

4. The Holy Spirit

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I. General

See also: *II. God's Holy Spirit in His People*, p. 155

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. This assertion is reflected by the Holy Spirit's divine and imposing attributes. However, the Bible also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from God, portraying him as a personal being in his own right.

The Holy Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .

Now [in the beginning] the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but *the Spirit of God* was moving over the surface of the water. [GENESIS 1:2](#)

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. As such one should bear in mind that when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, it is in effect speaking of God himself.

. . . Accordingly, God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit

I will no longer hide my face from them, *when I pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the sovereign LORD.* [EZEKIEL 39:29](#)

The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *by this we know that God resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.* [1 JOHN 3:24B](#)

This correlates the Holy Spirit with God's presence by asserting that believers having God's Spirit verifies that God lives in them.

God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

And *he* [God] *who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. [ROMANS 8:27](#)

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* [1 CORINTHIANS 2:11B NCV™](#)

The Holy Spirit's Being

As well as being a spirit, the Holy Spirit is everywhere

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* PSALMS 139:7–8 ESV

Verse 7 links the Holy Spirit with God's presence, and so along with v. 8 implies that the Spirit is omnipresent – i.e. everywhere.

The Holy Spirit is eternal

How much more is done by the blood of Christ. He offered himself through *the eternal Spirit* as a perfect sacrifice to God.

HEBREWS 9:14A NCV™

The Holy Spirit has great power

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him [the Messiah], the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, *the Spirit of counsel and might*, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ISAIAH 11:2 ESV

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 JOHN 4:4

The "one who is in you" is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit. As such, the description of the Holy Spirit as greater than Satan – "the one who is in the world" – is indicative of the Spirit's great power.

The Holy Spirit has great knowledge

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] But the Advocate, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, *will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.* JOHN 14:26

The Holy Spirit has great wisdom

But some men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen ... as well as some from Cilicia and the province of Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰*Yet they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.* ACTS 6:9–10

This suggests that Stephen's profound wisdom was a product of the Holy Spirit – indicative of the Holy Spirit having great wisdom.

The Holy Spirit's Personhood

The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *There is one body and one Spirit*, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵*one Lord*, one faith, one baptism, ⁶*one God and Father of all*, who is over all and through all and in all. [EPHESIANS 4:4–6](#)

The Holy Spirit has his own mind

And he [God] who searches our hearts knows *the mind of the Spirit*, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. [ROMANS 8:27](#)

The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through *the love of the Spirit*, to join fervently with me in prayer to God on my behalf. [ROMANS 15:30](#)

But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control*. [GALATIANS 5:22–23A](#)

Each of these characteristics is described as a “fruit of the Spirit” because – like fruit from a tree – their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit. Arguably this implies that the Holy Spirit's own character is reflected in them.

The Holy Spirit communicates . . .

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But *the Spirit himself speaks to God for us, even begs God for us* with deep feelings that words cannot explain. [ROMANS 8:26B NCV™](#)

. . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways

The church became stronger, as *the Holy Spirit encouraged it and helped it grow*. [ACTS 9:31B CEV](#)

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [GALATIANS 5:18](#)

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

The NT speaks of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as three identities, but also shows them as being related to each other in a unique unity. This is in part due to divine attributes and roles being attributed to each of them. Since the 4th century the church has understood their relationship in terms of the *Doctrine of the Trinity* – the concept of them being three “persons” but one substance.

This close-knit relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is still one of the most intriguing and debated aspects of the Bible. The following provides some basic “building blocks” for coming to terms with it.

Mutual Association

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are closely associated

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in *the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, ... [MATTHEW 28:19](#)

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
[2 CORINTHIANS 13:14](#)

The Holy Spirit is identified with God

[PETER, TO ANANIAS:] *Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit? ...⁴ ... You lied to God!* [ACTS 5:3B, 4B CEV](#)

Ananias had attempted to deceive the church, and in effect had lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter indicates that to lie to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) is to lie to God (v. 4). As such he identifies the Holy Spirit with God.

The Holy Spirit is also identified with Jesus Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *the Lord is the Spirit*, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom.¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from *the Lord, who is the Spirit.* [2 CORINTHIANS 3:17–18](#)

There are a number of interpretations of “the Lord is the Spirit” (v. 17) and “the Lord, who is the Spirit” (v. 18). The ones that are arguably the most plausible are compatible with a literal reading, demonstrating the very close association between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed *the Spirit of God* lives in you. Now if anyone does not have *the Spirit of Christ*, this person does not belong to him.

ROMANS 8:9

This not only closely correlates the Holy Spirit with God and with Jesus Christ, it also associates Jesus Christ with God, with the one Spirit being said to be of them both.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together

[PETER AND THE OTHER APOSTLES:] *God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* ³²*And we are witnesses of these events, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.* ACTS 5:31–32

Verse 32 points to the Holy Spirit’s role in the salvation of people, witnessing to them. This work of the Holy Spirit is in conjunction with God’s will, and with what God has done through Jesus Christ (v. 31) to save people.

Mutual Divine Attributes

The listings here and in the following section of mutual divine attributes and roles are not comprehensive. Note that the subsections usually have three verses – of which the first refers to God, the second to Jesus Christ and the third to the Holy Spirit.

Omnipresence – God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere

“Do you not know that *I am everywhere*?” the LORD asks. JEREMIAH 23:24B
Christ did that to fill everything with his presence. EPHESIANS 4:10B NCV™

[DAVID, TO GOD:] *Where can I go to get away from your Spirit? Where can I run from you?* PSALMS 139:7 NCV™

Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power

I know, LORD, that you are all-powerful; that you can do everything you want. JOB 42:2 GNT

Our Lord Jesus Christ ²¹has power over everything ... PHILIPPIANS 3:20B–21A CEV

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] You are from God, little children, and have conquered them, because *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.* 1 JOHN 4:4

Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that *he knows everything.* 1 JOHN 3:20 GNT

[JESUS' DISCIPLES, TO JESUS:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. JOHN 16:30A

For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:10B

The Holy Spirit searches out or finds out all things (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

Mutual Divine Roles

Common divine roles reflect the fact that God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation

But for us, “*There is only one God, the Father. Everything came from him, and we live for him. There is only one Lord, Jesus Christ. Everything came into being through him, and we live because of him.*” 1 CORINTHIANS 8:6 GW

[ELIHU:] *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.* JOB 33:4

They each give spiritual or eternal life

God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 JOHN 5:11B

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also *the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.* JOHN 5:21

The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help!
JOHN 6:63A

They each make God's people holy

Obey my laws, because *I am the LORD and I make you holy.*
LEVITICUS 20:8 GNT

Husbands, love your wives just as *Christ loved the church and gave himself for her* ²⁶*to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word,* ²⁷*so that he may present the church to himself as glorious – not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.* EPHESIANS 5:25–27

[PAUL:] I do this in order that I might bring the nations to God as an acceptable offering, *made holy by the Holy Spirit.* ROMANS 15:16B GW

Remember the persecuted