

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Concerns Christians sometimes have How do I know I have the Spirit?

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

The subject for our talk is “How do I know I have the Spirit?” We will look at this question under five headings plus a conclusion, tracing the active involvement of the Spirit of God in this world with regards to Christians.

1. The Lord’s promise.
2. When the Spirit of God came.
3. Believing and being sealed with the Spirit of God.
4. Changed lives.
5. Preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. Conclusion.

This talk would normally have been given by brother Stephen Thomson. However in June 2023 Stephen was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Stephen loved to use the King James (Authorised) Version of the Scriptures therefore this talk will use that version.

The six headings to be used for this talk are not necessarily comprehensive to deal with the subject, “How do I know I have the Spirit?” but I trust will be sufficient to help anyone listening who has concerns.

1. The Lord’s promise

The first Scripture is found in John 14 vv.16-17. Let us read these two verses.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.”

Chapter 14 of John’s Gospel is one of the chapters where the Lord is talking to his disciples just before He is betrayed. This chapter opens with those well-known verses about the “Father’s house”, knowing the Father because they had known the Lord and the early indication that the Lord would be leaving them. It is at this point the Lord speaks about another divine person coming into their lives referred to as “another Comforter” and the “Spirit of truth.” As the Comforter He would abide with the disciples for ever. Unlike the Lord Jesus who had come and was very visible to all it would not be so regarding the Comforter. In these verses the Lord Jesus desires that the “Father” would send the Comforter. So we find all three persons of the Godhead participate in this change.

Now in the Old Testament dispensations the Spirit came upon believers but did not dwell in them permanently as the Spirit of God does today in believers. This was to be a massive change. When the Spirit of God came, He would be with individual believers for ever. This is the first point in answering the question of our talk. The Comforter is also known as “the Spirit of Truth.” He is unknown by the world because the world cannot see Him. This is a major distinguishing difference between Christians and non-Christians.

At the end of chapter 14 we have another verse which adds further to our consideration of the Spirit of God coming. Let us read verse 26.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Here we have another activity of the Spirit of God, “[Bringing] all things to our remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” If you are like me then memory often fails. However, in the divine purposes of God believers today, as with the disciples of old, needed help in bringing things back to mind. For the disciples it was what the Lord Jesus had said over the past three plus years. I do not suppose that the disciples carried notebooks to record all that Jesus said and did. John, at the end of his Gospel, makes the following comment, chapter 21 v.25.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”

For believers today we may need to recall Scripture, for example, when witnessing to others of the Saviour.

There are similar thoughts in these next two verses from chapter 15 verses 26-27. Let us read these two verses.

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

In these two verses we find the Spirit and the disciples both engaged in witnessing about the Lord Jesus. When the Spirit of God eventually came the Lord Jesus had gone back to heaven waiting until the right moment determined by the Father for His return. Just as the Lord had witnessed in this scene so would the Spirit through His disciples. It is just the same today we need the Spirit to help us with the responsibility of witnessing about the Lord Jesus.

Let us read a few more verses from chapter 16.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He

shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you”
(John 16:7-14).

In the verses 7-11 we have reference to the activity of the Spirit in connection with this world. However the last three verses 12-14 show what He is to believers. He guides into all truth, making the Scriptures come alive in our hearts and minds. The Spirit of God does not speak about Himself but is here to speak about the Lord Jesus. He wants to exalt the Lord Jesus. When we come together to remember the Saviour in His death it is also a time to give the Lord due praise and worship.

There is a beautiful hymn by J.G. Deck (1802-84)

O LORD, a few of Thine
Are gathered to Thy name;
May hearts o'erflow with joy divine
As we Thy promise claim.

We are, O Lord, Thine own,
The purchase of Thy blood;
By Thee we would approach the throne,
Confiding in our God.

In us the Spirit dwells,
The witness of God's love;
Our hearts rejoice while He reveals
Thy glorious things above.

2. When the Spirit of God came

We will now consider the historical event of the actual coming of the Spirit of God. We will turn initially to Acts 1 vv.4-8.

“Being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

In these verses we have the Lord Jesus giving instructions to the disciples that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father. He was reminding them that He had told them these things and that the actual coming of the Spirit would not be many days away. The disciples were still focused upon the kingdom restoration of Israel, but the Lord directs them to a great work which they would be involved in, that of the proclamation of the Gospel. Its scope was to commence in Jerusalem and go out to the uttermost parts of the earth. A work which is still going on today.

Let us read a long section from Acts 2 vv.1-12.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and in Cappadocia, and in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?”

Pentecost was fifty days after the Saviour's resurrection when the Spirit of God came down to dwell in believers. To confirm this heavenly activity the Spirit gave the disciples the gift of speaking in various languages of which we have just read. Now this was a once only event as this act of the Spirit formed the church of God in this world. This had an impact on the people in Jerusalem who came together to hear what was going on. If we had read further in chapter 2, we would have had mockery by some of the people who said the disciples were drunk. This gave opportunity for Peter to deliver his first sermon. In verse 41 we find that 3000 believed trusting in the Lord Jesus for salvation. As a result of that salvation they, “Continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (v42).

A verse from A. Taylor’s (1782-1866) hymn captures the thought of the love of God in sending the Holy Spirit.

What moved Thee to impart
Thy Spirit from above,
Therewith to fill our heart
With heavenly peace and love?
‘Twas love, unbounded love to us,
Moved Thee to give Thy Spirit thus.

3. Believing and being sealed with the Spirit of God

We will now turn to Ephesians 1 vv.12-14 and read these verses.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

In these few verses the writer Paul is initially speaking of himself and the other apostles. Then he refers to the Ephesian believers as those who also trusted in Christ because they had believed the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. He then states the simple series of events. Upon

believing, they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise. That same Spirit was the earnest of our inheritance until the actual moment of the redemption of the purchased possession.

The first thing to notice was the sealing upon believing. Sealing denotes ownership, believers belong to God. God is not going to relinquish what He owns because the price He paid for ownership was the Lord Jesus going to the cross. The Holy Spirit dwelling in a believer guarantees ownership. Also the Spirit of God is the guarantee of our inheritance that we will one day come into the fully blessing of our salvation – the redemption of the purchased possession.

One of the hymns by S.P. Tregelles (1813-75) has these two verses.

“One spirit with the Lord;”
Oh, blessed, wondrous word!
What heavenly light, what power divine,
Doth that sweet word afford!

“One spirit with the Lord:”
Jesus, the glorified,
Esteems the church for which He bled,
His body and His bride.

Acts chapter 10 covers the conversion and blessing of Cornelius a Roman centurion. He was a godly man but needed to know the way of salvation to have his sins forgiven. In so doing he would receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is a lovely chapter and worth reading after listening to this broadcast. We will read the last few verses of the chapter, vv.44-48.

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

As Peter was unfolding the Gospel message suddenly and to the amazement of Peter and his Jewish companions the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and all those that were with him in the house. The Spirit had the same impact as He did at Pentecost, not so much for the gentiles but a clear witness to Peter and the other Jews with him. The work was real, the Gentiles were being brought into blessing. So again we have believing and receiving of the Holy Spirit.

A verse from one of J. G. Deck’s (1802-84) hymns seems appropriate here.

Lord, we are Thine, bought by Thy blood,
Once the poor guilty slaves of sin;
But Thou redeemst us to God,
And mad’st Thy Spirit dwell within;
Thou hast our sinful wanderings borne
With love and patience all divine;
As brands, then, from the burning torn,
We own that we are wholly Thine.

4. Changed lives

We will now consider Galatians 5 vv.22-23.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

As we grow in our faith and the understanding of the Scriptures, the above features will become evident in our lives. In Galatians 5 we see the kind of changes that should take place. In the three verses prior to our reading Paul catalogues the type of features that mark the unbelieving person. Not every feature will necessarily mark the unbeliever. This is different to the Christian where all nine features of the fruit of the Spirit should be true of us.

5. Preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ

In Ephesians chapter 5 v.27, we are brought into the secret of the heart of Christ that he has for His redeemed ones since Calvary. This does not stop until the Rapture. Let us read that verse.

“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

In this verse the Lord Jesus is looking forward to the day when He will present to Himself the whole church. It will no longer be marked by failure, doubts, or fears, but is wholly suitable to be with Him in glory.

In the above we have Christ's longing for His Church. Paul writes to the Philippian church and speaks of his longing to be with Christ. This should be true for each believer.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1 v.23).

At the end of the book of Revelation, in the last chapter, John brings to our attention the longing of the heart of believers. Here we find it is closely linked with the Spirit of God. Revelation 22:17 states.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

It is the opening part of the verse which once again links the believer with the Spirit of God. The type of world in which we live that we referred to earlier, in the section “Changed lives”, and what the apostle John had written about in the book of Revelation, should stir up the desire in our hearts that the Lord should come quickly. The Spirit operates in the heart of the Bride to cause that desire to be verbalised. Then in the second last verse of this chapter 22 we have again the heart response of both the Lord Jesus and the redeemed company.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Mrs A. Dent (1815-87) has a lovely hymn from which I will quote two verses.

Lord Jesus, come,
And take Thy rightful place
As Son of man, of all the theme;
Come, Lord, to reign o'er all supreme;

Lord Jesus come.

Spirit and Bride
With longing voice say, Come;
Yea, Lord, Thy word from that bright home,
Is "Surely, I will quickly come";
E'en so, Lord. come.

6. Conclusion

Let us just pick out the main points as I have endeavoured to address the question, "How do I know I have the Spirit?"

We started with looking at the Lord's promise as found in John chapters 14, 15, and 16, regarding the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, being sent into this world to specifically dwell in the hearts of believers. Not as a temporary affair but permanently. That this promise would be realised on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came and resided in the believers at Jerusalem. The Spirit of God would be both a Guide and One who would lead believers into the truth found in the Scriptures. That the Bible would become the living word of God not like the dead books that are the works of unbelievers.

We considered the Spirit's coming on the day of Pentecost that had a dramatic change in the believers, giving them the ability to speak in numerous languages and enabling Peter to preach his first sermon. This was followed by Paul's teaching to the Ephesians that when we believe we are sealed with the Spirit of God. That the sealing is permanent, and it is the guarantee that we will one day enjoy our salvation to the full in heaven.

We next moved to consider the change that should occur in a believer's life. No longer marked by our old nature but marked by the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit has nine features commencing with love. Finally at the end of the book of Revelation we find the Spirit of God moving our hearts to respond to the Lord's longing, "Surely I come quickly" by saying, "Even so come Lord Jesus."

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on "Concerns Christians sometimes have. How do I know I have the Spirit?" talk number T1325.

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