

“CHRISTIANITY 101: (#3) GOT SPIRIT?”  
(Luke 3:15-17,21-22; Acts 1:8)

**[PROP NEEDED: 2 Holy Spirit Videos from SermonSpice.com]**

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 2-3-08]

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1. Read Text: Luke 3:15-17,21-22; Acts 1:8 and Pray.

2. **[WATCH ONE of TWO VIDEOS: “*Spirit*” (1:42) OR “*The Holy Spirit*” (2:30)]**

A– So, who is the Holy Spirit? And what purpose and role does he play in our spiritual lives?

B–These are some of the questions I want us to wrestle with today as we continue our sermon series “Christianity 101” by talking about one of the most mysterious and elusive subjects in the entire Bible – the Holy Spirit.

3. Now, let’s begin by exploring a bit of the meaning of the name itself.

A–The word we translate as “*spirit*” in the Bible (Hebrew *ruach*; Greek *pneuma*) literally can mean “*spirit*,” OR it can mean “*wind*” or “*breath*.”

B–So, anywhere in the scriptures that we find references to the wind/breath of God, (especially in what we call the Old Testament), these are references to the Holy Spirit.

1–In the New Testament, God’s Spirit is referred as the Advocate, Comforter, Counselor, “*one who comes alongside*” [as “Spirit Man” clip put it] (Greek=*paraklete*/Helper).

2–And our English title “*Holy Ghost*” has its roots in the old Anglo-Saxon word for “*guest*” – so the Holy Spirit is truly a “*holy guest*” in the life of a Christian believer.

C–By whatever word that’s used, though, throughout the scriptures the Holy Spirit is portrayed as an extension of the very nature and character of God Himself,...

1–...So that as we think about the Spirit’s relationship to God the Father and God the Son (both of whom we talked about in our previous two sermons), it might be helpful to think of the Holy Spirit not so much as a *separate, 3rd* spiritual being,...

2–...but as a paradoxical way to describe God’s very love *between* Father and Son – as the glue, if you will, who binds all Godly things together. <sup>1</sup>

3–And this, by the way, is precisely why we refer to the Spirit *not* as an impersonal “It,” but using *personal* pronouns (“He” or “She”). <sup>2</sup>

4. So, this is a bit of WHO the Holy Spirit is.

A–But **WHAT exactly is His purpose and role in our spiritual lives?** Why do you and I need the work and presence of the Holy Spirit to be Christians today?

B–Well, there are numerous ways that the Holy Spirit affects and influences our spiritual lives, but today I want us to focus us on **three primary functions /roles** that are found over & over again in the scriptures (*See blanks in bulletin Sermon Notes– all start with letter “C”*).<sup>3</sup>

–II–

5. The first of these actually occurs *before* we ever even become believers: that is, the Holy Spirit functions to **CONVICT** us of sin so that we understand our need for salvation and can accept it for ourselves.

A–Last week I described how Jesus came to make possible a renewed relationship with God. But without the Holy Spirit, you and I can never even receive this renewing of our souls that Jesus makes possible!

B–It’s true that in today’s Luke 3 scripture, people were coming from all parts of Palestine to hear John the Baptist preach about salvation, but it was the *Holy Spirit* who (though never mentioned by name) was the one mysteriously drawing them there to begin with.

C–You see, in this “convicting” role, the Spirit shares various manifestations of God’s grace to bring us salvation:

1–For example, through something we call “**Prevenient Grace**,” the Spirit acts as God wooing us to come back and have a relationship with Him.

2–Through something we call “**Convicting Grace**,” we find the Holy Spirit as our “conscience” – the one who brings us a conscious awareness of our need for God – helping us to acknowledge that which separates us from Him (called “Sin”).

3–And through something we call “**Justifying Grace**,” God acts to pardon / forgive us, and enable us to accept again God’s renewed relationship with us (called by various terms: “*conversion*”; “*born again*”; or “*saved*”) = all the work of the Holy Spirit.

D–But as important as these are to bring us *to* salvation, the Holy Spirit also has some vital roles to play *after* we become believers, as well.

6. The first of these is to continually **CLEANSE** us of sin and refine us into the people that God wants us to be.

A–In Malachi 3:3, we find God’s Spirit referred to as a “*refiner’s fire*” and a “*fuller’s soap*” – come to cleanse and “*purify*” us daily of the things we do wrong.

B—And in Vs.17 of today’s Luke scripture, John the Baptist says that Jesus himself comes to...  
**[NRSV]** “...baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire,... [with] His winnowing fork... in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, [and to] burn [the chaff] with unquenchable fire.”

**[MSG]** “...change you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house (and) make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; (and) everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

C—You see, just because we’ve accepted Jesus as our Savior doesn’t mean we still don’t have things in our lives we need to work on and give up to God.

1—And it’s the Holy Spirit’s job to help us work on these even after we become Christians [(9:45) like what the “*Holy Spirit man*” was doing in the video clip].

2—That’s why we call this “**Sanctifying Grace**,” because it’s the work of God’s grace through His Spirit enabling us to be and act more like Jesus each & every day. <sup>4</sup>

7. And yet, perhaps the most important function/role of the Holy Spirit is to **COMMISSION** (i.e., to equip and empower) each and every believer for ministry and work in our world.

A—In today’s second scripture from Acts, Jesus tells his disciples that “*You will receive power [Greek *dunamus* = “dynamite”] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*”

B—Too often today, you and I try to live the Christian life in and through our own strength and ability: ...we trust our own business-savvy skills, or our great intellect, or our current finances to make it, and even in the church we sometimes leave God out entirely.

1—We sometimes forget that without the Holy Spirit, there *is* no real power for success in life or ministry – that, in fact, without the Holy Spirit, there’s not even power to *live* the Christian life itself [(9:45): again like we saw in the “HS Man” clip].

2—I believe that that’s one reason why Jesus didn’t preach or do any miracles until *after* his baptism that we read about today, because it wasn’t until *then* that Jesus received God’s commissioning and enabling *power* to go out and *DO* ministry!

3—And friends, in the same fashion, without *us* recognizing & tapping into that same commissioning power, we can never hope to accomplish ministry in Jesus’ name.

4—Author Croft Pentz says that “*If you have the Holy Spirit on the inside, you can stand any kind of battle on the outside.*” <sup>5</sup>

D—And so, to equip us for life and work in our world, the Bible says that the Spirit not only gives to each and every Christian various “**Spiritual Gifts**” (like wisdom, leadership, teaching, and a whole host of others), <sup>6</sup>...

E—...But also grows within us various “*Fruit of the Spirit*” which rise out of our daily walk with God – things like “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, & generosity*”<sup>7</sup> – so that the more closely we walk with God/Jesus, the more evident those “fruit” become in our lives.

8. Now, as I mentioned before, the Bible DOES describe *other* roles/functions of the Holy Spirit,<sup>8</sup> but I believe that these three – to *Convict, Cleanse, and Commission* – actually capture the essence of most all the others.

–III–

9. The bottom line is that both of today’s scriptures teach us that as great and important as it is to give our hearts and lives to Jesus, even *that* cannot really change or make a difference in us *without* the accompanying power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

A—God’s Spirit doesn’t make us “*better than anybody else*” – He simply makes us “*better than we’d be without Him.*”<sup>9</sup>

1—Now, maybe you’re a spiritual seeker here today, looking for tips on how to be a better spouse, or family member, or boss, or worker.

2—Perhaps you’re a new believer, trying to make sense of all this Christian stuff that you’ve committed yourself to.

3—Or perhaps you’ve been a Christian all your life, but have never really understood about the Holy Spirit.

B—Well, regardless of where you are in your spiritual walk, I want to encourage all of us to open ourselves (perhaps for the first time, perhaps for the hundredth) to the presence of God’s Holy Spirit, who can come alongside us and even *within* us, to give us the strength, power, and wisdom to live life as we were meant to.

1—After all, the question is *not* simply if we’ve “Got Jesus?”

2—No. The question is... have we *also* “**God Spirit?**” – the Holy Spirit of God Himself – to empower us to live the Christian life?

10. [PRAY... *for those who are new Christians to receive empowerment of Spirit, and for those who’ve been Christians all life and never understood to open themselves to that power*]
11. [HYMN: #393 -- “Spirit of the Living God” OR #420 -- “Breathe On Me, Breath of God”]

### **ENDNOTES:**

1. In this case, then, one way to think of the Spirit's relationship to *us* is to view God the Father as *God FOR us*; God the Son as *God WITH us*; and God the Holy Spirit as *God WITHIN us*.
2. What's more is that, unlike what some people might think, the Holy Spirit is *not* the property of charismatic/Pentecostal Christians or churches. Instead, He is and has been an important and integral part of nearly every Christian theological tradition since the beginning of the church 2000 years ago. For example, much of the ministry of John Wesley and the early Methodists in both England and America centered around the person, power, and work of the Spirit. So then, to be truly "Christian" is to acknowledge presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
3. The first two of these is accomplished before we ever even accept Christ into our hearts. The final two are accomplished after we accept Christ and become a Christian.
4. I.E., to be more and more "*holy*" or "*sanctified*" each and every moment of each and every day.
5. Croft M. Pentz, The Complete Book of Zingers (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1990). Of course, the reverse of this is also true: if we *lack* the Holy Spirit on the inside, we may fall prey to whatever is happening to or around us on the outside!
6. For several lists of various "Spiritual Gifts / Gifts of the Holy Spirit," read 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Romans 12:1-8, Ephesians 4:1-16, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.
7. Read Galatians 5:22-23 for the full listing of these "fruits of the Spirit."
8. For example, as Comforter, Counselor, Communicator with God, Helper (Greek *paraclete*), etc.
9. So the question is *not*, "*Do you have the Holy Spirit?*" If you've been baptized as a Christian believer, then you do – the question is, "*Does the Holy Spirit have you?*"