised remission of sins to the believer ([Acts 10:43](#); cf. [Acts 15:7-11](#)).
- Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ([Acts 10:48](#); cf. [Mark 16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [22:16](#)).

This all happened in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh and that salvation would be made possible for all men ([Joel 2:28-30](#); [Acts 2:14-21](#); cf. [Acts 2:39](#); [13:26,32](#); [Eph. 2:11-13](#); [3:6](#); [Gal. 3:14, 26-29](#); [Rom. 1:16](#)).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit received by Cornelius and his household was for the particular purpose of showing God’s acceptance of the Gentiles. The record shows it to be an exceptional experience like the apostles received in the beginning of the gospel to the Jews. It was not received by any others, but anyone can receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit by obeying the gospel of Christ.

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTS 2:38-39?

It is a promise for all people.

[Acts 2:39](#) reads, “For the promise is to you [Jews] and to your children [for generations to come], and to all who are a far off [every nation on earth; cf. [Eph. 2:13, 17](#)], as many as the Lord our God will call [cf.

[Mat. 28:18-20](#); [Mark 16:15-16](#); [Luke 24:46-48](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [Col. 1:23](#); [2 The. 2:14](#)].” The gift of the Holy Spirit is for all of us; it is for you!

It is received in obedience to the gospel.

[Acts 2:37-38](#) teach us that there is something we must do to receive the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. [Mat. 7:21](#); [Acts 22:16](#); [2 The. 1:7-10](#); [Heb. 5:8-9](#)). God wants you to have the gift of the Holy Spirit, but you must obey the gospel to receive it!

It is that which the Holy Spirit gives so that we may obtain eternal life.

This is what the world had been waiting for since the beginning when it was first promised that Christ would defeat Satan ([Gen. 3:15](#)). It was the blessing of all nations through Christ that God had promised to Abraham ([Gen. 12:3](#)). It was the promise of Christ’s coming to bless all people that was prophesied throughout the OT. Christ had to live a perfect life, be crucified for our sins, be buried in the tomb, be raised on the third day and finally ascend back into heaven before the promise could be fulfilled and the gift of the Holy Spirit could be given ([John 7:39, 16:7](#); [Acts 2:17, 33, 38](#); [Gal. 3:13-14](#)).

In [Acts 2:38](#), Peter uses a figure of speech called metonymy, where one thing is put for another (e.g. “Let me give you a hand [help]”, “The White House [President’s administration] said today...”). The Bible often uses this figure of speech (e.g. [Proverbs 10:20](#) “The tongue [words, speech] of the righteous is choice silver.”; [Pro. 20:1](#) “Wine [intoxication] is a mocker, Strong drink [intoxication] is a brawler...”; [1 Cor. 10:21](#) “You cannot drink the cup [fruit of the vine] of the Lord and the cup [drink] of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table [unleavened bread] and of the table [food] of demons.). In [Acts 8](#) the Holy Spirit is put for the miraculous gifts received by the laying on of the apostles’ hands ([Acts 8:12-20](#)). In [Acts 2:38](#), the Holy Spirit [the giver] is put for that which He gives [the effect, the influence, the gift] to all people who obey the gospel.

This is further illustrated when you compare [Luke 11:13](#) with [Matthew 7:11](#). Christ told them to pray for the Holy Spirit because of the good things that He would bring. The Holy Spirit and good things are used interchangeably in these two passages. Also, compare [Mark 16:15-20](#), [Acts 3:19](#).

The miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit (including baptism in the Holy Spirit and the giving of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands) was necessary to reveal, confirm and preserve the message of the gospel through which we might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but these things were only temporary ([1 Cor. 13:8-10](#); [Jude 3](#)).

The gift of the Holy Spirit includes all that we need to obtain eternal life ([John 4:9-15](#); [7:37-39](#); [1 Cor. 12:13](#); [Rev. 22:17](#)). We are born of the Spirit ([John 3:5](#); [Gal. 4:6, 29](#)). We have the comfort of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 9:31](#)). The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 5:5](#)). We walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and mind the things of the Spirit; the Holy Spirit dwells in us; by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body; we are led by the Spirit; the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God; we have the firstfruits of the Spirit; the Spirit helps in our weaknesses and makes intercession for us; we bear the fruit of the Spirit ([Rom. 8](#); [1 Cor. 3:16-17](#); [6:19-20](#); [Gal. 5](#)). We have joy, peace and hope by the power of the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 15:13](#); [1 The. 1:6](#)). The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit ([1 Cor. 3:16-17](#)). We are washed, sanctified and justified in the Spirit ([1 Cor.](#)

[6:11](#); [2 The. 2:13](#); [1 Pet. 1:2](#)). Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit ([1 Cor. 6:19-20](#)). We are sealed with the Spirit and have the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee ([2 Cor. 1:22](#); [5:5](#); [Eph. 1:13-14](#)). The Spirit gives life ([2 Cor. 3:6](#)). We have the communion of the Holy Spirit ([2 Cor. 13:14](#)). We through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith ([Gal. 5:5](#)). We have access by one Spirit to the Father ([Eph. 2:18](#)), we are built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit ([2:22](#)), we are strengthened through God's Spirit in the inner man ([3:16](#)), we are filled with the Spirit ([5:18](#)), we have the sword of the Spirit, the word of God ([6:17](#)) and we pray in the Spirit ([6:18](#); [Jude 20](#)). We have the supply of the Spirit ([Phi. 1:19](#)), we have the fellowship of the Spirit ([2:1](#)), we worship God in the Spirit ([3:3](#)). We are to keep the gospel by the Holy Spirit that dwells in us ([2 Tim. 1:14](#)). We have the renewal of the Holy Spirit ([Tit. 3:5](#)). We are partakers of the Holy Spirit ([Heb. 6:4](#)). The Spirit yearns jealously for us ([Jam. 4:5](#)). When we are reproached for Christ, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us ([1 Pet. 4:14](#)). We have the anointing of the Holy Spirit ([1 John 2:20-27](#)); we know Christ abides in us and we in Him by the Spirit ([1 John 3:24](#); [4:13](#)); we have the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning the Son of God in us ([1 John 5:6-11](#)).

WHAT IS BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Jesus spoke of it ([Matthew 12:22-37](#); cf. [Mark 3:28-30](#); [Luke 12:8-10](#)). This is a difficult passage and horrifying to many.

It is to speak against the Holy Spirit. The term "blaspheme" literally means "to speak to hurt" or "to speak against" ([Mat. 12:32](#)). "He has an unclean spirit" ([Mark 3:30](#)).

It is unpardonable. Jesus said, "it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" ([Mat. 12:32](#)) and that he "never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" ([Mark 3:29](#)).

But, doesn't the Bible say that whoever believes in Jesus should not perish but have everlasting life ([John 3:16](#); [Rom. 5:6, 8](#); [1 Tim. 2:6](#); [Tit. 2:14](#); [Heb. 2:9](#); [1 John 2:2](#)) and that if we walk in the light the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin ([1 John 1:7](#)) and that if we confess our sins God will forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness ([1 John 1:9](#))? So, why is it that those who are guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven?

It is from an evil person's heart that refuses to be moved by the work of the Holy Spirit for their salvation. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable because it reveals an evil person's heart that refuses to be moved by the work of the Holy Spirit for their salvation ([Mat. 12:33-45](#)). Here Jesus condemned their generation because they would not believe even when Jesus was raised from the dead. This ties in well with the parable of Lazarus and his unbelieving brothers who would not repent even if God raised the dead ([Luke 16:30-31](#)). Such rejection of the truth and refusal to repent always leads to eternal condemnation, though the circumstances may be different with us today than those here in [Matthew 12](#). Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom and His teachings still apply to us, today, just as for example His teachings on the new birth ([John 3:1-36](#)) and church discipline ([Matthew 18:15-20](#)). No one can ever be forgiven when they refuse to believe on the Lord, repent of their sin and obey God's word (e.g. [Num. 15:30-31](#) [to sin knowingly, willfully and purposefully out of disdain and contempt for the word of the Lord]; [Psa. 19:13](#) [ruled by sin]; [Mat. 7:6](#) [high-handed rebellion]; [1 Tim. 4:1-2](#) [if you still have a conscience that bothers you, you are not guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit];

[Heb. 2:3-4](#) [have no regard for the gospel]; [3:12-4:2](#) [hardened by rebellion to the point of no return]; [6:4-8](#) [there is nothing left that can bring them back]; [10:26-31](#) [having rejected Christ there is no other means of salvation]; [12:15-17](#) [beyond the point of return], 25 [rejected the gospel, the only thing left to save them]; [2 Pet. 2:1, 10-15, 19-22](#) [worse condition because cannot be moved to salvation]; [1 John 5:16-17](#) [because they will not repent they will die in their sin]).

Perhaps, you have spoken against the Holy Spirit but have not gone beyond the point of no return. If so, it is not too late for you to turn to God in faith, penitence and obedience to His will. Do this before it is too late for you ([Isa. 55:6-8](#)).

HOW IS HE INVOLVED IN CONVERSION?

In this lesson we want to see what the Bible says about the involvement of the Holy Spirit in one's conversion to Christ. This is especially important because we are talking about our salvation, and because there is so much confusion about it. I have found in the Bible that there are at least four ways that the Holy Spirit is involved in our conversion to Christ.

He convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8).

This is done by the word of God. The Holy Spirit was sent to guide the apostles into all the truth ([John 16:8-13](#)). It is the truth that convicts ([Acts 2:37; 7:51-54](#)).

He baptizes us into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).

This passage does not teach that we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Only the apostles and Cornelius' household received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit did not convert them but was to empower the apostles to bear witness to Christ and to show that the Gentiles could be saved just as the Jews. This miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit was only temporary until the complete/perfect revelation of the New Testament was delivered ([1 Cor. 13; Jam. 1:25; Jude 3](#)). Now, there is only one baptism ([Eph. 4:5; 5:26](#)). It is the one commanded by Christ unto the end of the world ([Mat. 28:19](#)). It is the one all must receive to be saved ([Mark 16:15-16; 1 Pet. 3:21](#)). It is immersion in water for the remission of sins ([Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16](#)). This is the only baptism that is a part of our conversion to Christ.

So, we are not all baptized *in* the Holy Spirit, but we are all baptized *by* the Holy Spirit (cf. [1 Cor. 12:3, 9](#)). We are baptized by the the Holy Spirit through the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. [Acts 2:37-41, 47](#)). We are baptized by the Spirit into the one body (i.e. the body of Christ, His church; [Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4](#)).

He gives us a new birth (John 3:5).

Read the whole context (vv. [1-8](#)). In this passage, Jesus speaks of our conversion to Christ as a birth. Nicodemus thought he was talking about being born again physically, but Jesus described it as "of water and the Spirit" (v. [5](#)).

To be converted to Christ we must be born of water. This is an obvious reference to water baptism. When we are baptized, we are brought forth from the water. This was the only water that had anything to do with the kingdom. As we have already noticed, water baptism is essential to our salvation and puts us into one body, the body of Christ, His church which is the kingdom of God ([Mat. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13-](#)

[14](#); [Heb. 12:28](#)).

But, this is only part of the new birth. We must also be born of the Spirit. The new birth is not of the flesh (physical) but of the Spirit (spiritual). Like the wind, we do not see the Spirit, but we can hear Him. He does not speak to us directly, or by angels, or in visions and dreams, or by inspired men as He did in the past, because, as we noted before, we now have the faith once for all delivered unto us ([Jude 3](#)). We are born of water and the Spirit when we hear the gospel and are obedient to the gospel in baptism (cf. [1 Cor. 4:15](#); [Jam. 1:18](#)).

[Titus 3:5](#) is a good commentary on [John 3:5](#): God “saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”. It is easy to see the parallel between this and what Jesus said about the new birth, “born of water and the Spirit”. The new birth includes a washing of regeneration (rebirth) which refers to the cleansing of our sins in baptism and a renewing of the Holy Spirit (cf. [Rom. 6:4](#); [2 Cor. 5:17](#); [Eph. 2:10](#); [Col. 2:12](#); [3:9-10](#), “you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him”).

He sanctifies us (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 The. 2:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22).

This means “to make holy, purify or consecrate” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary). We are set apart from sin and the world to serve and glorify God by the Holy Spirit.

In [Romans 15:16](#), those to whom Paul had ministered the gospel.

In [1 Corinthians 6:11](#), the unrighteous Corinthians who had been washed (cleansed of their sins in baptism), sanctified (made holy) and justified (made right with God) by the Holy Spirit.

In [2 Thessalonians 2:13-14](#), the beloved brethren of the church in Thessalonica “for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice, salvation comes through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth which comes by the gospel.

In [1 Peter 1:2](#), “the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father [this speaks of God’s predetermined plan of salvation], in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience [to the gospel] and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [by which He ratified the gospel, and redeemed us from our sins].” God does not pick and choose Christians, but He has chosen to send the gospel to all the world, and those who obey that gospel will be saved but those who reject it will be condemned ([Mark 16:15-16](#)).

We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit in the same way that we are born of the Spirit, through our faith and obedience to the gospel in baptism. Take, as an example, the preaching of the gospel at Corinth: “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized” ([Acts 18:8](#)). Then, when Paul later wrote a letter to them, he addressed them as, “the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” ([1 Cor. 1:2](#)). We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit when we are called by the gospel and are baptized to wash away our sins, calling on the name of the Lord ([Acts 22:16](#)).

There is a verse that puts much of what we have learned all together: [1 Peter 1:22-25](#). In [verse 22](#), the word translated “purified” is the same word translated “sanctified” in the verses we have already

studied. As we had learned before, Peter here tells us it is “in obeying the truth through the Spirit”. [Verse 23](#) explains that this is also how we are “born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God” and [verse 25](#) tells us “this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you”. Jesus used the figure of seed to teach about the kingdom of God, saying, “The seed is the word of God” ([Luke 8:11](#)). When we obey the word of the gospel we are born of water and the Spirit and enter the kingdom of God. At the same time, the Holy Spirit renews the heart. One result of this is indicated by Peter, “sincere love of the brethren...from a pure heart.” The Holy Spirit convicts us, baptizes us, gives us a new birth and sanctifies us through our obedience to the truth of the gospel ([Rom. 1:16-17](#)). The Holy Spirit converts the soul through the power of the gospel when one is obedient to that gospel in baptism. There is no other way.

WHAT IS THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Bible often mentions the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (e.g. [Rom. 8:9-11](#); [1 Cor. 3:16-17](#); [6:19-20](#)). We do not deny that the Holy Spirit indwells those of us who are Christians, but we ask, “What is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?”

It is *not* miraculous.

As we noted previously, the miraculous outpourings of the Holy Spirit were only temporary until the Scriptures were completed ([Mark 16:20](#); [Heb. 2:3-4](#); [1 Cor. 13:8-10](#); [Jude 3](#)). We do not have a miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit, today. If we did we would be able to duplicate the miracles of the first century church including the ability to heal every kind of physical ailment immediately and completely, perform spectacular displays of power over the very laws of nature, raise the dead to life again and speak God’s mind in languages we do not know. There is no such demonstration of God’s miraculous power, today.

It is *not* mystical.

Some believe that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a better felt than told experience. They talk about what they feel in their hearts, a gentle nudge from the Spirit, instead of what the Bible says ([Jer. 17:9](#)). Such people are always looking for a sign to lead them, or a vision or a dream. All of this is entirely subjective and always leads to a dead end ([Pro. 14:12](#)). There is no such idea of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit presented anywhere in the Scriptures.

It is *not* in person.

Many have made the mistake of thinking that the Holy Spirit dwells in us in person. The Holy Spirit is a person, but He does not dwell in person in you, in me and every other Christian. He is in person, along with the Father and the Son, in heaven ([Rev. 1:4](#); [3:1](#); [4:5](#); [5:6](#); cf. [Zechariah 1:4](#)).

If someone were to say, like Paul did to the Corinthians, “You are in our hearts” ([2 Cor. 7:3](#)), we would all understand exactly what he meant by that and we would never think they were in their hearts in person. No, but they had thoughts of them. So, it is with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is not in person.

Imagine the ramifications of the Holy Spirit in person inside you. Would you not now have a human spirit and a divine Spirit? Would you not now be both human and divine? Would you not now become

totally under the control of the greater Spirit? Would it not then be impossible for you to exercise your free will, to sin and fall away from the Lord? A direct, immediate, person in person indwelling demands a direct, immediate, person in person influence. This is not what the Bible teaches about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

It is by means of the word of God.

It is by means of or through the word of God, the word of truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. This happens when we believe and obey the word of God. This is how He came into our lives and continues to live in us ([Acts 2:38, 41](#); [Gal. 3:2](#); [Jam. 1:18,21](#); [1 Pet. 1:22-25](#); [1 John 2:20, 24, 27](#); [3:8-10, 19, 22, 24](#); [4:12-13](#)). My father and mother literally live in me, not in person, but their DNA. I have been born of their seed. In the same way, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit literally live in me, not in person, but their spiritual DNA. I have been born of their spiritual seed, the word of God. They all three dwell in me by means of the word of God.

The Holy Spirit is truth, He gave us the words of truth ([John 14:17, 26](#); [15:26](#)) and in a very real sense, when the word of God dwells in you so does the Holy Spirit (cf. [Eph. 5:19](#); [Col. 3:16](#)). This is how we walk in the Spirit, live by the Spirit, are led by the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit ([Rom. 8](#); [Gal. 5](#)). Think about it. Where does fruit come from? A tree. Where does a tree come from? A seed. It is by means of the word of God that we are able to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus taught that the seed of the kingdom is the word of God ([Luke 8:11](#)) by which we bear fruit (v. [15](#)). When the seed is planted in one's heart, it is believed and obeyed, it brings forth a child of God. As the child of God continues to allow that seed to abide in him by faith and obedience he is transformed more and more into the image of God ([2 Cor. 3:18](#); [Jam. 1:21-25](#)). I might say, "I can see your father in you", because you resemble him. He is not in you in person, but you have been born of His seed. So, people will see God in us when His word truly dwells within us.

The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, the means by which the Holy Spirit enables us to stand against the devil ([Eph. 6:17](#)). It is the means by which the Holy Spirit is able to pierce into our very hearts ([Heb. 4:12](#)). It is the means by which the Holy Spirit is able to save our souls ([Jam. 1:21](#)). But, when we refuse to believe and obey the word of God we grieve ([Eph. 4:30](#)), quench ([1 The. 5:19](#)) and insult the Holy Spirit ([Heb. 10:29](#)) until He no longer lives in us. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is determined by what we do with God's word.

WHAT IS THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS 8:16?

This is a difficult passage for some and there are many different ideas about what it means, so let's take a close look at it to see what the Bible really says.

Four important facts from this passage:

1. There are *two witnesses*, the Holy Spirit and our spirit. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 8:9, 11, 14, 15](#)).

2. The Holy Spirit does not testify *to* our spirit but *with* (i.e. as well as, in addition to, at the same time as, in agreement with) our spirit. The two witnesses, the Holy Spirit and our spirit, are both giving testimony.
3. The testimony of both witnesses is that *we are children of God*. The Holy Spirit testifies that we are the children of God and so does our spirit. The witnesses agree with one another. Their testimony is the same.
4. The Holy Spirit *Himself* bears witness. He does not bear witness by means of someone or something else, but He bears witness Himself. This is something He does in person.

What it *is* and what it *is not*:

It is not by mystical feelings. Some say, “I know I am a child of God because I can feel it in my heart.” Others talk about how they can hear a whisper from the Holy Spirit inside of them. John Wesley described it this way, “An inward impression on my soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God.” But, the Bible warns us not to trust such mystical feelings ([Jer. 17:9](#); [Pro. 14:12](#)). All of this is entirely subjective. Such mystical, better felt than told, religion has no basis in Scripture. This passage says nothing about mystical feelings, a whisper, or inward impression. And, as we already noted it says nothing about the Spirit witnessing *to* our spirit at all.

It is not by miraculous signs. The Holy Spirit has used miraculous signs to bear witness to Christ and to confirm the gospel ([John 15:26-27](#); [Heb. 2:3-4](#)). [Romans 8:16](#) has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit witnessing of Christ and the gospel by miraculous signs. The Holy Spirit has finished that work ([Jude 3](#)). [Romans 8:16](#) refers to the testimony of the Holy Spirit that we are the children of God.

It is not by inspired prophets. The Holy Spirit has used inspired prophets to bear witness to us ([2 Pet. 1:21](#)), but in [Romans 8:16](#) the Holy Spirit is not bearing witness to us. And, as we have already noticed the inspired prophets have served their purpose and prophecy has ceased ([1 Cor. 13:8-10](#)).

It is not by the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit has and does bear witness to us by means of the Scriptures ([Heb. 10:15-17](#)) but in [Romans 8:16](#) the Holy Spirit is not bearing witness to us, nor is He using any means to testify.

It is by the Holy Spirit Himself.

It is not by mystical feelings, by miraculous signs, by inspired prophets, by the Scriptures, by anyone or anything else, but by the Holy Spirit Himself. All the other ideas are indirect, but this is direct, personal testimony by the Holy Spirit Himself, in person.

The Holy Spirit does not bear witness to us, but rather in agreement with our spirit. Both, the Holy Spirit and our spirit, testify that we are children of God. This testimony is made to the Father (cf. v. [15](#); [Gal. 4:6](#)). We may also add a third witness, Jesus Christ Himself ([Mat. 10:32-33](#)).

Someone may ask, “Why is this so important? Doesn’t God know who His children are?” Of course, He does ([2 Tim. 2:19](#)). But, these witnesses are given so that it may be established in heaven before God ([2 Cor. 13:1](#)). All this was done for us, so that amid our suffering we can be assured of our reward with

Christ ([Rom. 8:17-18](#)). We can take heart, knowing that it has been established by the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit that we are children of God!

WHAT IS THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The idea of the intercession of the Holy Spirit comes from [Romans 8:26-27](#). Here we read that “the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us”. This is an encouraging thought but there is some disagreement about what this passage teaches. So, let’s examine it closely.

The context: “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought,”

“Likewise” This points back to the sure and certain hope that sustains us in our suffering (vv. [18, 24-25](#)). As hope helps us in our weaknesses, so does the Spirit.

“the Spirit” The Spirit is the Holy Spirit mentioned several times in this chapter. Some have suggested that the Spirit refers to our spirit, but what comfort is it to know that we help ourselves? Here we have another Helper, the Holy Spirit.

“helps” Compare [Luke 10:40](#), where Martha told Jesus to tell Mary to help her. The word speaks of someone who takes one end of the load to help another carry it. So, the Holy Spirit helps us with our weaknesses.

“weaknesses” in mind or body that we all have as human beings.

“we do not know what we should pray for as we ought” The Bible teaches us what to pray for and how to pray but there are times when we are suffering so that we do not know what to ask for nor how to ask for it (see vv. [22-23](#) as the world suffers from the curse of sin, so we suffer, too). A dear Christian lady lost her child in a plane crash. I went by to visit her not long after she got the news and found her curled up on the floor. She was groaning, and weeping. Her pain was so deep that she could not express her feelings in words.

That’s the context. It is in those moments of weakness that we have help from the Holy Spirit.

The fact: “but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

“the Spirit” Again, the Holy Spirit, not our spirit. How could the human spirit intercede for itself?

“Himself” The Holy Spirit does this Himself, personally, directly and not through or by means of someone or something else.

“makes intercession for us” This means that the Holy Spirit speaks to God on our behalf. This is what the Holy Spirit does *for* us, not *to* us. He does not help us pray (i.e. give us the words to pray, interpret or translate our prayer) but He prays for us (with His own prayer). Jesus also intercedes for us ([Rom. 8:34](#)) and we are to make intercession for all men ([1 Tim. 2:1-2](#)) and pray for one another ([Jam. 5:16](#)). We are fortunate to have anyone pray for us, but we have the church, Jesus and the Holy Spirit!

“with groanings which cannot be uttered” The Holy Spirit identifies with our suffering and groans with us before God. When I am hurting, I may groan before God, but so does the Holy Spirit. Though the Holy Spirit is a divine person, He has feelings. He loves ([Rom. 15:30](#)), grieves ([Eph. 4:30](#); cf. [Isa. 63:10](#)) and yearns jealously ([Jam. 4:5](#)).

Jesus, who also intercedes for us, can groan with us ([Heb. 4:15](#)). At the death of Lazarus, Jesus groaned in the spirit and was troubled ([John 11:33](#)). Jesus wept (v. [35](#)).

We must all learn to groan with others before God and so to help them in their weaknesses ([Rom. 12:15](#)).

The groanings of the Holy Spirit could not be uttered, just as the inexpressible words that Paul heard in heaven could not be uttered ([2 Cor. 12:2-4](#)).

The intercession of the Holy Spirit is not the miraculous gift of “speaking in tongues”. When the apostles spoke in tongues, they spoke “as the Spirit gave them utterance” ([Acts 2:4](#)), but the groanings of the Holy Spirit could not be uttered. They spoke in languages that could be understood by the people who spoke those languages ([Acts 2:5-11](#)), but the unutterable groanings of the Holy Spirit were meant for God’s ears, not man’s.

The amazing fact is that the Holy Spirit personally pleads to God on our behalf with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The assurance: “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because [or, that] He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

“He who searches the hearts” This is God ([1 Chr. 28:9](#) “the LORD [Yahweh] searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts”; cf. [Psa. 94:11](#); [Jer. 17:10](#); [Acts 1:24](#); [15:8](#); [Rev. 2:23](#)). He knows everything in your heart and completely understands whatever your pain and suffering (cf. [Exo. 2:23-25](#) God heard, remembered, looked upon, acknowledged, and responded to Israel’s groaning by sending Moses to lead them out of their bondage).

“knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because [or, that] He makes intercession for the saints” When the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, God completely understands that, too.

“according to the will of God” The Greek simply says, “according to God”. The intercession of the Holy Spirit is in keeping with God’s person, nature, character, desire, will, order, design, plan and arrangement.

The assurance we have is that God knows our hearts and the mind of the Spirit, that He makes intercession for the saints.

Yes, in our weakness we have the Holy Spirit to help us. He, Himself, groans with us before God, along with Jesus Christ and all others who are interceding for us. There is a heavenly conversation about our suffering. We are not alone. We are not forgotten. God knows.

So, let us take heart. Do not become discouraged but trust the Lord in everything and with everyone. Keep on in faith.

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

The gift of tongues is discussed in only five places in the New Testament. Once by Jesus in [Mark 16](#), three times in the book of Acts, and once in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Let us examine these passages and then draw a few conclusions.

Mark 16:14-20

- The gift of tongues is new, not only in time but in kind. No one had ever received a gift of tongues just like this gift of tongues.
- It is one of five signs to confirm the gospel preached by the apostles. Once confirmed, no longer needed. If one of these signs continues, they all continue.
- This passage doesn't tell us who or how many in the church would receive this gift nor how it would be received by them.

Acts 2:1-11

- The gift of tongues was given to the apostles ([Acts 1:26; 2:7](#)) and they received it by the baptism in the Holy Spirit ([Acts 1:2-5, 8](#)).
- The gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages ([Acts 2:4, 5-11](#)).
- The gift of tongues did not save the apostles, but it did confirm their word, the gospel which they preached.

Acts 10:1-11:18

- The gift of tongues was given to Cornelius and his household ([Acts 10:44-48](#)) and they received it by the baptism in the Holy Spirit ([Acts 11:15-18](#)).
- The gift of tongues did not save Cornelius and his household, but it did confirm what Peter had preached concerning God's acceptance of all nations through faith ([Acts 10:34-43](#)), which included repentance unto life and baptism in the name of the Lord (cf. [Acts 2:38](#)).

Acts 19:1-7

- The gift of tongues was given to about twelve men who had received John's baptism, but only after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and when Paul had laid his hands upon them (vv. [5-6](#)).

- This was the only other way besides the baptism in the Holy Spirit that anyone ever received the gift of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12-14

- The gift of tongues was one of many other miraculous gifts possessed by the church in Corinth for the profit of all ([12:4-11](#)).
- The gift of tongues was not the greatest of these gifts, nor did everyone possess the gift of tongues. It was listed last, along with the interpretation of tongues ([12:10, 28-31](#)).
- The gift of tongues, as with all other gifts, was not profitable without love ([13:1-3](#)). Note that Paul did not say that he spoke with the tongues of angels, any more than he gave his body to be burned. He was only speaking hypothetically. As we already learned from [Acts 2](#), the gift of tongues was the language of men, not angels.
- The gift of tongues, along with the other miraculous gifts, would fail, cease, vanish away ([13:8](#)). This was to happen when that which is perfect had come ([13:9-10](#)). The New Testament was being revealed part by part, but when it was complete, the miraculous gifts were taken from the church. They had served their purpose and were no longer needed ([Jam. 1:25](#); [Jude 3](#)).
- The gift of tongues was not to be used in the church at Corinth without an interpreter, because they did not understand the language being spoken and were not being edified ([14:1-6](#)).
- The gift of tongues was helpful in the beginning of the church in Jerusalem where those of fifteen different nationalities had come together for Pentecost, but not in the local church at Corinth where they all spoke the same language (vv. [11-12, 15-19, 23-25, 27-28, 33](#)).

There are at least three conclusions we have made from these passages regarding the gift of tongues that I want to impress upon you again before we leave this lesson.

1. The gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages. One of the greatest deceptions of our day is the confusion of ecstatic gibberish with the miraculous gift of tongues. There is nothing miraculous about it and it does not come from the Holy Spirit. It is a psychological phenomenon that has been experienced by many throughout history. It was extensively practiced by the ancient pagan religions of the Greeks and Romans. It is found in many different denominations, today. A problem exists when each group claims what they have is from God and the other from the devil, since it is unintelligible sounds and there is no way to determine one from the other. It is also found completely outside of religion. It can be learned and imitated. It is found in psychic cases. It is strictly a human, psychological phenomenon.

2. The gift of tongues was only given by the baptism in the Holy Spirit and through the laying on of the apostles' hands. There is no way for anyone to receive the gift of tongues, today. When Paul wrote Ephesians, he said there is one baptism ([Eph. 4:5](#)), which he described as “a washing of water” ([5:26](#)),

not baptism in the Holy Spirit. The apostles, who received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, can no longer pass on the gift of tongues to others because they have all died. Therefore, there is no way for us to receive the gift of tongues, today.

3. The gift of tongues has ceased, along with the other miraculous gifts of the church. They have served their purpose in revealing and confirming the gospel of Christ and are no longer needed in the church. We now have the complete New Testament.

The gospel of Christ is God's power unto salvation ([Rom. 1:16](#)). Do you believe it? Will you obey it and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Not tongues, but God's promise of salvation, that comes with all you need to obtain eternal life. It can all be yours, today!

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT STILL EMPOWER THE CHURCH TO WORK MIRACLES OF HEALING?

There are many who claim to possess the same miraculous power as Jesus, the apostles and others had in the church you read about in your New Testament, but does God work miracles of healing through His church today as He once did? That is the question.

The issue is not yesterday, but today. All four accounts of the gospel describe numerous miracles Jesus performed by the power of the Holy Spirit. John tells us that these signs were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name ([John 20:30-31](#)). Jesus gave the power to do miracles to His apostles and to other disciples, as well ([Mat. 10](#); [Luke 10](#)). Before leaving this earth, Jesus promised miracles to the church, including the miraculous ability to lay hands on the sick and they would recover ([Mark 16:17-18](#)). The church at Corinth had gifts of healings ([1 Cor. 12:9](#)). But, as we have noticed repeatedly in these lessons on the Holy Spirit, this power was given for the revealing and confirming of the New Testament ([Mark 16:20](#); [Heb. 2:3-4](#)) and would fail, cease, vanish away when the New Testament was complete ([1 Cor. 13:8-10](#)). God did not continue this process repeatedly for generations to come but delivered the faith unto us once for all ([Jude 3](#)).

The issue is not a question of power. In the beginning, God miraculously created the first man and woman, but everyone else has been born into this world naturally. It is not that God no longer has the power to create us, but He no longer works that way. So, it is not that God doesn't have the power to work miracles of healing through His church, but that He no longer works in the church that way.

The issue is not a question of prayer for the sick. The Bible teaches us that there is great power in prayer ([Jam. 5:16](#)) and that God hears and answers our prayers ([1 John 5:14-15](#)) but does that mean that God will miraculously heal through the laying on of hands? We are to pray for bread but that doesn't mean that God will reach down out of the sky and hand us a loaf. You see, though we don't always know what He does or how He does it, we can know that God still heals in answer to our prayers.

The issue is not determined by testimonials but by the Bible. We must not be deceived by the many who claim to have been miraculously healed by someone when the Bible tells us that the church no longer has such power. In [Matthew 7: 21-23](#), people had prophesied, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works, but Jesus said they were workers of iniquity. In [Mark 13:22](#), Jesus said false prophets would show signs and wonders. In [Acts 8:9-11](#), Simon, the sorcerer fooled ALL the people of Samaria,

but his power was not from God. According to [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#), even Satan can work signs and lying wonders. Those who claim to have miracles of healing can easily be shown as fakes and frauds by a comparison of the miraculous healings of the New Testament with the healings performed today.

The miracle healers of the New Testament demonstrated the power of God in ways that *cannot* be demonstrated, today.

They healed all kinds of sickness, disease, injury and even raised the dead. Read [Matthew 8:16; 9:35; Luke 4:40;7:22; Acts 5:15-16](#). They healed a man with a withered hand ([Matthew 12:9-13, Mark 3:1-5, Luke 6:6-10](#)), another with a severed ear ([Luke 22:50-51](#)), a paralytic ([Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:17-25](#)), a woman with an issue of blood for 12 years that no doctors could help ([Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-29, Luke 8:43-46](#)), a man crippled from birth ([Acts 3:2-11; 14:8-10](#)), another bedridden for eight years ([Acts 9:33-34](#)). Jesus brought Lazarus back to life after he had been dead four days ([John 11](#)).

“The limitations of present day healers, however, is tragic to witness. Of 1400 modern cases of healings that were investigated, not one of an organic character was discovered; all supposedly cured were of a neurotic nature” (Herbert Lockyer, *The Healer and Healing Movements*, p. 46).

If anyone has miraculous power today let them restore a withered hand, replace a severed ear and resurrect the dead, like Jesus, His apostles and the church did in the New Testament.

They healed instantaneously. Read [Matthew 8:1, 3, 15; 9:27-30; 12:13, 22](#). Without exception, the miraculous healings of the New Testament were always immediate. There is a difference between the slow, gradual healings of today with meds and treatment, and the instantaneous healings of the New Testament.

They healed completely. Read [Matthew 9:21-22; 12:13; John 7:23; Acts 3:6-9, 16; 4:14-16](#). Without exception, the miraculous healings of the New Testament were always 100% effective. There is a difference between the partial, inadequate healings of today and the complete, perfect healings of the New Testament.

They didn't need a special atmosphere to heal. The miracle healings of the New Testament were performed without the noise, fanfare, and mass hysteria of healing meetings today, where the preachers and musicians deliberately work the audience into a state of emotional excitement. They get them to shouting, and under the influence of mass hysteria and hypnotism they can move the audience according to their will. They seemingly effect cures under the spell of the moment, but the problem returns as soon as the emotional excitement has worn off.

“Here is what two medical men, who are also eminent psychological authorities namely, Drs. Hadfield and Browne, have to say about this matter: ‘In mass movements of healing, the number of people, the atmosphere of expectancy produced exactly the emotional conditions necessary to suggestibility; for, in such soil, both faith and credulity flourish, and cures are consequently performed.’ And here is what the Doctors have to say about functional diseases: ‘These diseases can be produced by suggestion. This was first demonstrated by Charcot; and we have, personally, produced paralysis, blindness, sickness, and hallucination, anaesthesia and headache by suggestion.’ Such a scientific fact means that these medico-

psychologists can perform the so-called modern miracles backward.” (Herbert Lockyer, *The Healer and Healing Movements*, p. 47).

Healers today operate in the same realm of mind-cures that psychiatrists operate in. This need for an atmosphere is the reason that the healers appear to do very little, if any at all, house or hospital visitation, where sick and afflicted ones are to be found. They must do what they do because they do not have miraculous power that was given to the church of the New Testament.

They didn't blame others' lack of faith for their own failure to heal them. Jesus refused to do miracles for those who were hardened in unbelief and steeped in sin ([Mat. 12:38; 13:48](#)) but He never tried to heal anyone and then failed to do so.

The apostles once failed to cure an epileptic boy who had a demon, but when they asked Jesus why they could not cast it out He told them, “because of your unbelief” ([Mat. 17:14-21](#)). The trouble was with the healers, not the one who needed healing.

New Testament healers never blamed others for their failure like so many today. They did not create an expectation of healing, then disappoint.

The “proof of the pudding” is in the demonstration and it isn't there! Our challenge to all who claim to have the power of the Holy Spirit to heal miraculously is this: Heal all that come to you whatever the sickness, heal them immediately, instantaneously, and heal them completely. Or, just go to the cemetery and call someone up from grave.

The Holy Spirit no longer empowers the church to work miracles of healing, *but* we have the greater power of the gospel which can save your sin sick soul ([Rom. 1:16](#)).

Written by [Robert Dodson](#)

**NORTHWEST
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

6059 Azle Avenue
Fort Worth, TX 76135
817-237-1205
northwest.cofchrist@gmail.com
northwestcofc.org

[Contact Us](#)

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Class...9:00 a.m.

Worship...10:00 a.m.

Worship...1:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class...7:00 p.m.