

# The Holy Spirit in the Believer

God With Us, God In Us, God Working Through Us

Primary Scripture: John 14:16-17, 26; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:9-16, 26; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 5:18

**"The Holy Spirit is not a reward for becoming a better Christian. He is God's presence in the believer, given because we belong to Jesus Christ."**

## Introduction - Is the Holy Spirit Really Working in Me?

I have asked a question that I believe many Christians ask, even if they do not always say it out loud: If I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, how is the Holy Spirit active in me? Is His work based on something I do? Do I have to reach a certain spiritual level before He begins working in my life?

Those questions matter because it is easy to turn the Christian life into a measuring stick. We look at somebody else's experience, their gifts, their prayer life, or the way they worship, and we wonder whether we are missing something. We hear someone describe a powerful spiritual experience and quietly ask, "Why does my walk with God not look like that?" But Jesus did not describe the Holy Spirit as a prize for the strongest believers. He promised the Spirit to those who belong to Him.

That changes where we begin. We do not begin with our performance. We begin with God's promise. The Holy Spirit is not a reward for becoming a better Christian. He is God's presence in the believer, given because we belong to Jesus Christ.

## 1. The Holy Spirit Is God's Gift, Not Our Achievement

Jesus told His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). Then He said, "he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). Think about the difference those words make. The Christian life is not simply us trying harder to follow Jesus from a distance. God gives His Spirit to dwell within His people.

Ephesians 1:13-14 says that after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and believing in Christ, believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That order is important. We are not saved because we first demonstrate enough spiritual fruit. We are not saved because we discover a spiritual gift. We are not saved because we reach some higher level of Christian maturity. Salvation rests in Jesus Christ. We receive eternal life by grace through faith, and the Spirit's presence is God's seal that we belong to Him.

That means the question is not, "Have I become good enough for the Holy Spirit?" None of us could answer yes to that. The better question is, "Have I trusted Jesus Christ?" If I belong to Christ, I can begin from the promise of God instead of the uncertainty of my feelings.

Feelings change. Some mornings we wake up ready to conquer the world. Other mornings we wonder whether we can conquer getting out of bed. God's promise is not built on the temperature of our emotions. The Spirit's presence is grounded in what Christ has done.

## **2. God Did Not Save Us and Then Leave Us Alone**

Sometimes we speak about salvation as though Jesus saves us, hands us a Bible, points us toward heaven, and says, "I will see you when you get there." That is not the picture Jesus gave His disciples. He knew He was going away, and He promised that they would not be abandoned.

In John 14:18 Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless." The word carries the idea of being left as an orphan. Jesus was telling them that His physical departure would not mean the absence of God. The Holy Spirit would be with them and in them.

Romans 8 describes that relationship beautifully. The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God. He helps us in our weakness. Even when we do not know what we ought to pray, the Spirit is at work. There are moments in life when prayer comes easily, and there are moments when all we have is a groan, a tear, or the name of Jesus. Romans 8 reminds us that our weakness does not shut God out.

I have had seasons in my own life when I did not have all the answers. I have learned that faith is not having every question answered; it is knowing whom I will trust when the answers do not come. The Holy Spirit works in those seasons too. God has never promised that we will understand every chapter while we are living it. He has promised that we will not walk through it alone.

## **3. The Holy Spirit Teaches Us and Points Us to Jesus**

Jesus said in John 14:26 that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, would teach His disciples and bring His words to remembrance. One of the Spirit's great works is continually directing us toward Jesus and helping God's Word become more than information on a page.

Have you ever read a passage of Scripture that you had read many times before, but suddenly it seemed to speak directly into what you were facing? The words were not new, but your heart heard them differently. Or perhaps you were in a difficult moment and a verse you had learned years earlier came back to mind. We should not treat every thought that enters our head as the voice of God, but we should recognize that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to teach, remind, convict, comfort, and direct us.

The Spirit does not come to make much of us. He comes to make Christ known. Jesus said in John 16:14, "He shall glorify me." That gives us a helpful test. Genuine spiritual growth should not make us more impressed with ourselves. It should make us more aware of Christ, more dependent upon Him, more loving toward others, and more willing to obey.

## **4. The Holy Spirit Changes the Way We Live**

Galatians 5 speaks about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Notice that Scripture calls this fruit. Fruit grows

because there is life within.

A branch does not tape apples onto itself and announce that it has become fruitful. Fruit comes from life flowing through the branch. In the same way, Christian character is not supposed to be a religious costume we put on Sunday morning. The Spirit works from the inside outward.

We should desire spiritual growth. We should pray, study Scripture, worship, obey God, gather with other believers, serve, forgive, and remain sensitive to His leading. But those things do not purchase the Holy Spirit. They are ways we cooperate with the God who is already at work in us.

Sometimes growth is dramatic. Often it is quieter. Maybe we forgive where we once would have held a grudge. Maybe we find peace in a situation that once would have controlled us. Maybe we become more patient, more compassionate, slower to anger, or quicker to listen. Maybe we recognize a temptation earlier than we once did. Maybe we apologize instead of defending ourselves. Do not overlook those changes. The work of the Spirit is not always loud, but it is real.

And fruit takes time. We do not plant an apple tree on Monday and become angry on Friday because there are no apples. Spiritual maturity is a lifetime of God shaping us. The question is not whether we have already arrived. The question is whether we are allowing God to keep changing us.

## **5. Fruit and Gifts Are Not the Same Thing**

This is an important distinction. The fruit of the Spirit describes the character God desires to develop in every believer. Every Christian should be growing in love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

Spiritual gifts are different. First Corinthians 12 says there are different gifts but the same Spirit, different ministries but the same Lord, and that the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the good of the body. The Spirit distributes gifts according to His will.

That means I do not have to possess every gift to know that the Holy Spirit is present in my life. Scripture does not tell us that every believer must have the identical gift, identical ministry, or identical experience. A body would not function very well if every part were an eye, an ear, or a hand. God builds His church with different people serving in different ways.

We get into trouble when gifts become status symbols. A spiritual gift is not a medal saying, "Look how spiritual I am." It is a tool saying, "Here is a way God can use me to serve somebody else." Gifts are for service, not status.

## **6. How Do I Discover and Develop What God Has Given Me?**

We sometimes make discovering a spiritual gift more mysterious than it needs to be. Begin by making yourself available to God. Ask Him where you can serve. Pay attention to the needs around you. Notice where God repeatedly gives you opportunities to help, teach, encourage, lead, give, show mercy, or strengthen others. Listen to mature believers who

recognize God's work in you.

Then serve. We often discover gifts while using them. A person may never discover a gift of encouragement while waiting at home for a supernatural label to appear. But begin walking beside hurting people, and you may discover that God consistently uses your words to strengthen them.

Can gifts grow? Our ability to recognize, steward, and use what God gives us can certainly mature. A teacher can study. A leader can learn wisdom. A person who serves can become more effective. But we should be careful not to turn spiritual growth into a transaction: "If I pray this many hours, God owes me another gift." God is not a vending machine, and spiritual gifts are not trophies.

We pursue the Giver, not the gifts. We seek God because He is God. As we walk with Him, He shapes our character and teaches us to use whatever He has placed in our hands faithfully.

## **7. Our Response Matters - But It Does Not Purchase God's Presence**

Scripture tells believers, "grieve not the holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30), and "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Those warnings tell us something important: our response matters.

We can ignore conviction. We can cling to bitterness. We can knowingly choose our own way. We can fill our minds with everything except God's Word and then wonder why His leading seems distant. We can become spiritually dull. But notice something: those warnings are addressed to God's people. They are not instructions for earning the Spirit; they are instructions for walking faithfully with the Spirit who has been given.

Ephesians 5:18 tells believers to "be filled with the Spirit." This is not a call to earn salvation again. It is a call to yield ourselves continually to God's influence and control. There is a difference between the Spirit being present in the believer and the believer being surrendered to the Spirit's leading.

So yes, what we do matters - not because our obedience purchases God, but because obedience affects our fellowship, usefulness, growth, and sensitivity. Grace is not permission to ignore God. Grace is the foundation from which we can finally walk with Him.

## **8. What Does It Mean to Walk in the Spirit?**

Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk in the Spirit." Walking is a wonderfully ordinary picture. Most of life is not lived in spectacular moments. It is lived one step at a time.

Walking in the Spirit means bringing God into the ordinary decisions of the day. How will I speak to this person? Will I forgive? Will I tell the truth when a lie would be easier? Will I respond in anger or wait? Will I listen when God corrects me? Will I serve when nobody notices? Will I trust God when I cannot see what He is doing?

We sometimes want God to show us His entire plan, while He is asking us to obey the next step. The Spirit leads us through Scripture, conviction, wisdom, prayer, and a growing desire to honor Christ. And as we take those steps, our lives begin to look different.

There may be moments when God's presence feels overwhelming, and we should be thankful for them. But we should not conclude that God is absent during the quiet days. A marriage is not real only during the anniversary celebration. A friendship is not real only during an emotional conversation. Relationship is built through daily presence. Our walk with God is much the same.

## **9. Stop Comparing Your Walk With Somebody Else's**

One of the quickest ways to become discouraged is to compare our spiritual life with someone else's. We compare their public moment with our private struggle. We see their gift and forget that God may be doing something entirely different through us.

Peter once asked Jesus about another disciple, and Jesus essentially brought Peter's attention back to his own calling: "what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22). That is good advice for us. Follow Jesus. Let God decide how He will use another believer.

If someone else has a gift you do not have, thank God for what He is doing through that person. If God has given you a gift, use it humbly. If another person's worship looks different from yours, do not automatically assume that yours is deficient or theirs is superior. The evidence of the Spirit is not that every Christian becomes identical. The evidence is that Christ increasingly becomes visible in us.

## **10. The Greatest Evidence Is a Life Becoming More Like Christ**

We can spend so much time asking, "What is my gift?" that we overlook a more searching question: "What kind of person am I becoming?" First Corinthians 12 speaks powerfully about spiritual gifts, but the very next chapter is First Corinthians 13 - the chapter about love. Paul would not allow gifts to be separated from character.

A person can speak impressively and still be unloving. A person can have knowledge and still be proud. A person can be active in ministry and still refuse to forgive. The Spirit who gives gifts is also the Spirit who produces fruit.

So when I ask whether the Holy Spirit is working in me, I should not look only for something spectacular. I can also ask: Is God teaching me to love people better? Is He softening places in me that were hard? Is He convicting me when I am wrong? Is He giving me a desire for His Word? Is He helping me forgive? Is He teaching me to trust Him in places where I once lived in fear?

Those may not make headlines. But they look a great deal like the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **What Does This Mean for Me Today?**

Maybe you have wondered whether you are spiritual enough for God to use. Maybe you have compared your Christian life with someone else's. Maybe you have expected the Holy Spirit always to feel dramatic and have missed the quiet evidence of His work.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ, begin with what God has promised rather than with what you happen to feel today. Thank Him for His presence. Open His Word. Pray honestly. Obey the truth He shows you. Ask Him to grow His fruit in your life. Ask Him to show you where you can

serve. Use whatever gifts He has given you for the good of others and the glory of Christ.

And when you fail, do not run away from God. Confess it. Receive His forgiveness. Get back up and keep walking. Sanctification is not pretending that we never stumble. It is God continuing His work in people who keep turning toward Him.

We do not pursue the Holy Spirit so that we can become important. We yield to the Holy Spirit so that Jesus Christ becomes more evident in us.

## **Conclusion - We Do Not Walk Alone**

The Christian life was never meant to be lived by our strength alone. Jesus promised His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless. God has not saved us and then told us to figure out the rest by ourselves.

The Holy Spirit teaches, reminds, convicts, comforts, helps us in weakness, produces fruit, equips us for service, and points us continually toward Jesus Christ. Our part is not to earn His presence. Our part is to trust God, remain available, surrender our lives, and walk with Him.

You may not always feel what God is doing inside you. You may not always understand why He is leading you through a particular season. But if you belong to Christ, you are not walking alone.

God is with us. God is in us. God is working through us. And the same God who began the work is faithful to continue shaping our lives for His glory.

## **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for saving us by Your grace through Jesus Christ. Thank You that You have not left us to walk this life alone. Thank You for the Holy Spirit, who teaches us, comforts us, convicts us, helps us in our weakness, and continually points us toward Jesus.

Forgive us for the times we have resisted Your leading, compared our walk with somebody else's, or looked for something spectacular while overlooking the quiet work You were already doing within us.

Grow Your fruit in us. Teach us to love more deeply, forgive more freely, trust more completely, and obey more faithfully. Show us how to use the gifts You have given us to serve others rather than ourselves. Give us ears to hear Your Word, hearts willing to surrender, and courage to take the next step You place before us.

And when we do not understand what You are doing, remind us that we are not alone. May our lives make Jesus Christ known. In His name we pray. Amen.