

God the Holy Spirit: His Personality

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The Holy Spirit is a person with personality, coequal with the Father and the Son, and has the attributes of God.

Scripture: Isaiah 63:10, John 4:24, John 14:16, John 14:26, John 16:8, Acts 13:2, Romans 8:16, Romans 8:26, Galatians 4:6, Galatians 5:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Trinity Doctrine"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the Bible teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of recognizing His personality. The Spirit is shown to have personal attributes and to perform works that only a person can do, such as reproving, teaching, speaking, interceding, leading, and appointing. The Scriptures indicate the Spirit's personality through various activities and relationships, dispelling misconceptions that treat Him as a mere influence. Chafer highlights the Spirit as one of the Persons of the Godhead, coequal with the Father and the Son, possessing divine attributes and performing divine works.

Transcript

The Godhead subsists in three Persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having in previous chapters considered the Bible teaching concerning both the Father and the Son, it yet remains for us to consider the Bible teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. This and the four following chapters are assigned to this subject. In teaching the fundamental truths relative to the Holy Spirit, special emphasis is always required on the fact of His personality. This is due, no doubt, to the effect produced through the divine arrangement by which the Spirit does not now speak from Himself or of Himself; He rather speaks whatsoever He hears (Joh 16:13. Comp. Act 13:2 with Eph 4:7), and He is said to have come into the world to glorify Christ (Joh 16:14). In contrast to this, the Scriptures represent both, the Father and the Son as speaking from themselves and of themselves, not only with final authority and by the use of the personal I, but they are presented as being in immediate communion, cooperation, and conversation -- the One with the Other. All this tends to make less real the personality of the One who does not speak either from or of Himself. This reserve on the part of the Spirit may account in a measure for the fact that some creeds have slighted the Person and work of the Spirit; treating Him as though He were a mere influence or emanation from God. The corrective for this error and the preventive against it is the due consideration of all that the Bible teaches and implies relative to the Person and work of the Spirit.

I. THE SPIRIT'S PERSONALITY IS INDICATED IN THE SCRIPTURES

1. Since the Spirit is said to do that which is possible only for a person to do:

(1) He reproveth the world, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Joh 16:8).

(2) He teaches, "He shall teach you all things" (Joh 14:26; Neh 9:20; Note, also, Joh 16:13-15; 1Jo 2:27).

(3) The Spirit speaks, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6).

(4) The Spirit maketh intercession, "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom 8:26).

(5) The Spirit leads, "led of the Spirit" (Gal 5:18. Comp. Act 8:29; Act 10:19; Act 13:2; Act 16:6-7; Act 20:23; Rom 8:14).

(6) The Spirit appoints the service of men, "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Act 13:2. Comp. Act 20:28).

(7) The Spirit is Himself subject to appointment (Joh 15:26).

(8) The Spirit ministers: He regenerates (Joh 3:6), He seals (Eph 4:30), He baptizes (1Co 12:13), He fills (Eph 5:18).

2. He is affected as a person by other beings:

(1) The Father sends Him into the world (Joh 14:16, Joh 14:26), and the Son sends Him into the world (Joh 16:7).

(2) Men may vex the Spirit (Isa 63:10), they may grieve Him (Eph 4:30), they may quench (resist) Him (1Th 5:19), they may blaspheme against Him (Mat 12:31), they may lie to Him (Act 5:3), they may do despite unto Him (Heb 10:29), they may speak against Him (Mat 12:32).

3. All Bible terms related to the Spirit imply His personality:

(1) He is called "Another Comforter" (Advocate), which indicates that He is as much a person as Christ (Joh 14:16-17, Joh 14:26; Joh 16:7; 1Jo 2:1-2).

(2) He is called a Spirit and in the same personal sense as God is called a Spirit (Joh 4:24).

(3) The pronouns used of the Spirit imply His personality. In the Greek language, the word spirit is a neuter noun which would naturally call for a neuter pronoun and in a few instances the neuter pronoun is used (Rom 8:16, Rom 8:26); but more often the masculine form of the pronoun is used thus emphasizing the fact of the personality of the Spirit (Joh 14:16-17; Joh 16:7-15).

II. THE SPIRIT IS ONE OF THE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD AND AS SUCH IS COEQUAL WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

1. He is called God. This fact will be seen by comparing Isa 6:8-9 with Act 28:25-26; Jer 31:31-34 with Heb 10:15-17 (Note, also, 2Co 3:18, R.V., and Act 5:3-4 -- "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? ... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God"). Though the judgments of God have fallen so

drastically on some who have lied against the Spirit (Act 5:3) and though men are evidently not permitted to swear in the name of the Holy Spirit and though He is called The Holy Spirit, it is certain that He is not more holy than the Father or the Son; absolute holiness being the primary attribute of the Triune God.

2. He has the attributes of God (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; 1Co 2:9-11; Heb 9:14).

3. The Holy Spirit performs the works of God (Job 33:4; Psa 104:30; Luk 12:11-12; Act 1:5; Act 20:28; 1Co 6:11; 1Co 12:8-11; 2Pe 1:21).

III. APPEAL

Through meditation on the Word of God and through the experience gained by trusting the Spirit for His power, His guidance, and His instruction, the believer may come to realize the personality and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit, the importance and value of which is beyond all estimation.

QUESTIONS

1. What has tended to discredit the personality of the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the corrective against all false theories concerning the person and work of the Spirit?
3. Name eight activities predicated to the Spirit which prove that He is a person.
4. Name the proofs that He is a person which are based on His relation to other beings.
5. What are some of the titles by which the Spirit is designated which prove His personality?
6. Is it any discredit to the personality of God that He is called a spirit?
7. What are the proper pronouns to be used in speaking of the Spirit?
8. a. What is the gender of the word Spirit in the Greek language?
b. How has this affected translations?
9. Indicate important passages which assign absolute deity to the Holy Spirit.
10. Who was punished for lying against the Spirit?
11. a. Is the Spirit more holy than the Father or the Son?
b. Are men permitted to swear in His name?
c. Do they swear in His name?
12. Indicate the Scriptures wherein the attributes of God are assigned to the Spirit.
13. Indicate the Scriptures wherein the Spirit is said to perform the works of God.
14. How may the Spirit become more real to the child of God?

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