

What Does the Bible Say About the Holy Spirit?

Few subjects are surrounded by more confusion than the Holy Spirit. Some speak of Him as a vague feeling or a force. Others claim He speaks to them directly, in promptings and impressions apart from the Bible, or look for the same miracles the apostles worked. The Scriptures give us something surer than feelings and clearer than guesswork. They tell us that the Holy Spirit is God, that He gave us the written word, that the age of miracles served its purpose and closed, and that He works in us now through that word. Let us follow what is written.

The Holy Spirit Is God

The Spirit is not an it. He is a person, and He is God. He has a mind and a will, dividing His gifts *"to every man severally as he will"* ([1 Corinthians 12:11](#)). When Ananias lied, Peter said he had lied *"to the Holy Ghost"*, and then, *"thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God"* ([Acts 5:3-4](#)). To lie to the Spirit is to lie to God, because the Spirit is God. He can be grieved ([Ephesians 4:30](#)), and He stands with the Father and the Son in the one name into which we are baptized ([Matthew 28:19](#)). We owe Him the honor we owe to God.

The Spirit Gave Us the Scriptures

The great work of the Spirit that touches us is this: He gave us the word of God. The Scriptures did not come from men, for *"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* ([2 Peter 1:21](#)). Jesus promised the apostles that the Spirit would *"guide you into all truth"* ([John 16:13](#)), and they spoke *"not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth"* ([1 Corinthians 2:13](#)). When you open the Bible, you are reading what the Spirit revealed. That is no small thing. It is His message to you, complete and in your hands.

The Spirit Works Through the Word

This is the point most often missed. The Holy Spirit does not work on a person apart from the word He gave. The word is called *"the sword of the Spirit"* ([Ephesians 6:17](#)), and it is by that word that He does His work in us. We are born again, not by some separate inner stirring, but *"by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* ([1 Peter 1:23](#)). God *"begat he us with the word of truth"* ([James 1:18](#)). The gospel *"is the power of God unto salvation"* ([Romans 1:16](#)). When the crowd at Pentecost were cut to the heart, they were *"pricked in their heart"* ([Acts 2:37](#)) as they

heard the word preached, not by a voice apart from it. Jesus prayed, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth"* ([John 17:17](#)). The Spirit and the word are never at odds, and the Spirit will lead no one away from what He Himself has written.

The Miraculous Gifts Were for the First Age

When the church began, the Spirit worked in a way He does not work today. At Pentecost the apostles spoke in tongues they had never learned, and Peter promised the obedient the *"gift of the Holy Ghost"* ([Acts 2:38](#)). That gift was miraculous. It was power to speak by inspiration, to prophesy, to heal, and to work signs, and it belonged to the founding days of the church.

These gifts were not handed out to everyone, nor passed from one Christian to the next. They came through the hands of the apostles. When Philip preached in Samaria, men and women believed and were baptized, yet they did not receive these gifts until two apostles came down and laid hands on them. Simon watched it happen, *"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given"* ([Acts 8:18](#)). Paul did the same at Ephesus, where *"when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied"* ([Acts 19:6](#)). He reminded Timothy of *"the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands"* ([2 Timothy 1:6](#)). Only the apostles could impart them.

There was a reason for these gifts, and once that reason was met, they were no longer needed. They confirmed the word while it was still being delivered, for the Lord was *"confirming the word with signs following"* ([Mark 16:20](#)), and God bore witness to the gospel *"with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost"* ([Hebrews 2:4](#)). Paul said plainly they would not last. *"whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away... But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away"* ([1 Corinthians 13:8-10](#)). The gifts were partial, given while the revelation was still in part. When the complete word had come, the partial passed away.

So the end came in a natural way. The apostles alone could impart the gifts, and the apostles died. When the last person to whom they had given a gift also died, the age of miracles closed. It had done its work. The faith was *"once delivered unto the saints"* ([Jude 3](#)), and we have it now, whole and confirmed, in the Book.

How the Spirit Dwells in Us Now

What, then, of the promise that the Spirit dwells in the Christian? The Bible does say it. *"the Spirit of God dwelleth in you"* ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#)), and the body of a Christian is called *"the*

temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 [Corinthians 6:19](#)). The question is how He dwells in us, and the Scriptures answer it themselves. He dwells in us through His word.

Set two verses side by side. To one church Paul wrote, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* ([Colossians 3:16](#)). To another he wrote, *"be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"* ([Ephesians 5:18-19](#)). The same fruit, almost word for word, follows from two things, the word of Christ dwelling in us and being filled with the Spirit. They are the same thing. To be filled with the Spirit is to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. The Spirit dwells in a Christian as His word lives in him and rules him.

This is no empty doctrine. It means the man who fills his heart with the word is filled with the Spirit, and the man who casts the word aside has no part in the Spirit, whatever he may feel. *"if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* ([Romans 8:9](#)). We do not wait for a separate voice or an inner nudge. We open the word the Spirit gave, and as it dwells in us, He dwells in us.

Walking After the Spirit

The life God calls us to is a life lived after the Spirit and not after the flesh. *"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"* ([Galatians 5:16](#)). Those who let the word govern them are *"led by the Spirit of God"* ([Romans 8:14](#)), and their lives begin to show it. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance"* ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). This is how a man knows the Spirit is at work in him, not by signs and wonders or sudden impressions, but by a life that is turning, slowly and surely, into the likeness of Christ.

So do not chase the Holy Spirit in feelings, signs, and wonders. The age of miracles served its purpose and closed. He is God, He gave you the word, and through that word He still does His work. Let that word dwell in you richly, and the Spirit dwells in you. Walk after Him by walking in the Scriptures, and bear His fruit by letting the word shape you day by day. The Spirit will never lead you past the Book He inspired. He will lead you deeper into it.

Every Scripture reference in this study links to the King James Version. Open it and read for yourself.