

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 4 The Titles of the Holy Spirit

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Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 4

The Titles of the Holy Spirit

Correct views of the Divine character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital godliness. It should, then, be one of our chief quests to seek after the knowledge of God. Without the true knowledge of God, in His nature and attributes, we can neither worship Him acceptably nor serve Him aright. "Names" Describe Character Now the three Persons in the Godhead have graciously revealed Themselves through a variety of names and titles. The Nature of God we are utterly incapable of comprehending, but His person and character may be known. Each name or title that God has appropriated unto Himself is that whereby He reveals Himself unto us, and whereby He would have us know and own Him. Therefore whatever any name of God expresses Him to be, that He is, for He will not deceive us by giving Himself a wrong or false name. On this account He requires us to trust in His Name, because He will assuredly be found unto us all that His Name imports. The names of God, then, are for the purpose of expressing Him unto us; they set forth His perfections and make known the different relations which He sustains unto the children of men and unto His own favored people. Names are given for this intent, that they might declare what the thing is to which the name belongs. Thus, when God created Adam and gave him dominion over this visible world, He caused the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air to pass before him, that they might receive names from him (Gen. 2:19). In like manner, we may learn of what God is through the names and titles He has taken. By means of them, God spells out Himself to us, sometimes by one of His perfections, sometimes by another. A very wide field of study is here introduced to us, yet we can now say no more than that the prayerful and diligent searcher will find it a highly profitable one to investigate. What has been said above serves to indicate the importance of the present aspect of our subject. What the Holy Spirit is in His Divine Person and ineffable character is made known unto us by means of the many names and varied titles which are accorded to Him in Holy Writ. A whole volume, rather than a brief chapter, might well be devoted to their contemplation. May we be Divinely guided in using the limited space which is now at our disposal in writing that which will both magnify the Third Person in the blessed Trinity, and serve as a stimulus unto our readers to give more careful study and holy meditation to those titles of His which we cannot here consider. Possibly, we can help our friends most by devoting our attention to those which are more difficult to apprehend. Concurrence in the Trinity The Holy Spirit is designated by a great

many names and titles in Scripture which clearly evince both His personality and Deity. Some of these are peculiar to Himself, others He has in common with the Father and the Son, in the undivided essence of the Divine nature. While in the wondrous scheme of redemption the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are revealed unto us under distinct characters, by which we are taught to ascribe certain operations to one more immediately than to another, yet the agency of each is not to be considered as so detached but that They cooperate and concur. For this reason the Third Person of the Trinity is called the Spirit of the Father (John 14:26) and the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6), because, acting in conjunction with the Father and the Son, the operations of the one are in effect the operations of the others—and altogether result from the indivisible essence of the Godhead. Titles Used in Scripture First, He is designated "The Spirit," which expresses two things. First, His Divine nature, for "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); as the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Episcopal Church well express it, "without body, parts, or passions." He is essentially pure, incorporeal Spirit, as distinct from any material or visible substance. Second, it expresses His mode of operation on the hearts of the people of God, which is compared in Scripture to a "breath," or the movement of the "wind"—both of which adumbrate Him in this lower world; suitably so, inasmuch as they are invisible, and yet vitalizing elements. "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ezek. 37:9). Therefore was it that in His public descent on the day of Pentecost, "suddenly there came a sound from Heaven of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). Second, He is called by way of eminency "The Holy Spirit" which is His most usual appellation in the New Testament. Two things are included. First, respect is had unto His nature. As Jehovah is distinguished from all false gods thus, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11); so is the Spirit called Holy to denote the holiness of His nature. This appears plainly in Mark 3:29, 30, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness; because they said, he hath an unclean spirit"—thus opposition is made between His immaculate nature and that of the unclean or unholy spirit. Observe, too, how this verse also furnishes clear proof of His personality, for the "unclean spirit" is a person, and if the Spirit were not a Person, no comparative opposition could be made between them. So also we see here His absolute Deity, for only God could be "blasphemed"! Second, this title views His operations and that in respect of all His works, for every work of God is holy—in hardening and blinding, equally as in regenerating and sanctifying. Third, He is called God's "good Spirit" (Neh. 9:20). "Thy Spirit is good" (Ps. 143:10). He is so designated principally from His nature, which is essentially good for "there is none good but one, that is God" (Matthew 19:17); so also from His operations, for "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth" (Eph. 5:9). Fourth, He is called the "free Spirit" (Ps. 5 1:12), so designated because He is a most munificent Giver, bestowing His favors severally as He pleases, literally, and upbraiding not; also because it is His special work to deliver God's elect from the bondage of sin and Satan, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. Fifth, He is called "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9) because sent by Him (Acts 2:33), and as furthering His cause on earth (John 16:14). Sixth, He is called "the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 8:29) because He possesses Divine authority and requires unhesitating submission from us. Seventh, He is called, "the Eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14). "Among the names and titles by which the Holy Spirit is known in Scripture, that of 'the eternal Spirit' is His peculiar appellation—a name, which in the very first face of things, accurately defines His nature, and carries with it the most convincing proof of Godhead. None but 'the High and Holy One, inhabiteth eternity,' can be called eternal. Of other beings, who possess a derivative immortality, it may be said that as they are created for eternity, they may enjoy, through the benignity of their Creator, a future eternal duration. But this differs as widely as the east is from the west, when applied to Him of whom we are speaking. He alone, who possesses an underived, independent, and necessary self-existence, 'who was, and is, and is to come,' can be said, in exclusion of all other beings, to be

eternal" (Robert Hawker). Eighth, He is called "the Paraclete" or "the Comforter" (John 14:16) than which no better translation can be given, providing the English meaning of the word be kept in mind. Comforter means more than Consoler. It is derived from two Latin words, *com* "along side of" and *fortis* "strength." Thus a "comforter" is one who stands alongside of one in need, to strengthen. When Christ said He would ask the Father to give His people "another Comforter," He signified that the Spirit would take His own place, doing for the disciples, what He had done for them while He was with them on earth. The Spirit strengthens in a variety of ways: consoling when cast down, giving grace when weak or timid, guiding when perplexed. We close this subject with a few words from the pen of the late J. C. Philpot (1863), "Nor let anyone think that this doctrine of the distinct Personality of the Holy Spirit is a mere strife of words, or unimportant matter, or an unprofitable discussion, which we may take or leave, believe or deny, without any injury to our faith or hope. On the contrary, let this be firmly impressed on your mind, that if you deny or disbelieve the Personality of the blessed Spirit, you deny and disbelieve with it the grand foundation truth of the Trinity. If your doctrine be unsound, your experience must be a delusion, and your practice an imposition."

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