

## Lesson 2

# The Personality of the Spirit

## Introduction

Our God is inherently personal. He is the original model for all created personhood. When studying the Godhead, we observe three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In our previous lesson, we discussed how all three possess all the attributes of God, i.e., eternal existence, creator, worthy of worship, and power to forgive sin.

In this lesson we will learn about the personhood of the Spirit.

## The Personhood of Jesus

Going back to Scripture, let's first examine Biblical doctrine regarding Jesus. In every way, He is a person. While He lived on earth, He exhibited this in many ways:

- He was a man, 1 Timothy 2.5.
- His individual personality could be observed. Matthew 7.28 says He astonished His audiences with His teaching. Matthew 22.16 shows how His style of teaching produced a definite impact on others.
- He had feelings, Matthew 14.14.
- He had a will, Matthew 8.7.
- He had a mind, Philippians 2.5.

If a person accepts the divinity and personality of Jesus as truth, then it is very easy to come to the same conclusion in regard to the Holy Spirit.

## The Personhood of the Spirit

In John 14.16, Jesus said, *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Helper**, to be with you forever.* "Helper" as translated by the ESV, comes from the Greek word *parakletos* and describes one who "comes alongside."<sup>10</sup> Phillips translates the word as "someone else to stand by you."<sup>11</sup> Jesus' usage of another is also significant. *Allos* denotes "the simple distinction of individuals."<sup>12</sup> Another Greek dictionary defines the word as describing "each succeeding one being of the same character... Thus, Christ promises to His disciples that He will send "another" Comforter, similar to Himself."<sup>13</sup> We may

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<sup>10</sup> "Helper" in ESV is also translated "Comforter" in KJV, ASV, & LB. "Counselor" in RSV, NIV, NLT, & CSB. "Advocate" in NEB, NRSV, & TNIV. "Paraclete" in NAB.

<sup>11</sup> The New Testament in Modern English by J.B Phillips copyright © 1960, 1972 J. B. Phillips. Administered by The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England.

<sup>12</sup> Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922.

<sup>13</sup> Trench, Richard Chenevix. *Synonyms of the New Testament*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1880.

conclude that when Jesus called Him “another” Helper, He implied that the Holy Spirit is a person just as much as He is a person.

Now, let’s bring John 16.6-7 into consideration: *But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, **the Helper will not come to you.** But if I go, I will send him to you.* The fact that Jesus was going to leave them alone was real. It produced a profound sense of loneliness and helplessness among the disciples. So, to bring them comfort, Jesus would pray to the Father and He would give them another Comforter to take the place of Himself during His absence. About this Torrey writes: “Is it possible that Jesus Christ could have used such language if the other Comforter who was coming to take His place was only an impersonal influence or power? ...No, one Divine Person was going, another Person just as Divine was coming to take His place, and it was expedient for the disciples that the One go to represent them before the Father, for another just as Divine and sufficient was coming to take His place.”<sup>14</sup>

Another piece of evidence that presents the personhood of the Spirit is seen in two texts where He is listed among other persons. Consider this passage again:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in the name of** the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

– Matthew 28.19

See how the Spirit is linked with the Father and the Son. All three are mentioned together with an equal connection to a single name. Regarding this, R. T. Kendall<sup>15</sup> says, “Baptizing ‘into the name’ is a Hebrew form of expression. It carries with it a complete break with Judaism including under a singular name not only the Father, but the Son and the Holy Spirit.” The one name in Matthew 28.19 unites the three persons. The phrase “into the name of” generally means “into a relationship with.” So we may properly conclude that when one is baptized he/she enters into a “saving relationship in which all three persons of the Trinity participate. In the Greek world the phrase was used specifically as an accounting term for the entry of an item into the list of one’s owned assets. Thus the phrase means that in accepting God’s salvation a person becomes the “property” equally of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit and surrenders to Their shared lordship.”<sup>16</sup>

Consider this passage:

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:

– Acts 15.28

See again how the Spirit is listed alongside another group of persons - i.e., the elders, apostles, and church members of Jerusalem.

## ***The Spirit Acts Like a Person***

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<sup>14</sup> Torrey, R. A. *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience*. New York; Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> Kendall, R. T. *Understanding Theology, Volume One*. Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Cottrell, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit*, p. 36.

Scripture continually presents the Spirit as doing the kind of things persons do. For example:

- He is **rational**. In John 16.8, we learn that the Spirit will “convict the world.” This involves exercise of the mind. Romans 8.26-27 refers to “the mind of the Spirit.” And 1 Corinthians 2.10-11 mentions how the Spirit *searches all things — even the depths of God*.
- He is **volitional**. In other words, He exercises judgment, makes decisions, and enforces some of those upon human beings. See Acts 13.1-4; 15.28; 16.6-7; 1 Corinthians 12.11; Hebrews 2.4.
- He **speaks**. He spoke to both the apostles and the prophets, Acts 8.29; 1 Timothy 4.1; Matthew 10.20; John 15.26; 16.13; Acts 13.2; 21.11; Hebrews 3.7; 10.15; Revelation 2.7.
- He **teaches**. See Nehemiah 9.20; John 14.26; 16.13-15; 1 Corinthians 2.12-13.
- He **feels** emotion. See Isaiah 63.10; Ephesians 4.30; Romans 15.30.

### ***The Spirit is Treated as a Person***

The Bible goes out of its way to describe the Spirit as being treated like a person would be treated. Reading Acts 5.1-11, we observe that Ananias and Sapphira *lied to the Holy Spirit* and *tempted the Spirit*. Hebrews 10.29 says a person can *insult* the Spirit of grace. One may also commit blasphemy against the Spirit, Matthew 12.31.

### **For Thought and Reflection**

1. Why does it appear the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was largely neglected during the second and third centuries?
2. How have some of the ancient false doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit been repackaged for modern people?
3. If one accepts the fact that Jesus is a person, what must logically follow regarding the Spirit?
4. What is so significant about Jesus’ words *another Helper* in John 14.16?
5. What does *in the name of* mean in Matthew 28.19?

6. What are some things the Spirit does as a person?
7. How can someone insult the Spirit of Grace?