

LIFE QUESTIONS

The Work Of The Holy Spirit



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In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon those who had specific God-given tasks to accomplish. Bezaleel, a master-craftsman, is such an example, who would oversee the construction of the tabernacle, its furniture and artefacts (Exodus 31). David recognised the influence, workings and importance of the Holy Spirit when following his adultery with Bathsheba he cried out that God would not take the presence of the Holy Spirit away from him (Ps 51:11). David had come to enjoy and value the Holy Spirit, and did not want to go through life without His presence. The value of His presence can also be seen in the life of Jesus, who only commenced His ministry following the Holy Spirit descending upon Him at His baptism (Luke 3:21-23).

Jesus never wasted His words. The night before His death, He gave His disciples some significant teaching on the Holy Spirit and His role after Jesus had left. "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (Jn 16:7-11 ANIV).

Jesus stated that it was good that He leave - many do not understand this, and wish that Jesus was still present with them, even though Jesus says otherwise. This is also supported in the word that Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit, something that his hearers would have understood but has been lost in translation. He describes the Holy Spirit as someone who would be a mirror image of Him - helping, comforting, leading, guiding and instructing people just as if He, Jesus, were doing it. Therefore if you want to get to know what the Holy Spirit is like - take a good look at Jesus and you will begin to recognise what the Holy Spirit is like! For example, Jesus didn't come to condemn the world (Jn 3:17-19), and the Holy Spirit would be just like Jesus! Jesus also informs the disciples of some of the Holy Spirit's characteristics. He would be their guide (Jn 16:13), their help and comfort (Jn 14:16) and their teacher (Jn 14:26). In fact Paul points out that the Holy Spirit wants to be our best friend by fellowshiping, communing and partnering with us continually (2 Cor 13:14).

However, in spite of Jesus' instructions there is still a lot of misunderstanding, particularly in relation to John 16:8-11 - "When he [the Holy Spirit - author added] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (ANIV). There are those who on reading this have concluded that the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict men and women of every sin they commit, by

making them feel guilty and uncomfortable whenever they step out of line. If we read on, Jesus clarifies that the sin that the Holy Spirit will convict a person of is their refusal to recognise, accept and trust who Jesus really is! In other words, the Holy Spirit wants to reveal and make Jesus real to you!

If the Holy Spirit's role was something other than what Jesus refers to in John 16:8-11, this would be a clear contradiction of Romans 8:1 which says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," (ANIV). A person does not go to hell because they commit the sin of greed, stealing, lying, sleeping around, adultery or any other sin; but they go to hell because they refuse to accept the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He seeks to reveal Jesus as God's only gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. When a person commits sin the guilt, condemnation, insecurity and feelings of unworthiness they often experience is because their own conscience is making them feel that way, and not the Holy Spirit. Paul points out that some have lost their faith because of the way they have ignored their consciences (1 Tim 1:19 TLB).

From my observations of scripture as well as experience, I have noticed that the Holy Spirit is amazingly positive, unlike the devil who is always negative! Yet religion has often misrepresented the Holy Spirit as being responsible for the times when a person's conscience condemns them. Once again the apostle Paul points out in his instructions on the gift of prophecy, its purpose is for "edification, exhortation and comfort" (1 Cor 14:3) of believers - or building up, stirring up and cheering up. Lastly, let's not forget that following a person's conversion the Holy Spirit comes to live in every believer as a guarantee of what is to come (2 Cor 1:21-22), meaning getting to know how wonderful is our loving Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3) who loved us and washed us free from sin and its penalty!

The Holy Spirit desires to fill people to the extent where they are able to talk to the Lord using a language which they have never learnt. This is what happened on Pentecost in Acts 2. This language enables you to talk to the Lord all the time and will encourage and build you up. You see, just like the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit just loves to give gifts to the people of God. Gifts that will you to be the kind of person God desires you to be. But more importantly the Holy Spirit wants to produce fruit in you that marks you out as a child of God. The problem exists where a lot of Christians focus upon the gifts without giving half as much attention to His fruit through you! If you have His gifts without His fruit, you will find you won't have the character to handle the gifts correctly and this will not be God glorifying. If your focus is upon allowing the Holy Spirit to produce His kind of fruit in you then you will be able to use His gifts for the glory of God!

Make the Holy Spirit your friend, as a result He will begin to reveal the Father and His Son Jesus so real to you! In turn you will become a person who reflects the grace of God in your daily lives!