

Sermon Series: *The Person & Work of the Holy Spirit*

The Personal Presence of the Holy Spirit Prior to Pentecost

Last week one of the two main points of the sermon was that God's Holy Spirit is a person. He is a powerful person, not an impersonal power. One of the reasons we have difficulty understanding and embracing the Holy Spirit as a person is because all other persons we know and experience have a material body. However, God's Holy Spirit does not have a material body. "God is Spirit," said Jesus to woman at the well (John 4:24). We cannot reach out and touch Him. Therefore, we tend to think that He is not real. However, He is more real than any *body* you can reach out and touch.

We can say He is "more real" than our own physical bodies because something that is really real, really exists and that which exists forever is "more real" than that which will exist only for short time. Our bodies will one day cease to exist. However, the wonderful, kind, compassionate, personal, eternal, Holy Spirit of truth, who is the Spirit of Jesus, will never cease to exist. He is God. It is His nature to exist. He is very, very real.

I believe that the Lord is inviting Hope Church to embrace Him anew, in all the fullness of His Trinitarian essence—as Father, Son, and Spirit, as we begin to try to understand and learn about His Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit Neglected For Far Too Long

In the church of God there has for far too long existed a rather blissful, willful ignorance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In 1660 the Puritan Thomas Goodwin began his book, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Our Salvation*, with the following sentence,

"There is a general omission in the saints of God, in their not giving the Holy Spirit that glory that is due to His Person and for His great work of salvation in us, insomuch that we have in our hearts almost forgotten this Third Person."¹

The Doctor, as he was affectionately known, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, in a series of lectures given in Westminster Chapel from 1952 to 1955 said about his day,

"Now generally speaking, the position today is that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is either neglected or it tends to be emphasised [sic] and exaggerated in a false manner. And I have no doubt at all that the second is partly the cause of the first."²

I completely agree with Lloyd-Jones. We have for the most part neglected the doctrine (i.e. the corpus of biblical teaching on the subject) of the person of the Holy Spirit. He was neglected in

¹ Arthur W. Pink, *The Holy Spirit*, electronic ed. (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002).

² David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossways Books, 1997), 5.

the mid 1600's, He was neglected in the mid 1900's, and it is still true today. The doctrine of the person of the Holy Spirit is still neglected today.

Lloyd-Jones is also correct in stating the reason for this. It is mostly because of misuse and abuse of the biblical teaching or out of fear that it may cause division. However, we do not avoid the doctrine of God, though it is certainly misused, abused, and does cause division. Neither do we avoid the doctrine of the Son, though it too is misused, abused, and causes division. Yet, why are we content to avoid the doctrine of the Holy Spirit? It would be a sin to neglect the doctrine of God in our teaching and preaching. It would be a sin to neglect the doctrine of the Son. Yet do we see it as a sin to neglect the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

Why has this neglect been detected for hundreds of years? Is there something about the person of the Holy Spirit that our enemy does not want us to know?

Of course there is. Knowing the Spirit of God is knowing God Himself. If the enemy can keep us contentedly ignorant of the Spirit of God, then we will necessarily be ignorant of the full personality of God and therefore not genuinely know Him in the deepest, most intimate and personal ways in which He has intended for us to know Him.

Think about this for a moment. In the Old Testament the enemy focused his attack upon the nation of Israel since God the Father, the living God, the God above all gods, was proclaimed as the One True God by worshipping Him only through the Temple in Jerusalem. The enemy attacked the presence of God in the world by attacking Israel. Then when Jesus entered this world, the presence of God was manifested to the world through Jesus. Therefore, Satan focused his attack on the Son.

However, now, today, how would the enemy attack the presence of God in the world? We Christians live on this side of Pentecost which enabled the presence of God through His Spirit to dwell within His people wherever they are. So to attack the presence of God in the world, Satan has to attack people of God. The problem is they are scattered all over the planet. So what does Satan do? He simply attacks the source—the knowledge of who God the Holy Spirit is and how He is at work in the world.

If Satan can successfully suppress the truth that the fullness of the entire personality and power of God the Father and God the Son takes up residence within the soul of man (by faith in Jesus), then we Christians will simply be left thinking that God is “out there” somewhere and not “in here” (i.e. inside our hearts) and we will be left thinking that our ability to live the life that God approves of is up to us to do in our own strength.

One of the main points of last week's sermon was that the Holy Spirit is a person. This is the essence of true Christianity. The essence of true Christianity is personally knowing the living God. Being a Christian is not defined by church attendance or any other heartless, external religious activity. True Christianity is not about a place you go, but a person you know! Coming alive in your heart toward God through faith in Jesus and receiving His Holy Spirit is what it means to become a Christian. Dr. R. A. Torrey said,

“If the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person and we know it not, we are robbing a Divine Being of the love and adoration which are His due. It is of the highest practical importance

whether the Holy Spirit is a power that we, in our ignorance and weakness, are somehow to get hold of and use, or whether the Holy Spirit is a personal Being ... who is to get hold of us and use us. Many can testify to the blessing that came into their lives when they came to know the Holy Spirit, not merely as a gracious influence ... but as an ever-present, loving friend and helper.”³

The Invitation: Know Me By Knowing My Spirit

This is the invitation that comes to us through this particular sermon series—to *get to know God personally by getting to know His Holy Spirit*. He is the Comforter. He is the loving, ever-present, helper, and friend. Jesus told the disciples, “I do not call you servants any longer. I call you My friends” (Jn 15:15). How amazing it is to be called friend by Jesus!! And Jesus said, “It is good that I go away so I can you My Holy Spirit.”

This is why we are preaching this sermon series, so that God might be pleased to show us how good it is to know Him through the powerful person of His Holy Spirit. I’m convinced that this is the invitation from the Lord to us. “Come to Me and get to know Me by getting to know My Spirit.”

Learning more about who a person is is one of the ways in which love for that person grows more deeply. The more we know Him the more we will love Him. The presence of God is now manifest to the world through the presence of His Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we would know and love Him, we must know His Spirit.

And Jesus said the presence of the Spirit in our lives was even better than His own physical presence. Why is that good Jesus? The answer is that it is good to have Jesus standing beside you, but it is even better to have the Spirit of Jesus living *inside* you! It is wonderfully good that Jesus has returned to the Father and He has sent His Spirit! We need to know this and believe this.

“There is no spiritual good communicated to anyone but by the Spirit; whatever God in His grace works in us, it is by the Spirit. The only sin for which there is no forgiveness is one committed against the Spirit. How necessary is it then that we should be well instructed in the Scripture doctrine concerning Him! ⁴

There is a wonderful promise in Jeremiah 24:7.

Jeremiah 24:7 (NASB)

I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart.

Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

³ William Evans and S. Maxwell Coder, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, Enl. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 108.

⁴ Arthur W. Pink, *The Holy Spirit*, electronic ed. (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 2002).

Getting To Know The Person of the Spirit

I think the most helpful way we can go about this is simply to think of this sermon series as a means of getting to know someone. We are getting to know the powerful person of the Spirit of Jesus, who is the Spirit of the living God, the eternal Spirit. One of the ways we get to know people is by listening to each other's story. Hearing the story of another person's life allows you to get to know them and understand them.

So what would happen if we were to ask the Holy Spirit that question. Holy Spirit, would you tell us about yourself? This is also relevant as it pertains to last week's sermon. One question that came up this week over coffee with a friend was, "OK, so Jesus said, 'It's good that I go away so that I can send the Holy Spirit.' But where was He? Wasn't He always here?"

Well, the answer to that is yes, He was always here, but in light of all that happened at Pentecost, which will discuss next week, no. Something amazing happened at Pentecost which completely changed the way in which the Holy Spirit was present in the world. So the question before us now is, **how was the Holy Spirit present in the world prior to Pentecost (i.e. in OT)?**

So Holy Spirit where did you come from and what have you been doing? We'd like to know.

1. Holy Spirit Personally Present at Creation Giving the Gift of Life & Sustaining Life

"I have existed from the beginning. I was present at the beginning of creation and participated by giving and sustaining life."

Genesis 1:2

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Job 33:4

*The Spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Job said that his life would last...

Job 27:3

*as long as my breath is in me,
and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,*

All life comes from the Spirit of God, both man and beast.

Job 12:10

*10 In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind.*

Psalms 104

*24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom have you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

25 *Here is the sea, great and wide,
which teems with creatures innumerable,
living things both small and great.*

29 *When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.*

30 *When you send forth your Spirit, they are created...*

Job 34:14-15

14 *If he should set his heart to it
and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,
15 all flesh would perish together,
and man would return to dust.*

Moses refers to LORD as “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num 16:22; 27:16). All life wherever you find it and in whatever form, comes ultimately from the Spirit of the Living God who created it (see also Eccl 12:7; Is 57:16; Zech 12:1).

2. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Interpretation of Dreams

“I was present giving my sons, like Joseph and Daniel, the ability to interpret dreams in order to do great good to My people and that My name would be greatly praised among the nations.”⁵

Speaking about Joseph after God had given him the interpretation of the Pharaoh’s dreams,

Genesis 41:38

And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?

Daniel 4:18

This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you. (see also Dan 4:9; 5:11)

3. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Artistic Skill and Craftsmanship

“I was present to give artist skill and craftsmanship for the purpose of “beauty and glory.”⁶

Exodus 35:30-35

30 *Then Moses said to the people of Israel, See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;
31 and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship,
32 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze,*

⁵ See Nebuchadnezzar’s confession in Dan 4:34-37 (cf. 4:17, 25, 32) and Ex 9:16.

⁶ Exodus 28:2, 40.

33 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft.

34 And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan.

35 He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

4. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Leadership and Miraculous Deliverance

"I was present to give the ability to men to lead My people, Israel, and to deliver them from their enemies."

Numbers 11:14-15

14 I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me.

15 If you will treat me like this, kill me at once...

16 Then the LORD said to Moses, Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

As Moses was about to die, he asked the Lord to choose a godly man to succeed him and Joshua was chosen.

Numbers 27:15-18

15 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying,

16 Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation

17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.

18 So the LORD said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.

Note: Verse 18 says here that Joshua was a man "**in** whom" was the Spirit of God.

Judges 3:10

The Spirit of the LORD was upon [Othniel], and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Judges 6:34

But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.

Judges 11:29

Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh and passed on to Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.

Judges 14:19

And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [Samson], and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house.

Judges 15:14

When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands.

I Samuel 11:6

And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. And he was able to defeat the Ammonites.

I Samuel 16:13

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

5. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Teaching and Guidance

"I was present to teach and to guide."

Nehemiah 9:20 (ESV) (during the wilderness wandering)

You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.

Psalms 143:10 (ESV)

*Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me
on level ground!*

6. Holy Spirit Personally Present to Overcome Fear

I was present to give encouragement to overcome fear. The Spirit of the Lord was present to encourage the people to continue the work of rebuilding the temple and the land and not to give up or be afraid.

Haggai 2:4-5 (ESV)

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts,

5 according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.

Zechariah 4:6 (ESV)

Then he said to me, This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

7. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Boldness to Reveal Sin

"I was present to give power and boldness to My prophets to proclaim My word and warn people to turn from their sin."

Micah 3:8 (ESV)

*But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the Spirit of the LORD,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.*

2 Chronicles 24:20 (ESV)

Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, Thus says God, Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.

Nehemiah 9:30 (ESV)

Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Zechariah 7:12 (ESV)

They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.

8. Holy Spirit Personally Present to Give the Gift of Hope

"I was present to point to a new day when I would have greater power in the lives of My people."

Isaiah 32:15 (ESV)

*until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.*

Joel 2:28-29 (ESV)

*28 And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;*

*your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
29 Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (ESV)

*26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

Ezekiel 39:29 (ESV)

And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.

See also Isaiah 44:1-5.

9. Holy Spirit Personally Present in the Gift of Prophecy

"I was present to give the gift of prophecy."

Numbers 11:25 (ESV)

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.

This was evidently a temporary manifestation of the Spirit of God that did not abide. In speaking to Joshua, Moses then looked forward to a future day when the gift of prophecy would have a broader application by the Spirit.

Numbers 11:29 (ESV)

But Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!

Saul prophesied by the Spirit of God.

1 Samuel 10:10

When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them.

Luke 1:67

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

Joel 2:28 (ESV)

*28 And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,*

*and your young men shall see visions.
29 Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

10. Holy Spirit Personally Present in Predicting Messiah

"I was present to predict and point to the coming of Messiah."

1 Peter 1:10-12 (ESV)

*10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,
11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.
12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

Isaiah 11:1-2

*1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

Isaiah 42:1

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
My chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

Isaiah 61:1

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

11. Holy Spirit Personally Present Giving the Gift of Regeneration

"I was present in the lives of Old Testament believers giving them a new heart to believe in Me." When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, in John 3:3, He told Nicodemus, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again [or "from above"] he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Nicodemus responded to this by saying, "How can these things be?" (Jn 3:9). Jesus replied, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"

Evidently Jesus thought there was enough Scriptures (i.e. what we call the Old Testament) to make it plainly understood that entrance into the kingdom of God was not merely about physical birth but was primarily about spiritual birth. Entrance into the kingdom of God required the life-giving activity of the Holy Spirit. Paul understood this.

Romans 2:28-29 (ESV)

28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.

29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Other OT passages we could look to: Dt 30:6; Ps 51:10; Jer 4:4; 31:31; Ez 11:19; 18:31; 36:25-27.

God's Holy Spirit has been present in the world since the beginning of creation. He gives life and sustains life. He has given the gifts of interpretation of dreams, artistic skill and craftsmanship, leadership, miraculous power, teaching, guidance, overcoming fear, boldness to point out sin, hope, prophecy, predicting Messiah, and regeneration. The Holy Spirit has been actively and personally present in the world, even since before Pentecost.

However, Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit to His disciples. If Holy Spirit was already here then what did Jesus mean? In what sense would He come if He was already here? What happened at Pentecost? This is the question for next week.