We have looked at God the Father and God the Son – this week we will look at the characteristics of the third person within the Trinity – God the Holy Spirit - He may be invisible, but the Holy Spirit is very real.

Billy Graham wrote on the subject…

‘The Holy Spirit is not a thing and Scripture severely warns against mocking (blaspheming) the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31). Reverence for the Trinity is at the heart of the Christian faith. “For there are three that bear witness in heaven; the Father, the Word (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7).

A young boy asked his father, “How can I believe in the Holy Spirit when I have never seen Him?” His father took the boy to a power station and showed him the generators. “This is where the power comes from to light our house and heat the cooker. We can’t see the power, but it’s in that machine and in the power lines.” Then he asked his son, “Do you believe in electricity?”

As the boy thought about it his father explained that everyone believes in electricity because they see what it can do. Likewise, though we cannot see the Holy Spirit, believers in Christ know the results of His power in their lives. Surrendering our lives to the Lord Jesus opens up the power source.

The Bible is very clear that the Holy Spirit is God Himself. When you desire God and His truth, that is the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. A life that is filled by God’s Spirit will no longer go after sinful things. It is never a question of how much we have the Spirit, but how much He has of us.

**PRAY**

The Holy Spirit is probably the least understood person of the Trinity and as a result, many misunderstandings and myths have arisen concerning Him.

We should not consider Him as a second-class or replacement god, nor should we consider Him as an insignificant part of the Trinity, just because He is usually listed third.

Both of those misconceptions reduce the Holy Spirit’s status and failing to fully know and understand the Trinity, reduces our overall understanding of the Trinity itself and God as well.

As professing believers, we need to know the Spirit, learn how to relate to Him and understand how He manifests Himself.

**SLIDE**  **John 16:5-7 …now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 7But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.**

The Holy Spirit and Jesus are not an ‘either/or’ option, so this analogy doesn’t fully stand up. Here Jesus says He is going away and only when He does can the Advocate come. In that, Jesus is saying two things:

* The advocate is Jesus’ replacement to continue the Heavenly ministry on earth.
* That Jesus has full trust in the Holy Spirit to hand that work over to Him.

So, what does the Holy Spirit do for us and enable us to do, that Jesus actually says **it is for our good** that He needs to leave?

Jesus actually goes on to say…

**SLIDE John 16:8-15 When the Holy Spirit comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; 11and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. 12“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the 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. 14He will glorify Me because it is from Me that he will receive what He will make known to you. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from Me what He will make known to you.”**

Jesus and the Holy Spirit would show:

* the world that it was sinful and it needed dealing with.
* that we are not right with God, but we need to be.
* as a result of those two, we all face God’s judgement.

One man said, ‘The Spirit does not merely accuse men of sin, he brings to them an inescapable sense of guilt so that they realise their shame and helplessness before God.’ (Tenney)

That explains why Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be our ‘advocate’. For those who have put their trust in Jesus for salvation, the Holy Spirit will act in our defence. For those who have not trusted, He acts as the prosecutor.

I have seen many solicitors, barristers and other legal people in action – some good, some not so good – but the Holy Spirit is someone you want and need on your side – He is the best advocate you need in the only court that will really ever matter.

There is an interesting comment by Jesus in v12-13 - **I have much more to say to you… But when… the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.**

Jesus says that His own teaching was incomplete – but only because we cannot take it in, but the Holy Spirit would continue the teaching process and **guide** us **into all the truth**.

The Bible is God’s truth and the Holy Spirit inspired the human writers to play their part, so reading and studying all of God’s Word is important.

We have seen that the Holy Spirit is a person and as such has a personality and with that comes feelings. Therefore, we can please Him, sadden Him, insult Him and because He is God, we can also blaspheme Him.

**SLIDE** **READ**

**They rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. So He… became their enemy and He Himself fought against them Isaiah 63:10.**

**I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven Matthew 12:31**

**How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:29**

Those are serious warnings which the Lord gives us - to not dismiss the Holy Spirit, but to accept His assistance in all things, to allow Him to guide our lives.

The Holy Spirit is there to help us as individuals – in guidance, love, teaching and prayer.

**SLIDE** **READ**

**When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father - the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father - He will testify about me. John 15:26**

**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.” Acts 13:2**

**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. Romans 8:26-27**

**I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Romans 15:30**

**All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines. 1 Corinthians 12:11**

Those attributes show the Holy Spirit plays, or wants to play, an active role in our lives. If we take note of the ways the early church sought the Holy Spirit’s guidance and power, that will help us too.

They had a confidence that the Holy Spirit was God and was of God Himself – anything that He said could be trusted and would ensure God and Jesus were glorified. Interestingly, the Holy Spirit never seems to seek praise or honour, He always deflects or reflects it in the direction of the Father and Son.

His work is always for the glory of Jesus and God the Father, rather than Himself.

For those who struggle with prayer, try to make a renewed effort and take a renewed confidence that even if you don’t know what to say, the Holy Spirit will search your heart and represent that before God.

The Holy Spirit has been part of the Trinity from the start. **SLIDE** **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.**

He is clearly part of the God-head in **Genesis 1:1** - remember the word used to describe ‘God’ in that verse is plural in the original Hebrew - and the next verse shows the Holy Spirit being part of the creation process.

The Spirit doesn’t appear to be present at all times within the OT writings. He is present at specific times, with specific people – some of whom had His presence for a short time, whilst others such as Samuel appear to have been filled with the Spirit’s presence for all of his life.

Yet that changes in the NT age.

The Holy Spirit was certainly present in Jesus’ earthly ministry, but also was involved in His birth – remember **Luke 1:35 ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.**

Later at Jesus’ baptism, **Matthew 3:16** records, **As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.** On this occasion, the Holy Spirit appeared in a physical form.

Jesus put a great deal of emphasis on the Holy Spirit during His ministry, so if the Holy Spirit was so important to the life of Jesus, how much more should He be for us as believers as we live our lives out for God.

From the beginning to the end of the Bible we find the Spirit mentioned in an active form - He comforts, helps, guides, reminds, teaches, comes along side us, counsels, intercedes and advocates for us. There is no area of our life in which we do not need the help of the Holy Spirit.

The message that we give today and which you were given when you first became a believer in Jesus, needs the Holy Spirit at its centre.

Some of the greatest NT moments are when individuals became filled with the Holy Spirit.

* John the Baptist **Luke 1:15**, his mother Elizabeth **1:41** and father Zechariah **1:67** were all filled with the Spirit.
* Jesus, was filled with the Spirit in the desert **Luke 4:1**.
* The Pentecost account saw the disciples filled Acts 2:4, enabling Peter to preach and bring 3,000 people to salvation 2:41.
* Stephen, the first martyr, was killed whilst full of the Spirit **Acts 7:55**.

A believer’s life and therefore, the church, should be filled by the Holy Spirit. Without that in place, your spiritual life cannot be fully built up and you end up limiting God’s work in our lives.

**SLIDE** So, we return to where we started, to Jesus statement that **When the Holy Spirit comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: John 6:8**

The Holy Spirit should be key in our lives - in showing (proving/convicting) the world of their sin and the need for a Saviour, a Messiah.

Jesus said, **…you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:7-8** Clearly, without the filling and directing of the Spirit, the evangelistic task of this or any church will fail – our ability to do God’s work comes through His Spirit.

For over three years, Jesus’ disciples had seen the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ work and now they were having the same power made available to them.

There is no great formula to get the Holy Spirit in your life. All it requires is a personal relationship with Him and to be prepared for Him to fill your life with Godly things. To be filled with the Spirit’s fruit that Paul described in **Galatians 5:22-23 - love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**.

Through those gifts we can love, serve, adore and respect the Holy Spirit, wait for Him and within Him – you will form an eternal and unbreakable relationship with Him.

The power of the Holy Spirit can and will change lives and His work within you can and will change you.

In **Galatians 3:2**, Paul asks,**I would like to learn just one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?**

Paul knows that no one receives the Holy Spirit based on what they do. Salvation is by God’s grace alone and our relationship with the Holy Spirit should be exactly the same – based on grace. In the same way we receive Jesus’ salvation without doubting whether He will enter our lives or not, we should receive the Holy Spirit in the same way.

So, if you have not received the Holy Spirit, ask Him in to your life today.

**OFFER / PRAY**

**READING**

**JOHN 14:15-31a**

**15‘If you love me, keep my commands. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – 17the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.’**

**22Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, ‘But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?’**

**23Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.**

**25‘All this I have spoken while still with you. 26But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

**28‘You heard me say, “I am going away and I am coming back to you.” If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, 31but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.**

**JOHN 15:26**

**26‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me. 27And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.**

**JOHN 16:5-16**

**…now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 7But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.**

**12“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the 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. 14He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”**

**16Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”**