



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person equal with the Father and the Son. Each Person is distinct from the other but never acts independently. The three are one in nature and purpose. This mystery is called the doctrine of the Trinity although that word is not used in the Bible. The teaching of God in Three Persons began in the Old Testament and then was clearly revealed in the New Testament. It is essential to our Christian walk that we realize the Holy Spirit is not an influence but a Divine Person. We begin this study of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament for the purpose of recognizing the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit throughout God's Word. **John 4:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*"

If you find yourself struggling to understand the complexity of the doctrine of the Trinity, remember the words of Billy Graham: "Our finite minds cannot understand or explain this mystery of God, which is nevertheless a fact. We must accept the truths found in the Word of God by faith even though we ourselves cannot comprehend them fully." **Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)** ¹ *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

The Triune God – God in Three Persons

Read Genesis 1:2 (ESV) 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.*

God's Word tells us that even in the place of darkness in the beginning, there was hope because of the Presence of the *Spirit of God*. Centuries later in the New Testament, Jesus would say in **John 14:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.* When we accept Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us – that is a portion of the same Holy Spirit of God who brought Light into the darkness in the beginning. This does not mean that we become a god because His Spirit is in us. There is only one God but God does deposit a piece of Himself within us! How marvelous! The Presence of the Spirit of God within us allows us to live with our Savior forever!

Read Genesis 1:26 (ESV) ²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...."*

The best explanation of the *let us* phrase in this passage is that it is the first reference to the three persons of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Think of the Three Persons of the Trinity this way: The Father is the Originator; the Son is the Executor; the Holy Spirit is the Applicator.

For example, in salvation, the Father gave His Son; the Son came to pay the price of sin and break the power of death; and the Holy Spirit applies the salvation that has been provided. Do

not make the mistake of concluding that the Holy Spirit is less than God the Father or God the Son. The Holy Spirit is God!

We also get a glimpse of the Three-in-One in **Genesis 3:22 (ESV)** ²² *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil... There is another such reference when mankind sinned at the Tower of Babel: **Genesis 11:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."**

"Us" is also used when the prophet Isaiah got his personal glimpse into heaven. **Isaiah 6:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."* All these references foreshadow the truth that from the very beginning God exists in three persons.

Because of our human nature it is easy for believers to take the Holy Spirit of God that dwells within us for granted. We should always be aware of **1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. When we accept Christ as our Savior, when we become part of the King's family, we represent the King of All Creation. That is why Oswald Chambers said that he wanted to give 'My Utmost for His Highest'.*

The Holy Spirit Has Not Always Had Its Special Residence in the Child of God

Read 1 Samuel 16:14 (ESV) ¹⁴ *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.*

We can read this verse concerning King Saul and become 'nervous'. Does it mean that someone today who has accepted Christ as Savior can lose their salvation?

To answer that question, I turned to the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM) to help with the answer. They suggest to go back in scripture in order to understand just what the "presence of the Holy Spirit" meant in the life of Saul.

Numbers 11 relates the story of the people of Israel's grumbling and rebellion over the matter of having only manna to eat. This incident is the last straw for Moses, and he prays that if he has to continue to lead the people alone, he would rather God just kill him now. God then tells him to select 70 men who are among the authoritative elders of the tribes of Israel and to gather them at the tent of meeting. God then tells Moses:

Read Numbers 11:17 (ESV) 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.*

The passage describes Moses having the Spirit upon him uniquely and alone among Israel, and God is now going to give that Spirit to these 70 elders as well. He is not giving the Spirit to them

based on their repentance or faith, nor for the purpose of their eternal salvation. Instead, the Spirit is given to them so that they can share in the leadership of Israel along with Moses. We find in this passage a connection between God raising someone up to lead Israel, and God blessing that person with the unique presence of the Spirit to carry out this role. The passage goes on to explain:

Read Numbers 11:25 (ESV) ²⁵ *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.*

One of the functions of the Holy Spirit was to work in those whom God had blessed to be leaders in Israel.

It makes sense that when God chose Saul through His prophet Samuel to be king over Israel that He would place His Spirit upon him. Nothing is ever said about Saul's redemption or forgiveness of sins. It is all in the context of Saul having been chosen by God to be king.

It is natural to wonder if Saul 'made it to heaven'. When Samuel spoke through the witch of Endor to Saul, Samuel said in ***1 Samuel 28:19 (ESV)*** ¹⁹ *Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines."*

In this instance, Saul used a witch to summon a familiar spirit. A familiar spirit is a demon that is summoned by a medium with the intention that the spirit summoned will obey his or her commands. Often, familiar spirits are believed to be the spirits of people who have died. Keep in mind that such spirit appearances are actually demonic forces imitating people in order to deceive and they should not be toyed with even today.

Commentators are split on whether or not this was actually Samuel, but the text seems to imply it was. So why the exception? We are not sure, but it might have been allowed for the purpose of rebuking Saul for his sin. If it was indeed Samuel speaking, then Saul and his sons will be heaven along with Samuel.

The Spirit leaving Saul means God removed His blessing on Saul as king of Israel and placed His Spirit on David, the man He has chosen to replace Saul as king. The removal of the Spirit from one and the giving of the Spirit to the other was God's supernatural declaration that the throne had been taken from Saul and given to David. Saul may cling to His crown for a time, but God was no longer with him nor blessing his leadership. Israel had a new shepherd. God had raised up a new leader for his people. David was now God's chosen king. Is it any wonder that David became fearful that the LORD would remove His Spirit from his life when he committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. Let's read his words when he was confronted with his sin and accepted responsibility for them.

Read Psalm 51:11 (ESV) ¹¹ *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

David had witnessed firsthand the effect of the loss of the Holy Spirit's Presence on the life of King Saul and he did not want to lose the blessing and help of the Holy Spirit as he ruled Israel and he desires for his heart to be right once again with God.

Our disobedience does not cause us to lose our eternal salvation but God's children can lose the effectiveness of our ministry because of our disobedience. God forgave David but his reign over Israel was never the same.

Although the next passage is not from the Old Testament, this seems like the appropriate place to look into the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit or the unpardonable or unforgivable sin which some worry about having committed.

Read Matthew 12:31-32 (ESV) ³¹ *Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.* ³² *And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

Jesus spoke these words after healing a man who was blind and could not speak. The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is saying that Jesus performed His miracles by the power of the devil. Jesus did His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit who had come upon Him at His baptism. This is unforgivable because it struck at the very heart of the redemptive work of God in Christ through the Spirit.

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated today although some try. Jesus Christ is not on earth—He is seated at the right hand of God. No one can personally witness Jesus performing a miracle and then attribute that power to Satan instead of the Spirit like the Pharisees did.

Is there an unpardonable sin today? The only unforgivable sin today is the mistake of remaining in continued unbelief. The Holy Spirit is in the world convicting us of sin. **John 16:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*

To resist that conviction and willfully remain unrepentant is to “blaspheme” the Spirit. There will be no pardon for rejecting Christ after we have passed from this life into death. The way to avoid the unpardonable sin in the future is to believe NOW. **John 3:36 (ESV)** ³⁶ *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

If you are worried that you may have committed some sin that is too heinous to be forgiven, then don't be concerned. The blood of Jesus covers all our sin!