

## 254 The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

In our current Weekly Reflections we are studying the deep truths involved in God being “One God in Trinity”, so as to understand, as well as we are able, more of God’s nature; that in turn we may serve Him, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, more effectively in our lives. This time we come on to the Person and role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity as made known to us in John’s Gospel.

So far we have been shown in this Gospel: the divinity of Christ, His Oneness with the Father, and the unceasing love between Father and Son; Jesus being sent to this earth, bestowed with divine authority, to serve in obedience and declare all that the Father had told Him and to undergo all that the Father asked of Him; leading to the giving and receiving of glory between the Father and the Son. We now see the precious role played by God the Holy Spirit in this relationship (largely ignoring this time most non-John references, and such matters as the “baptism”, the “filling”, the “gifts” and the “fruits”, of the Holy Spirit).

First, God the Father sends the Holy Spirit on to His Son at the start of Jesus’ public ministry, to allow John the Baptist to identify Him, and to affirm Jesus as He sets out to fulfil all the Father is asking of Him (John 1.29-33 / 3.34-35 / Mark 1.9-11). But things quickly change - “And the Spirit at once thrusts Him out into the deserted place (Mark 1.12, Literal) – the Holy Spirit acting here as the no-nonsense Agent of the Father’s will concerning Jesus, in both good times and bad.

Then we learn of the Spirit’s role, once again as Agent, in terms of our own “new birth” (John 3.3, 5, 6, 8 / 4.23-24 / 6.63). This spiritual necessity for us is something we cannot achieve ourselves, in the flesh, by mere human will. It is something that can only be done TO us, just as happens with a natural birth in which the baby has no say in the proceedings! So it is the Holy Spirit who serves as “the divine midwife”, bringing the new spiritual baby to birth, at the behest of the Father and on the basis of the God-given faith and belief in the Son. We do well to remember that our Christian discipleship is God-wrought and is all about life “in the Spirit” rather than life “in the flesh” (eg Romans Chapter 8 / I Corinthians 6.20 and 7.23).

But the Holy Spirit is not only involved at the start of our spiritual lives, but at every step along the path thereafter. He is “given” (John 7.37-39 / 20.21-22 / Acts 2 / Acts 10.44-48 and 11.15-18 / ...), dwelling within the lives of the believers individually and collectively (eg., I Corinthians 3.16 / 6.19-20 / II Corinthians 6.16 / ...).

This “giving” is beautifully explained by Jesus in John Chapters 14, 15 and 16. He tells His disciples that He would pray to the Father, who, in response, would give to the disciples “another Comforter”, who will “abide with them for ever” (14.16). The Holy Spirit is described here as “the Spirit of truth”, unknowable by the world, but knowable by Jesus’ followers, and dwelling within them (14.17).

Jesus promises that the “Spirit of truth” will “teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (14.26); “He will guide you into all truth .... whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you

things to come”, bringing glory to the Son as He does so (16.13-15). Here then is further assurance of the divine inspiration of the New Testament Scriptures (eg., II Timothy 3.16-17 / II Peter 1.20-21 and 3.15b-16), an assurance that is strengthened by our own experience of the Holy Spirit still speaking to us through the Scriptures as we read them prayerfully ourselves under His guidance today.

The Holy Spirit also ministers in the wider world, convicting it of “sin, righteousness and judgement” (16.8-11) – a conviction based on the world’s refusal to accept Jesus for who He really is – and restraining wickedness within it “until He be taken out of the way” (II Thessalonians 2.7).

So in summary we see that it is the Holy Spirit who “makes things happen” in the relationships within the Godhead Himself, and between the Godhead and both the born-again believers and the wider world beyond. We also see His reluctance to draw attention to Himself. Instead He looks to the Father and to the Son, conveying to us all that He hears and receives from them, and ever pointing us, past Himself, to the Father and the Son. What an example, on a wholly different scale, for us to follow!

Thanks be to God for the Holy Spirit, truly our God-given “another Comforter” and “the Spirit of truth”.

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