

Roles of the Holy Spirit

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For the apostles it must have been such a blessing to be with Jesus every day. To be with the Son of God, who could heal the blind, calm the sea, walk on the water and raise the dead. It must have been truly a privilege to have been amongst the followers of Christ when He walked the earth. But then the day came when Jesus told them that He was leaving, but somehow it was going to get even better. Jesus had walked alongside the Apostles; now the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, would come to live inside of them. The coming of the Spirit would be the fulfillment of Christ's promise found in Matthew 28:20, *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* The divine power of Christ living in them would grant them all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came. Many believers have heard this story, but few understand what we gained when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in us. In these next few pages we will look at the roles that the Holy Spirit plays in the life of a follower of Christ.

The Holy Spirit dwells within us (John 14:17). In the Old Testament God gave the exact details for the building and furnishing of the tabernacle and eventually the temple. They were to be a *"copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary"*. Behind the veil there was a space known as the *"Holy of holies"*. This was where the presence of God dwelt. When Christ died, the veil in the temple was torn in two and everything changed. Now that Christ has come and we have been reconciled to God, the Spirit of God now dwells in us. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"* It is unbelievable that we are now *"the Holy of holies"* in whom the Spirit dwells. In this we gain everything that the Holy Spirit brings.

In John 16:8-10 we read that *“When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”* This word convict can also be translated convince. It was used to describe the cross-examination of a witness during a trial, or to convince one of His guilt or error. That is one role of the Holy Spirit. He comes to reveal, convict and convince people of their sin and guilt. As the Spirit convinces a person of their sin, He then makes clear to them the righteousness of God and their deserving of judgment. This revelation comes only through the Holy Spirit.

We read in John 16:13 that *“When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.”* *“He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”* (John 14:26).

At the time when these words of Christ were spoken, the Apostles were not ready to understand and believe them. The cross, the crucifixion and the ascension of Christ had not yet taken place, but the Holy Spirit would be their mentor, their tutor, their helper and their counselor, who would reveal the truths of God and Christ in the difficult days that lie ahead. The Spirit would lead them as they became the leaders of the early church and were used of God to lay the foundations for His kingdom work until Christ would return. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth.

The Holy Spirit is available to each of us as we stand in desperate need of understanding the truths of scripture. As we grow in Christ, faith and obedience, we are able to “bear more” of God’s truth. As we humble ourselves before the scriptures and the Holy Spirit’s teaching, He will guide us into true understanding and the will of God. As Christians, this is our confidence. As the Word of God intersects with the Spirit of God in our lives, we will be guided into a proper understanding of the truths of God and into a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:13 tells how believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. The word seal had two different meanings that are helpful to our understanding. The first “seal” is like that of a king who applies wax to an official letter and then presses his royal ring into the wax as the official sign. Whatever bears the seal belongs to the king. We are the same. The Holy Spirit is God’s seal that has been stamped onto our lives as proof that we are truly His. The word “seal” also had a similar meaning to a pledge or a deposit. It is a down payment or proof that the later payment will be given. We have been promised eternal life with Christ, but that will not come until we arrive in heaven. As proof of God’s promise, He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us as a deposit, until the day that we stand face to face before God Himself.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, we see that the Holy Spirit also gives each follower of Christ gift(s) that are to be used for the common good: *“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.”* Among these are gifts such as exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, prophecy, service, teaching, administration, faith, teaching and others (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12).

The Holy Spirit also prays on our behalf. In Romans 8:26-27 we read that, *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit,*

because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." This is truly remarkable. The Holy Spirit, who knows the will of God, intercedes on our behalf even in those times when we do not know what to pray.

In Galatians 5:22-23 we see that the Holy Spirit is the source of Spiritual fruit in our lives: *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

God desires that our hearts and our lives bear righteous fruit. In Galatians 5 the Apostle Paul writes of a war that wages within each of us. It is between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh is our old godless sin nature. The Spirit is the new life of Christ that now indwells us. The old nature has been defeated, and yet when we do not submit to the working of the Spirit, when we do not believe the truths that are found in God's Word, the flesh seeks to draw us back to our old sin patterns, our old ways of trying to meet our own needs.

Now some will read this listing of fruit of the Spirit and respond, *"That was possible for Jesus because he is the Son of God, but I will never be able to bear these types of fruit."* Scripture would agree with you. You will never be able to bear this type of fruit, but the Spirit of Christ who dwells within every believer can. It is Christ in us, who is our hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Did he not say that *"whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father?"* (John 14:12).

It is as we walk closely with Jesus in submission and obedience that we are empowered to bear fruit. The moment that we draw away from his lordship and his resources, we are drawn towards selfishness and fruitlessness once again.

Throughout scripture the descriptions of the Spirit continue. In Romans 8:16, *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."* Isaiah 11:2 declares the Spirit of the Lord as the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of counsel and might, and the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. John 14:6 portrays the Holy Spirit as a Helper or companion who will be with us forever. He is even the Author of scripture, *"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:12).

The Holy Spirit is the giver of joy (1 Thessalonians 1:6) and the origin of hope and peace (Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:27). Because of this the child of God no longer has to be governed by external circumstances. He or she now has access to joy, hope and peace regardless of what situation they find themselves, because the Holy Spirit dwells within. There is a freedom to truly live, apart from the opinion of others or what the world may do to you.

The Holy Spirit gives the believer the power to be Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit leads the sons of God (Romans 8:14). Ultimately the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16:14).

This is the Holy Spirit's role as well. He seeks to reveal the greatness of Christ. Yes, scripture refers to Him as the Revealer of Truth, The Spirit of God, The Teacher, The Witness, the Convicter of Sin, the Intercessor, the Indweller of Believers, a Guide, the Comforter, The Counselor, Our Helper, Our

Advocate, and a Seal on the lives of believers that we are truly His. However, in the midst of all these functions, His overarching purpose and delight is to point people towards Jesus. That is what the Spirit does.

While familiarizing ourselves with roles of the Spirit does have its benefits, the essential aspect of this entire discussion is not the fact that we understand all the roles. The crucial truth here is that we are walking with the Spirit, because in Him we gain everything.

In the book of Galatians, Paul describes the life of a person who believes in Jesus Christ and is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Yes, they started as an enemy of God, but they now have been forgiven, made new, and are counted righteous in the eyes of God. This person lives by the Spirit. The motivations for and the abilities to be holy now come from the Spirit who lives within them. The fear of judgment no longer threatens them. Instead they now hunger and thirst for righteousness because of what God, through Jesus Christ, has done for them. They are now motivated by love and carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote in Galatians 5:25, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."*

This phrase "keep in step" was a military term. The soldier did not set the pace, or the direction. He merely submitted to the stride and the speed of his commanding officer and kept in step. The soldier was to completely trust his commanding officer, even to the point of following Him into battle and risking his life. That is our role with the Holy Spirit. We are not to get ahead of Him or behind Him. We surrender to His guidance, fully trusting in His leadership and purpose of where He leads us.

Although a follower of Christ can be confident that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, they must give attention to keeping in step with the Spirit and not quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Acts 7:51 uses the phrase "resisting the Holy Spirit". Ephesians 4:30 speaks of "not grieving the Holy Spirit". Each of these descriptions carry with them the understanding of disobedience and an unwillingness to submit to the Spirit's leading. Acts 7:51 even describes those who were resisting the Holy Spirit as "stiff-necked people". This phrase was usually used for those who refused to bow or humble themselves to the lordship of God.

At times we long to walk by the Spirit, but find ourselves ensnared in sin from which we cannot free ourselves. Paul gives a solution in Galatians 3:3, *"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"*

Living by the Spirit is putting our full trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation, our sanctification and our every spiritual need. Paul is challenging them. You received the spirit by faith. Does faith then cease to help us? Must we then be made holy by our own actions, our own will power and our own strength? No, God is leading us in the process of being made perfect. He is the author and perfecter of our faith. This God-given faith was used to usher us into salvation. In the same way our faith in Christ will guide us to walk daily in the spirit.

The same truths that describe salvation are the same truths that remain as we live the Christian life. God draws us to Himself for salvation. He then continues to turn our hearts to Him as we live the Christian

life (John 6:44, John 6:65). God granted faith unto salvation and continues to grant faith as we trust in Him daily in our walk with Christ (Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 2:8-9). The spirit convicted us of sin at salvation and continues to convict us of sin to turn us from sin (John 16:8). We repented of sin and confessed this sin to God when we entered into salvation. An ongoing repentance and confession continues to draw us near to God and a right relationship with Him (Romans 10:9-19; 1 John 1:9). We were helpless and totally dependent on God's grace for salvation, and we continue to be helpless and dependent on God's grace to live a holy life (Philippians 4:19; Philippians 4:13).

If we depend on our own power to live a holy life, we will time and again "quench, resist, and grieve the Holy Spirit." We do not have the ability to walk in the Spirit. Only as we humble ourselves before God will we be able to trust and obey.

Christ, in the flesh, is not standing in our midst. He will return one day for His people, but for now He is not physically with us. Now the Spirit of Christ abides within each of us. Christ in the flesh was unable to be in all places at all times, but the Holy Spirit now dwells in each person who has repented and believed in Jesus Christ. We have been born again. We have passed from death to life. We have been given a new nature and have become children of God. In our homes, our neighborhoods and in our workplaces, the Spirit of Christ that dwells within us will go with us. In Him we will carry with us all the resources of the Holy Spirit.

We are a truly blessed people. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We are not alone. We are not orphans. We are not lost, not defeated, not forgotten and not beyond hope. For those of us who have repented of our sin and believed in Jesus Christ, we are now children of the Most High God whose Spirit lives within us. In the Spirit we have received a Helper who will accompany us as we seek to glorify Jesus Christ, regardless what life brings our way.

Cry out to God for His daily work of grace in your lives. Then you will walk in step with the Spirit, bear the fruit of the Spirit, manifest the gifts of the Spirit, and experience all the resources that are found through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.