



# HOLY SPIRIT

The Third Person of the Trinity is the most mysterious. Even Jesus said the Spirit blows where He will and can't be seen easily. But the Holy Spirit is also God at His most present to us—even inside of us. He is constantly at work in the world, in the church and in people to change things for the good. If you want to see God's power in your life, look for the movement of the Holy Spirit.

## HOLY SPIRIT • Acts 2:22–32 • Tim McConnell • June 23, 2019

We are spreading Pentecost right through the month of June. This annual recognition of when the Holy Spirit came down to empower the church in Acts 2 is worth spending four weeks on together. We need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God at work in your life to make things different. We won't cover everything there is to know about the Holy Spirit, but Acts 2 gives us four aspects. The Holy Spirit is Sanctifier, the one who makes us holy; Church Builder, as the church is the Holy Spirit's project and we get to be a part of it. We are in the season where the Holy Spirit isn't just poured out on particular people but is poured out on all believers—men and women, slave or free, young or old—all believers to share the gospel with all people. "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Today I want you to see that the Holy Spirit is the Life Giver. He is, as the Nicene Creed says, "the Lord the giver of life." I'm going to suggest, you need more life in your life. Next week you will get the Holy Spirit as Baptizer. You'll want to be here for that.

Here's the thing, the Holy Spirit is what applies the power of God to your life. He takes God's character, God's being, God's love and grace, all that God has done for you, and He applies it to your life. What Jesus did for you on the cross means nothing to you until you believe and the Holy Spirit applies it to your life. There is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is enough to short-circuit our rational minds, and I believe was meant to do just that. It crashes our computer to try to think of the Trinity, but if your God is a god you fully understand, it is a god of your own making. The one true God reveals Himself beyond our comprehension. But as God reveals Himself three and one, we see the particularities of the operations of the Persons and how they relate to one another. You might say, Father creates, initiates, generates; the Son redeems, accomplishes, and is begotten; the Spirit then sustains, completes and applies God's redeeming grace. The Spirit is the finisher, the completer, the one who carries it all on to the end until the work is done. He's the closer. I want you to know too, since I haven't had a chance to say it, when you recite the Apostles Creed, it says in the third article: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." This is a list of what the Spirit does. We believe in the Holy Spirit. We don't believe in the church or the invisible gathering of saints, or that these affect God's work in our lives. Those things are products of the work of the Holy Spirit in whom we believe. We put our faith in God alone, not products. So if you want to see what the Holy Spirit does just

go back over that list, and maybe sometime that will be another longer series on the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit applies the power of God and the benefits of His redeeming work to our lives. That application produces all these things we celebrate. But if you don't have the Spirit in your life, what good is it to you? When we lived in Charlottesville (Va.), we had a beautiful deck put on the back of our little house. It almost doubled the living space, really, and the guy almost destroyed our house putting it together, but it got done and we loved it. Now wood decks need to be protected with weather sealant. Luckily there is sealant. Great stuff. Really does the job. And, good thing too, I was able to obtain a bunch of it. Buckets of it. So I had the deck and I had the sealant. No problem, right? But for some reason week after week the deck started to show some wear and a few cracks. Can you guess why? The product does no good until you apply it. The applicator (in this case me) was more interested in watching golf. The Holy Spirit is God at work in your life to make things different. God's work is applied, redemption in Jesus is applied, eternal salvation won for you is applied by the Holy Spirit. And no kidding, this is about life and death. This is a life-sized question. Without the Lord the Giver of Life, detached from the power of God to give life, we are nothing more than cut flowers, waiting to wilt and perish. You need more life in your life. You need the Holy Spirit.

Why do I call the Holy Spirit the Life Giver? Well, first of all, Jesus called him that. In John 6, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life" (John 6:63). Jesus said the Spirit gives life, He is the Life-Giver. The life-maker, or life-generator. The Spirit, Jesus says, is the one who should be known as the source of life. What Peter says in this sermon is that the Holy Spirit, as the life-giver, had a critical role to play in the most important story ever told—how Jesus came down as the Son of God, took on flesh, demonstrated the Kingdom of God in power, died on the cross for our sins, went down into actual death, then rose again from death to life, and ascended to heaven as the first of all who are saved for eternal life drawing all who believe in His name where He Himself has gone. It couldn't happen without the Holy Spirit. The Spirit foretold the coming of Jesus. The Spirit overshadowed Mary, seeding the life of Jesus within her. The Spirit descended on Jesus in power at His baptism and accompanied Jesus, cooperating with Him in every miracle and teaching. The Spirit did all that. But Peter turns his hearers, and us, to focus on one key moment when, if it was not

for the Lord the Giver of Life, all would be lost.

Let's look together, "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). It's a great sermon. A model sermon for any of us who stand to preach. Peter makes himself one with the crowd, he creates connection: "fellow Jews, fellow Israelites." Then he disarms them with humor as Pastor John (Goodale) pointed out last week. Then with connection and with humor established, he body-slams them with God's Word. The effect is that they are cut to the heart, they change their lives, they believe in Jesus and they are saved forever in eternal life, which will be the focus of the message next week. This week, we watch Peter outline the gospel story, the greatest story ever told. The text, he says, Joel, the Scriptures told you what was going to happen. Then this Jesus, who he calls here "a man"—do you see how carefully Peter starts from where his listeners stand? Peter knows Jesus is more than a man, but let's start where we can agree—this man Jesus demonstrated signs and wonders and miracles, and you all saw it, we all witnessed them. What are you going to do with all that? "We all saw this stuff. We all witnessed some wild things. I walked on water, for Pete's sake (for my sake...)." The first generation had a harder time believing Jesus was fully human than they had believing he was fully divine. They had seen some wild stuff.

"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Acts 2:23). Jesus did a lot of wonderful things, but His ministry and purpose culminate at the cross. Look now, never was God out of control. At no moment was the Father up in heaven yelling, "Oh no! What are they doing to Him now?" No. God knew. What was meant for evil, God purposed for good, for the salvation of all mankind, even the mankind that put Jesus on the cross. Now, look. Jesus died. He went to death. When we recited the Apostles Creed it says he "descended into hell." People get tripped up on that. I want you to understand, Jesus was dead. There is no aspect or depth or distance or existential experience of death that Jesus was not fully in. He was dead. Helplessly, hopelessly dead. "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24). How can that be?

Follow along here, there is a lot in this. Jesus took our sin, the sin of all disobedient humanity, on Himself

in such a real and actual way that He died to satisfy the wrath of God. What's the wrath of God? That's where God not only won't tolerate the disobedience that leads to death but moves against it to stop it. That wrath gets poured out on Jesus. That's how really and truly He bore our sins in His own flesh; the Bible says He "became sin for us." So Jesus is dead in sin—in our sin, but in sin. How can God the Father turn and reach out to Him and give Him life? Does God suddenly regret moving against unrighteousness? Does God the Father change His mind and say, "Eh, it's alright." No. The Spirit. The Holy Spirit. What some theologians call the love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit, the life-giver, must move in. It's God the Holy Spirit who pours life into Jesus the Son dead in sin. It's God the Holy Spirit who raises Jesus up from death to life. This is the power of God the Lord the Giver of Life. And because Jesus never sinned, the claim of death was unfounded. Far from dying of His own disobedience, Jesus died to pay for our disobedience, and death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him, as Peter says. That's a lot. That's a chunk of Trinitarian theology and justification and atonement for you this morning, but I want you to see the Spirit's role in the great work of redemption wrought in Jesus Christ. When He was dead in the tomb, the Lord the Giver of Life, the Holy Spirit, is who came. Is there enough life in your life? The same power that rose Jesus from the dead is alive in you. "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you" (Romans 8:11 NLT).

Peter says that reminds him of Psalm 16, which nobody could figure out what it was about until now. But it's about how God beats death and holds onto us for eternal life, even when we die physically. Without the Spirit of God, life is just a process of dying and death is permanent. With the Spirit applying what Christ accomplished, we are not cut flowers, life is not about steadily inching toward the grave, death is not the end. With the Spirit of God, death is an empty shadow quickly dispersed by the light of God's eternal glory, and life, life is eternal life starting right now. "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope" (Acts 2:26), because God has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is more powerful than death, that what Jesus did to save us worked, and that any who are hidden in Christ will know the same victory over death that He did, and even though my body may die, even though it may waste away with time, I'm not going to die. Never. I'm in eternal life right now in Jesus. You can burn my body and scatter the ashes, I'm not dead. I've got more life in my life than death could ever take. I'm in Christ and in



the power of His Spirit. Death couldn't hold Jesus. Death can't hold me. "You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence" (Acts 2:28).

Peter goes on to explain, David, the author of Psalm 16, he died. His body died. You can go see the bones if you want. So what was he talking about when he talked about a body that did not decay to prove God's power over death? Not David's body. Jesus' body. Jesus, who once raised from death was then raised to the right hand of the Father in heaven. "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). What are you going to do with that? "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:32). What are you going to do with that? Will you dismiss it? Can you just walk away from it?

Well, I can tell you what God intends to do with it. God intends to apply all this to your life. God intends to pour life into your life through the power of His Holy Spirit. That's what God intends. And it's a life-sized question. No smaller than that. The same Spirit of God that extended Himself, stretched out His power and entered the sealed tomb where the body of Jesus was lying dead and cold, that same Spirit of God extends toward you, to envelop you, to serve you—can you believe that?—to serve you. To want and to enact what is good for you, what satisfies you, what makes your life more of a life. The same Spirit of God, the Life Giver, is right here being poured out on you.

Life is so delicate, so fragile. Have you ever seen a sonogram of a baby in its mother's womb? Last month Focus on the Family held a history-making event by hosting a live 4D ultrasound in Times Square. When the 18,000 people there heard the heartbeat, they erupted in cheers. How beautiful and precious life is. This week our whole city has been in prayer for Mark Karla, who was hit by a runaway stolen Jeep (on Saturday night, June 15). Our prayers are with him and his family. Life is so precious, so delicate, but so beautiful. Apart from connection with the author of life, apart from connection with the source of life, we are cut flowers. But the Lord the Giver of Life is right here. The Father sent the Son, the Son conquered sin and death, the Spirit raised Him up and all who call on His name, the name of Jesus, will know the same fate—eternal life.

**STUDY GUIDE**  
**HOLY SPIRIT • "Life Giver"**  
**Acts 2:22-32**

**UP: Connect With God Through Spending Time in His Word**

Read aloud the passage for the week: Acts 2:22-32.

- 1) Reread verse 22. God used various means to validate Jesus before the people, and yet they couldn't see Him for who He is. What sorts of things get in the way of people's abilities to see and know Jesus in our context?
- 2) Reread verse 32. In what ways do we continue to bear witness to God's resurrection of Jesus?
- 3) Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit implied in these verses?
- 4) The Nicene Creed describes the work of the Holy Spirit this way:

*"We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life.*

*He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.*

*He spoke through the prophets..."*

Where do these statements lend insight to the Spirit's work in the passage?

**OUT: Connect With the World Around Us (Join God in His Mission)**

The Holy Spirit is the Giver of Life. This Spirit-given-life should spill out to others and be a source of joy. Name one person in your life who is especially in need of the life and the joy that the Spirit offers. Spend time praying for them.

**IN: Connect with Each Other**

Close with this ancient prayer of the church:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.*

*And kindle in them the fire of your love.*

*Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.*

*And you will renew the face of the earth.*

*Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit*

*you have taught the hearts of your faithful.*

*In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen*