

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Romans 8:1-21

Pastor Tom Anderson

In her glory days as British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was once given a tour of a nursing home. As she moved through the hallways and wards, she greeted people and shook hands. Some were lucid and some were not. The Prime Minister came to an elderly woman hunched over in her wheel chair. She bent down to see her face while she greeted her and asked, “Do you know who I am?” She replied innocently, “No I don’t, Dearie, but if you ask at the nurse’s desk, they’ll tell you.”

Who is the Holy Spirit? We say in the creed, “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Yet, despite extensive teaching about the Holy Spirit from Jesus and Paul, many Christians remain uninformed about the third member of the Holy Trinity. The Spirit is never referred to as an “it”. He is a person, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. He was there at the foundation of the world hovering over the face of the waters in Genesis 1:2. He is the life force that animates all living things and all the processes of nature. In our scripture today Paul refers to him variously as: The Spirit of Christ, The Spirit of Him who raised Christ, and the Spirit of life in Christ. This indicates that He is distinct yet one with the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is essential to our salvation. The cross of Christ fundamentally changes our relationship to God. The Holy Spirit brings this change into the life of a believer. The Cross is about what God does for us. The Holy Spirit is all about what God does in us. Without the Spirit we cannot be Christian. The main points about the Holy Spirit that I want to teach you this morning form the acrostic S.P.I.R.I.T.

“S” stands for sonship. Romans 8:15 says, “You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry Abba, Father.” The Holy Spirit adopts us into the family of God. Not everyone is a child of God, but only those who by faith have received the Spirit of adoption are children of God. Without faith we are merely orphans, dead in our transgressions and sins, living in the ways of the world, cultivating a spirit of disobedience and having the devil himself as our father. The Holy Spirit searches us out in the streets and shacks and ghettos. He brings home to our hearts the message of the Cross: Jesus died for you and you are considered to be part of the family now. You belong. You are

God's son; God's daughter. The sign of your adoption is the presence of the Holy Spirit in you through faith in Christ.

“P” stands for putting to death the misdeeds of the body. Romans 8:13 - “...by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body.” The Holy Spirit is the key to mastering the fears and the cravings of your flesh for security, food, drink, money, sex, or power

Most people live by their sinful natures. In other words they follow their bodies through life. What ever their bodies' desire is what leads and guides their decisions and choices. They try to live by will power or indulgence. They try to medicate themselves with alcohol, drugs, food, gambling or sex. Some grace the covers of supermarket tabloids and some are so broken and depressed that they rarely leave their couches. But all of them alike are dead on the inside; they are only waiting to be buried.

Jesus said self denial is the requirement to being his follower. (Luke 9:23) In practical terms, this means we let the Holy Spirit lead and our bodies follow. This helps me to understand why fasting is such an important form of prayer. In fasting, I am training my desires to be second place. I am training my body to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. If I can do this in little things like coffee or dessert, I'm better off to face the big temptations of anger or greed or sex.

“T” stands for *inner witness*. Romans 8:16: -“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” Assurance, confidence and trust are the birth right of every Christian. I don't think or hope I am a Christian, by the inner witness of the Spirit I know I am. So I sing with confidence: *Blessed assurance Jesus is mine...!*

I am the proud owner of a big yellow lab named Tyler. I don't think I have a dog, or hope I have a dog—I know I have a dog. Anytime I get up to go anywhere in the house, he gets up and follows me. If I go in the garage, he comes after me. If I go in the backyard, he's right behind me. If I sit still, he comes and puts his head on my lap. It's endearing and it can be annoying but he will not let me ever forget that I have a Labrador. The Holy Spirit is not your dog but he will never let you forget that you are his and he is yours. He constantly brings an inner conviction to your life that you belong to God.

“R” stands for The Holy Spirit residing in you. Romans 8:9 - “You however are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you...” In 1st Corinthians 6:19, the Bible says, “...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...” (I preached on this once and a guy told his wife afterwards that he was going into an expansion program!) In the Old

Testament Solomon built a Temple. The glory of God filled the temple. But God withdrew his Spirit from the temple because of the sins of the people. But now Christ has deposited his Spirit directly into the soul of a believer. God does not dwell in temples, shrines, or statues he dwells in our hearts through faith. We have direct personal access to Christ. We are as close to him as the first apostles through the Spirit. He teaches us and reminds us of everything Jesus did and taught. He is the voice of the Good Shepherd within us.

“I” stands for intercession. Romans 8:26 - “...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

How could I possibly talk to the sovereign God who is beyond the stars? How could I possibly say anything intelligent; anything of importance to the Almighty? Would my words not be like a child’s ignorant babble or the buzzing of a dying fly on the windowsill? All by myself, I could never summon the confidence to pray. It is the Holy Spirit who takes the crude jabbering of my lips and turns it into real prayers before my heavenly Father. The Spirit searches my heart and makes known to God my deepest hurts and hopes. He makes prayer possible.

“T” stands for taking the lead of my life. Romans 8:14 - “...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Who or what leads your life? Some people are led by money; the first thought they have about any idea or event is this, “How much will this cost?” Some people are led by the past; the first question they ask of anything is this, “How did I do this last year?” Some people are led by their bodies, their first question is, “What’s in it for me?” Some people are led by their depression, their first response to life is, “What is the most disappointing thing I can see in this?” Some people are led by others and their first question is, “What will the neighbors think?” But to be led by the Spirit is to be asking where does The Good Shepherd want me to be in this? Have you given him the leadership of your life?

S-P-I-R-I-T spells out what it means to believe in the Holy Spirit. He adopts us into sonship. He puts to death the misdeeds of the body. He is the inner witness giving us blessed assurance. He resides in our hearts. He intercedes to make prayer possible and he takes the leadership of our lives.