

“THE SPIRIT IS GOD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Sermon Texts: Genesis 1:1-2; John 16:13

Introduction.

How many of you grew up saying the Holy Ghost? Did you ever wonder why Christians believed in a Ghost or worshipped a Ghost?

Ghost comes from an Old English word, gast, which simply means spirit. Ghost was the word used by the King James Bible hence its common use in the church until the 20th century.

The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the forgotten member of the Trinity or the silent member of the Trinity. We certainly don't know as much as we should about Him. He doesn't get anywhere near the same attention that we give to the Father and the Son.

Despite the efforts of some Pentecostals and charismatics there is still much confusion. Many Christians are like the people in Ephesus in Acts 19:

Acts 19:1-2 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

We are commanded by God in Scripture to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the most central and important thing we are do in this life and in the life to come. To love God. But God is three persons. And how can we love God if we don't know the three-personal God, or the three persons of the Godhead?

In truth, we are to pay equal attention to all three persons and we are to give equal honor and worship to all three. The lack of understanding about the Holy Spirit in the church today accounts for the weakness of the church today and for her lack of power and boldness.

The story of the Bible is in three acts, creation, redemption and sanctification. In the first act the people of Israel knew God as the one God who created and governed the nations. In the second act the people of first century Israel received the revelation of the Son and His redemptive purposes. In the third act, the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church, on all the faithful followers of the Father and the Son.

How blessed we are and how thankful we should be that we live in the fullness of time, in the time of the full and complete revelation of the Trinity.

We are living in the end times, in the final revelation of God, in the age of the Spirit and the Church. All that remains now is for the Son to come again, when the Spirit is finished testifying to the Son and all who are elect of the Father are gathered in.

Article 11 of the Belgic Confession, though one of the shorter articles helps remedy our ignorance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a *person* and the Holy Spirit is *God*. Let's look at Scripture for the proof or evidence for saying these two things.

First, how do we know from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person?

The Holy Spirit has a personal name.

He's not just an impersonal force or a power or an influence. He's not like gravity or the tides. He's a person with a name. He's not an it. Only personal pronouns are used of the Spirit.

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it know to you.

He is called the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of God and the Comforter or Helper.

The Holy Spirit has been seen/heard/revealed in a veiled manner on earth.

He came down as a dove, as flames of fire, and as a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:1-3).

Acts 2:33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are *seeing and hearing*.

The Holy Spirit speaks.

Acts 8:29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

The Holy Spirit teaches and gives counsel.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

He is not just the voice of God, but a teacher and counselor in His own right.

The Holy Spirit witnesses.

John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

The Holy Spirit searches and understands.

I Corinthians 2:10-11 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit determines or wills actions.

I Corinthians 12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

The Holy Spirit has power/ability.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Where you find understanding, will, and power you have personal existence.

The Holy Spirit intercedes.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Holy Spirit is lied to.

Acts 5:3 Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?”

The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

You cannot grieve an impersonal force. You cannot make gravity angry or sad or happy. The Holy Spirit performs tasks that only persons can perform. He comforts, guides, teaches, convicts, admonishes, testifies, speaks, reveals, creates, and makes intercession.

Second, how do we know from Scripture the person of the Holy Spirit is divine?

Article 11 of the Belgic Confession particularly speaks to this aspect of the Spirit, that He is divine. The Holy Spirit has divine attributes.

The Spirit is eternal.

Hebrews 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the *eternal Spirit* offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Just as the Son is eternally begotten, and just as there never was a time with the Son was not, so also the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son and there never was a time when the Spirit was not.

There is no interval of time in eternity, no beginning or end, no before or after, no sooner or later. God is. He is the great I Am, always Father, always Son and always Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and He is also called the Spirit of Jesus. He proceeds from both.

Without a knowledge of church history we would not think much of the statement “that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son.”

But that very phrase divided the Church of Jesus Christ in half in 1054AD. The West half or the Roman side declared the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The East half or the Eastern Orthodox side declared the Spirit proceeds only from the Father (John 15:26).

The Roman pope Leo IX excommunicated Michael Caerularius, patriarch of Constantinople as guilty of heresy.

I know this sounds like theological hair-splitting at its worst but it does have serious implications for the church and can be seen in some of the significant differences in Eastern and Western Christianity.

Jesus said the Spirit coming is the same as Him coming.

John 14:16-18 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another Helper, to be with you forever*, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
18 “I will not leave you as orphans; *I will come to you.*

The Spirit is no less of a person than the Son.

The Holy Spirit is omniscient, knowing all things.

I Corinthians 2:10-11 For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 ... no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Isaiah 40:13-14 Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel?
14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?
Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?

Psalms 139:7-8 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

This also teaches the Spirit is omnipresent.

He is omnipotent, having all power.

Romans 15:19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.

Romans 8:11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, God is Truth.

John 14:16-18 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Peter says that lying to the Spirit is lying to God.

Acts 5:3-4 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to *lie to the Holy Spirit* and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? *You have not lied to man but to God.*”

The Spirit is linked to the Father and the Son in the benedictions.

II Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Revelation 1:4-5 Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

Seven is a number that signifies divine perfection. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God Himself. The Holy Spirit shares God’s eternal existence and divine nature.

Application and conclusion.

Brothers and sisters, I commend to you this wonderful doctrine of the personhood and the deity of the Holy Spirit for your comfort and help. Our God is a Trinitarian God. The Gospel preaches a triune Godhead. Our world was created by and reflects a three-personal God. We are made in the image of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Our world is ordered after and governed by the principle of order and governing revealed in the Trinity.

Our knowledge of God is not just objective or rational, it’s not just a head knowledge. Our knowledge of God is personal, intimate, real. All His dealings with us are personal. The Spirit is the presence and love of God in us, warming our hearts and affections, illumining our minds, softening our wills.

Without the Spirit’s presence in us we would remain dead in our sins, darkened in our understanding, and without any hope of knowing the Father or the Son.

By believing in Him as God we can also trust Him with complete confidence to be with us forever, sealing, preserving and protecting us, and leading us to our eternal inheritance in heaven.

The truth concerning the Holy Spirit is a great comfort to our souls especially as we approach our departure from this life for the glorious inheritance that awaits us.

Think about these things, meditate on them, pray for further insight into them, pray to the Holy Spirit, desire and ask for a greater knowledge, awareness and filling.

Revelation 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Prayer: We believe in you, Holy Spirit. We affirm your presence and your power. We worship and adore you. We love you and we desire you, we seek you. We want to know you better and to experience all that you have for us. Be glorified in our worship and in our lives. Be glorified with the Father and the Son. Come, consuming fire. Our only hope against the fire of hell, is your fire. We surrender our lives to the flames of your refining, purging, purifying fire. Come, Holy Spirit. Fill us with your fullness, for your glory, for your namesake, that we might know you and love you and obey you and be your bold witnesses and turn the world upside down for your sake.