

Questions/answers About the Holy Spirit

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon explores the multifaceted role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, emphasizing His power, presence, and the importance of obedience to His guidance.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, John 16:13, Acts 15:9, Romans 8:9, 1 Timothy 1:5

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Christian Perfection"

Description

James Blaine Chapman delves into various questions regarding the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of relying on the Spirit's power rather than worldly resources, the significance of not grieving the Holy Spirit through continuous sin or rejection, and the understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the lives of believers. He clarifies the use of terms like 'Holy Ghost' and 'Holy Spirit,' highlighting their interchangeable nature and the importance of accurately conveying their meaning. Chapman also addresses the concept of Christian perfection, distinguishing between perfection in love and the perfection of state, and the necessity of obedience and faith in God's work in believers' lives.

Transcript

QUESTION #112 -- Please explain "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

ANSWER #112 -- The subject was the rebuilding of the temple, and for such a task there seemed to be insufficient resources. But the Lord assured the prophet that the real force was not that of armies or worldly influence, but the Spirit of God. And we know the parallel today. The greatest miracle in the world is the changing of a sinner into a saint, and this cannot be done by armies or navies, but only by the Spirit of God. And it is thus also with the greatest accomplishments in the Christian service -- not equipment and popularity, but the presence of the Holy Spirit will answer to our needs.

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QUESTION #113 -- Some Christians at this place want to know what it means to grieve away the Holy Spirit. Some contend that one would not realize that the Spirit had departed, but would make light of Christianity, and probably curse and revile God. Others think that when the Spirit departs the person is told the reason. Some think that if one knew he had grieved the Spirit away there would be so much agony of spirit over it that all coming in contact with that person would know what had happened on account of his unhappy condition. So we are submitting the problem to you.

ANSWER #113 -- The evidence from observation is that the effect of the Holy Spirit's withdrawal is not uniform, any more than the effect of conviction is uniform. Some people do know when they made the final decision that drove the Spirit away, and they are so very unhappy that reason itself is threatened. Others sin continuously and become hardened by a gradual process so that they reach a state of hopelessness without being fully aware of it. So I think there is truth in all the opinions expressed above, only the descriptions given are not of universal application. People may sin so as to drive the Spirit away by means of one single act or decision. Or they may grieve Him away by the attitude of neglect which finally becomes an irrevocable attitude of rejection. And the only way to make sure not to sin the sin unto death is to be instant and constant in obeying God in all things great and small.

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QUESTION #114 -- Are we scriptural when we speak of the Holy Ghost as the Holy Spirit? Lately my attention was called to the fact that the Scriptures speak of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire -- not the baptism with or of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, it was said is the "Spirit of God," "The Spirit of Christ," the "Spirit of truth," etc. I am anxious to speak scripturally in my public and personal ministry. Will you please help me?

ANSWER #114 -- There is just the one word *pneuma* for spirit in the original Greek from which our English Bible is translated. And this is the word for wind or air in motion, for the human spirit, for a temper or disposition of soul, for the intelligent, incorporeal human spirit separate from the body, for the undying soul, for angels good and bad, for God (as in John 4:24), and for the third person of the trinity in His relationship to Jesus, to the prophets and apostles, and to the saints in general. What is actually meant by the word must be determined by the adjective with which it is associated or by the context. But Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost and fire (and here is found a metaphor which means simply "the fiery Holy Ghost"), Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Truth, and other such terms refer to one and the same person. There is no reason, speaking from the viewpoint of the original word, why you should not read "Spirit" everywhere instead of "Ghost" or "Ghost" everywhere instead of "Spirit." The translators of the 1611 edition, our Authorized Version, probably used the two words just for the sake of avoiding monotony. But in modern English the word "Ghost" has come to be used pretty much in a derogatory sense as in describing apparitions and evil spirits. Therefore the revisers adopted "Spirit" as the uniform translation of the word *pneuma* whenever the third person of the Trinity or the Godhead is meant. And, considering our English usage, this is in the interest of accuracy. But especially in speaking, the old form, "Baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire" is sometimes more emphatic and in well informed Christian circles is not misleading. But by all means there should be no confusion as to the meaning of these words, and there should be no thought of any "unscripturalness" when either form is employed.

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QUESTION #115 -- Please explain (1) Malachi 1:2, 3; and (2) Matthew 12:31.

ANSWER #115 -- The first passage mentioned reads as follows: "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob: and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." I suppose the difficulty is in the statement that God hated Esau, and I think scholars generally are agreed that this and kindred statements, some of them in the New Testament, are to be understood as expressing degrees of regard. As though to say, "I loved Jacob, and Esau I loved less" -- or "Esau I disregarded." And

in the present instance, it is evident that it is the nation which sprang from Esau, and not the man Esau, which is in mind. The purpose of the prophet was to show how unkind Israel had been in the face of such wonderful favor as had been shown them. The second passage says, "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." From the context we learn that persecutors of the Master were accrediting the work of the Holy Ghost to the devil, and this was to warn them that their act was approaching the point where mercy would give way to wrath and they would be hopeless. It is evident that when men accredit the work of the Spirit to the devil they put themselves out of reach of the Spirit; for then the more He strives with them the farther they will be driven away. This is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Another method of sinning against the Holy Ghost is to just persistently and continually reject His call or disregard His reproof. This is perhaps the most common way of passing beyond the line of hope. Let us all be ready and anxious to listen and obey, lest we, too, should grieve Him so that He will go away.

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QUESTION #116 -- What was that perfection which Paul, according to his testimony in Philippians 3:11-13, had not attained?

ANSWER #116 -- Paul had attained Christian perfection, but not resurrection perfection. The one is perfection in love, the other is the perfection of state. The one is received through the ministration of the Holy Spirit on condition of faith here and now, the other is to be attained by the ministration of the Holy Spirit at the second coming of Christ. When Peter and John and the others were mending their nets in preparation for another excursion after fish, the Greek says they were "perfecting their nets" -- that is, they were mending the rends and preparing their nets for catching fish. But the perfection of the resurrection is represented by the draft itself in which 153 fine fish were brought to the land. We are to be sanctified and "prepared unto every good work" (like the nets were prepared for the service they were made to serve), but we are yet to strive that we may come out to the end with the purpose which we were set to serve actually accomplished.

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QUESTION #117 -- In Acts 15:9 Peter says of the people at Jerusalem and Caesarea, "God purified their hearts by faith." Was there a specific promise upon which this faith for cleansing was based?

ANSWER #117 -- The Master Himself called the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, "The Promise of the Father." There are many promises, but by way of pre-eminence, this one is marked out as though it were the only one. And the coming of the Spirit in dispensational fullness was and still is called, "The baptism with the Holy Ghost." The primary meaning of baptism is cleansing. Hence, in the language of the times, baptism with the Holy Ghost meant the cleansing wrought by the coming of the Holy Spirit. And since this coming was the outstanding promise, I believe the Christians in question based their prayers and their faith upon this outstanding, and best known of the promises of God. The promise, the dispensational promise of this age is that God baptizes His people with the Holy Ghost, and thus purifies their hearts. And since the coming of the Spirit is conditioned upon faith, their hearts are purified (conditionally) by faith, although they are purified efficiently by the Holy Ghost.

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QUESTION #118 -- Seeing all scripture is inspired by the Holy 'Spirit, how can it be said, "He shall not speak of himself," as in John 16:13?

ANSWER #118 -- The rendering is clearer if you read ("from") instead of ("of") and the statement must be read in connection with the succeeding clause. Thus: "He shall not speak from himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak," etc. That is, the Holy Spirit is not a voice disconnected from the Father and the Son, and He does not speak anything inconsistent with what the Son has said and done. And Jesus commended the disciples to the further revelations that were to come through the Spirit and assured them it would be dependable and in harmony with what He himself had already told them by word of mouth.

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QUESTION #119 -- Are we to understand that when Jesus breathed upon His disciples in the Upper Room and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that it was an impartation for personal victory, and that the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them at Pentecost was a baptism for service to others?

ANSWER #119 -- I do not so understand the distinction. Adam Clarke thought the experience of His breathing upon them was in the nature of an assurance, a sort of clearing up of all past experiences, making ready for the Pentecostal experience which was for personal purity as well as for power for service to others. The very word baptism means to cleanse, and it is scarcely correct to speak of a "baptism for service," since baptism is for purity.

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QUESTION #120 -- Some people say that regenerated people do not have, the Holy Spirit. That He is just with regenerated people and not actually within until we are sanctified wholly. If this is true, what is the meaning of Romans 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his"? Is there a difference between "the Spirit of Christ" and the Holy Spirit?

ANSWER #120 -- Regenerated people do have the Holy Spirit both with them and in them. No doubt the error you have noted arises in the minds of good people from an inaccurate reading of John 14:17, and an overemphasis on the with and in, in this instance. The actual tense in both instances is future and the thought has to do with fullness (by your side and within your hearts), rather than with a distinction regarding the Holy Spirit's location in the case of regenerated and sanctified Christians. And there is no difference between "The Spirit of Christ" and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit, and if any man have not the Holy Spirit, he is no Christian. This is the statement of the Scriptures, and there is no way around it except by unpalatable evasion. The only "Executive of the Godhead" in this world is the Holy Spirit. He convicts the sinner, regenerates the penitent believer, and sanctifies the devoted, believing Christian. The distinction is a distinction of offices, not of personalities. The Holy Spirit is a person, and is indivisible. He does not live in temples of stone or other materials, but in the hearts of His disciples. When He comes into the penitent believer's heart in regenerating office, there follows the conflict between the "flesh and Spirit" (carnal nature, not the material body, and the Holy Spirit), and this is ended when the believer makes a full consecration and believes for the full cleansing of his heart from inbred sin. And the actual purging out of inbred sin (on the basis of the blood of Jesus as its merit and by faith as its condition) is by the Holy Spirit. Henceforth the Holy Spirit rules the will and affections completely.

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QUESTION #121 -- Some people say that if we get saved and sanctified and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit we shall receive light on such things as specific matters of dress, wedding rings, etc., and that then these things pass from the list of nonessentials to that of essentials and that we then either bring our lives to the standard or else we shall lose the Holy Spirit out of our lives. Do you think this is true?

ANSWER #121 -- Well, I believe the Holy Spirit will lead those who receive and obey Him, even in the minute and detailed things of life. But I have not found in my years of observation that this results in uniformity of dress and habit among God's people. There is unity in variety among the people of God, and some things like specific manner of dress remain in the realm of the personal to the end of life. "Regimentation" is not the teaching of the Bible. There is a "rugged individualism" among the best people in the world, and I am glad it is so.

Please read Romans 14:2 and 5 and see if these passages do not amply justify my statements. It is not one sanctified person in a thousand that dresses according to my taste. Each one is a little too finely dressed, or else he does not use colors that blend, or else he is a little faddish, or else he is somewhat slouchy. He is too nearly up with the latest styles or else he is too far behind (and by he I mean also the females of the species). Thank God I am not the criterion.

"Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." It is never safe to take a specific passage of scripture and make it a rule for ourselves and others until we first consider when it was written and what it meant to the people to whom it was first addressed. One old, eccentric preacher is said to have attacked the style of women's hair dress in his day by the use of the text in Matthew 24. He eliminated the context and just used the words, "Top-knot come down." But such use of the Holy Scriptures is a worse vice than the ones the preachers seek to condemn.

Here is the standard: Get saved and sanctified, walk in all the light that comes to you through the Word of God and by the impressions of the Holy Spirit. Do nothing that you yourself believe and feel to be out of harmony with God's will for you, and just let the people, good and bad, have their liberty to talk about you, and do not try to compel others to follow your specific rules, for "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5).

Evangelist E. A. Fergerson used to paraphrase thus: "Now the sum of all God requires is divine love overflowing a pure heart, a good conscience and faith that is not put on." It must be a disagreeable thing when one feels compelled to set himself up for a standard and expect the neighbors to accept what he says and what he does. My observation is that usually when people get into this they lose their love for saints and sinners and become mossbacks in religion. I believe they will go to heaven all right, and the world will not suffer much loss when they do so.

But let us try to keep good standing with God by obeying His Word and Spirit according to the best light we can get. Then let God judge His people and decide who has light and who does not, and also let Him keep the gates of heaven and let in whomsoever He will. We know some things, like breaches of the Ten Commandments, are sinful and wrong, but in the instances where God has spoken only in principles, let us not try too hard to make specific rules.

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