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# FALSE IDEAS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

## *Bro. Chris Afekolu*

### **Preamble**

*There is a great deal of misunderstanding in the world today about the Holy Spirit and the way He operates in this age. Many false and misleading claims were made regarding the Holy Spirit and even congregations of the Lord's Body are tending towards these errors. A thorough study of the work and person of the Holy Spirit will help counteract false teachings regarding the Holy Spirit. This underscores the need for us to study the Bible and see what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit.*

### **WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

He is a Person. By that it is meant that He has personality – that He possesses “individuality, character, influence, life, thought, will, power and ability” {“Person” does not mean “body”} He has the following characteristics of personhood:

1. He has a mind. (**Romans 8:27**)
2. He has a will (**Acts 16:7, Acts 21:11-14 & 1 Corinthians 12:11**)
3. He has knowledge (**1 Corinthians 2:10-11**)
4. He has the ability to speak, teach. (**1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Corinthians 2:13**)
5. He has ability to love (**Romans 5:5 & 15 verse 30**)
6. He has goodness. (**Nehemiah 9:20**)
7. He can be insulted and grieved. (**Hebrews 10:29, Ephesians 4:30**)

**He is a Person – Spirit.** Like God and Christ, He is a Spirit. (**John 4:24**). This means that we should not expect Him to have a physical body or other material manifestations (**Luke 24:39**). At different times in the Scriptures the importance, nature and works of the Holy Spirit are suggested by symbols, {Just as Jesus is described as a Lion, Lamb, Shepherd, Door, etc...}. We must be very careful not to stretch the symbols too far or take them too literally.

- *The symbol of winds, breath (**John 3:8, John 20:22 & Acts 2:2**). The Spirit comes from above as does the wind; is invisible to human eyes, yet we see the result of His moving and working.*

- The symbol of a dove. (**Luke 3:22**). Like a dove He is gentle, kind and pure. He is the Spirit of love, grace and peace.
- The symbol of living waters. (**John 7:38-39**). He refreshes, quenches spiritual thirst, causes life to appear where there was only dry deadness
- The symbol of a seal. (**2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30**) The seal was used to authenticate, confirm, certify, to place under protection.
- The symbol of fire. (**Acts 2:1-4, Hebrews 12:29**). Fire is powerful, vivid, searing, cleansing.

Note: This should not be confused with the baptism of fire in Mathew 3:10-12 which refers to the fire of eternal punishment!)

**He is a Divine Person – Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead. (**Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20, Colossians 2:9 – KJV**).

Like ‘manhood’ or ‘childhood’, Godhood refers to the sum of qualities, “the state or quality of being God”.

Many passages declare the doctrine of the Trinity. {**Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 15:30, Mark 1:9-11, Genesis 1:1, 26 John 1:1-15, John 15:26**, etc.}.

We do not mean that one God is three Gods; rather we mean that there is only one infinite Spirit Being, but within that Spirit essence there are three personal distinctions, each of which may be called God; each capable of loving and being loved by the others and each having a distinct part to play in the plan of Salvation. The Holy Spirit possesses all the characteristics of divinity: eternity, omnipotence, transcendence, omniscience. (**Hebrews 9:14, Micah 3:8, Psalm 139:7-10 & 1 Corinthians 2:10-11**)

Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit

- 1) To work with the apostles in a special, unique way, never promised to other men, giving them miraculous divine reassurance, (**John 14:17, 16:13-14**)
- 2) Miraculous divine gifts, including the power to speak and write the inspired word. (**John 16:13-14**),

The power to confirm the word through miracles, (**Hebrews 2:3-4**) and the power to bestow miraculous gifts on others (**Acts 8:17**).

The Holy Spirit was at work in the establishment and building up of the church. {**Acts 2; Ephesians 2:20-22**}. The Holy Spirit was at work in the inspiration of the New Testament. (**1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16**)

## Misconceptions about the Holy Spirit

There are many false concepts about the Holy Spirit in the religious world. The Holy Spirit identity may be clearer if we look at some mistaken notions about His nature and work.

### **That The Holy Spirit is Merely an Impersonal Force or Influence from God**

One of the most fundamental errors regarding the Holy Spirit is the tendency of some cults/ religious groups to deny The Holy Spirit very personality.

**A Watchtower publication asserts that the Holy Spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will** (Reasoning from the Scriptures 1985, 81).

Jehovah's Witnesses say that only God the Father is the Eternal Divine Being, that Christ was created and that the Holy Spirit is "not a person, but God's active force" Mary Baker Eddy, founder of "Christian Science," characterized the third person of the Trinity as "**Divine Science**" (n.d., 55).

Parley Pratt, one of Mormonism's original "apostles," once described the Holy Spirit as **a force like "magnetism" or "electricity."** **He further spoke of the Spirit as "a divine fluid" and "impersonal energy"** (see Jackson 1993, 26).

Nothing could be more clearly taught in the Bible than that the Holy Spirit is a Person! Personal pronouns are used to describe Him in the New Testament. 'He' instead of 'it'

**"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (John 16:7-8 NKJV)**

The Holy Spirit does acts; He has a work to do "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (**John 16:13-14 NKJV**). He has all the attributes of personhood {Romans 8:27, Acts 16:7}. He is capable of feeling (**Romans 5:5, Ephesians 4:30**). **"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."** (**Ephesians 4:30 NKJV**)

### **That The Holy Spirit Is Merely another Name for God**

This doctrine is known as Sabelliannism, from Sebellius a third-century religious leader who taught that there is only one divine essence which operated in three

successive stages under different names: as Father, the Creator and Lawgiver, as Son, the Redeemer; and as Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver.

A modern form of this doctrine is taught by the United Pentecostal (“Oneness Holiness”) Church. They teach that there is only one Person in the Godhead – Jesus Christ. They insist that Jesus was not in the Trinity but the Trinity was in Jesus.

Many New Testament passages affirm the reality of the Trinity {**Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Romans 15:30, John 1:1-15**}.

Jesus spoke of Himself and the Father as “two” witnesses (**John 8:16, 18**).

*"And yet if I do judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. (John 8:16 NKJV)*

**"I am one who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." (John 8:18 NKJV)**

Jesus is not the Father because He had a will distinct from that of the Father. Saying, **"Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." (Luke 22:42 NKJV)**

The Father and Son were distinct in knowledge. **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (Matthew 24:36 NKJV)**

Since will and knowledge are characteristics of personhood, the Father and Son are distinct Persons. Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. (**John 1:30-34**)

### **That The Holy Spirit Brings About Conversion through “Direct Operation”**

Denominationalists frequently contend that the Holy Spirit, in a direct and mysterious fashion, operates upon the sinner in the process of conversion. In his debate with N.B. Hardeman, the celebrated Baptist preacher, Ben M. Bogard, affirmed: “The Bible teaches that in conviction and conversion the Holy Spirit exercises a power or influence in addition to the written or spoken word” (1938, 7).

**If the Holy Spirit operates upon the soul of the sinner independent of the written Word of God, why is it that not a solitary Christian has ever been discovered in those locales where the gospel has not been proclaimed? Why is it that tribes in primitive regions know nothing regarding the Lord Jesus, apart from the influence of biblical revelation?** This circumstance is inexplicable in light of the foregoing theory.

This theory of “Direct Operation” which is widely taught in modern religious world is a legacy of Calvinism. Two of the key tenets of Calvinism are

(1) Total Hereditary Depravity : The theory of Total Depravity holds that the sinner is so inherently depraved (corrupt morally) that he cannot think a good thought or do a good deed but is inclined to all that is evil and opposed to all that is good. Thus, it is held that only a direct, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit can turn him from Sin to God.

(2) Irresistible Grace: The theory of Irresistible Grace merely holds that it is impossible for man to resist this operation when it comes.

There are a number of Scriptural objections to the doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in Conversion.

1. It makes God a respecter of persons when the Bible says He is not {**Acts 10:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:4**}.
2. It denies the Biblical emphasis on the free will of man {**Revelation 22:17, Galatians 6:7-8, 2 Peter 3:9**}.
3. It leaves the Sinner passively uninvolved in his own conversion, while the Bible insist that he has an active role in the process of his salvation {**Acts 2:40, Mark 16:15-16, Hebrews 5:8-9, Philippians 2:12**}
4. It makes a mockery of the Great Commission and voids the mission of the church {**Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 3:10-11**}
5. It takes away personal accountability and responsibility and lays the blame on God for men being lost {**2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 2:9 & John 3:16**}
6. It reverses the divine order of the New Testament which proclaims that the Holy Spirit is received after conversion, and not before {**Acts 2:38, Galatians 4:6 & Acts 5:32**}.

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and convert them to Christ through the revealed Word of God {**Romans 1:16, James 1:21, Luke 8:11, Romans 10:13-14, 1 Corinthians 1:21**}.

This can be easily demonstrated by the fact that there are no Christians in the world where the Word (Bible) has not gone! In every case of conversion in the Bible, sinners were converted through the word. Clearly, the Spirit converts men to Christ through the Word which He has revealed.

### **That the Holy Spirit Provides a Direct “Inner-Witness of Salvation to the Believer**

Many religious groups believe that the Holy Spirit gives an assurance “better felt than told” which offers evidence of salvation.

This doctrine has no Biblical basis. The witness borne by the Spirit is not “to” our spirit but “with” our spirit. **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”, (Romans 8:16 NKJV)** It is borne not in our hearts but in heaven; not to us but to God!

We are saved when we obey the teachings revealed by the Holy Spirit in the scriptures (**1 John 2:3**). *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (1 John 2:3 NKJV).*

Faith comes by hearing, not by feeling (**Romans 10:17**). Feelings are contradictory. When feelings become the standard in religion, every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

Feelings are subjective and do not provide reliable evidence of salvation. Only the truth can make us free. ***"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** (**John 8:32 NKJV**) If a person believes and practices religious error, his faith and practices will be wrong, although the feelings produced will be strong as if what he believed was the truth. Example, Saul of Tarsus strongly “felt” he was pleasing God when he was persecuting the church (**Acts 22:3-4**).

### **That the Holy Spirit Brings About Sanctification Directly Through a “second Work of Grace”**

Some religious groups teach the doctrine of “Entire Sanctification” as a “second work of grace” following conversion by which believers are made free from inbred sin. This sanctification is supposed to be wrought instantaneously by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Once this religious status is achieved such believer cannot sin; that is as a result of having received the second work of grace such a believer is entirely free of sin. This doctrine is, in reality, a form of the Calvinistic doctrine of the Impossibility of Apostasy.

This doctrine is contrary to the teachings of the scripture as follows;

1. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was never promised to all Christians. It was received in New Testament times only by the Apostles and the Household of Cornelius. (**Acts 1:2-5; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 11:15-17**)
2. To receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not produce spiritual perfection or offer a guarantee against falling from grace. “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy”. (**Galatians 2:11-13 NKJV**) *See also 1Corinthians 9:27.*
3. The New Testament repeatedly warns that those once saved can be lost. **“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they**

crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame". (*Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV*) See also *2 Peter 2:20-22*.

4. The New Testament teaches that no one lives a perfectly sinless life. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us". (*1 John 1:8 NKJV*)
5. Sanctification is a process – a striving towards holiness – continues throughout the Christian life. "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". (*1 Thessalonians 5:23 NKJV*). "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God". (*2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV*) See also *Philippians 3:12, 2 Timothy 2:19, 21, 22*.
6. The Holy Spirit operates through the word in the work of sanctification. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth". (*John 17:17 NKJV*) "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". (*2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 NKJV*)

### **That the Holy Spirit Still Empowers Men to Perform Miraculous Signs Today**

It is widely taught by many religious groups that men are still performing miracles through the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that the age of miracles is past:

1. Miracles were given for a specific purpose to inaugurate the Christian age and to reveal and confirm the inspired word. That purpose was achieved in the Apostolic Age. "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will"? (*Hebrews 2:3-4 NKJV*)
2. Miraculous spiritual gifts were conferred by the baptism of the Holy Spirit or by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, (*Acts 8:14-18 NKJV*) "For I long to see you, that I

**may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established”- - (Romans 1:11 NKJV)** Only the Apostles and the household of Cornelius received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. With the death of the last Apostles, the means of conferring miraculous spiritual gifts came to an end.

3. The so-called “miracles” of today are very different from the genuine miracles of the Bible. Many different types of miracles were performed in the New Testament: turning water to wine, raising the dead, stilling the storm, multiplying loaves and fishes, the lame walk, Sight restored to the blind, etc. Those who claim to perform “miracles” today generally confine themselves to attempting to heal internal (and undetectable) illnesses only! The miracles of the New Testament were remarkable for their completeness. People were instantly healed, and it lasted! There was no later reoccurrence of the same old symptoms. Furthermore, genuine Biblical miracles were open and above board – done in such a public way that the enemies of Christianity could not deny that remarkable and irrefutable miracles had been performed.
4. The Scriptures affirm that miracles would cease when the “perfect” – the perfectly revealed and confirmed written word of God – had been given. “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”. (1 Corinthians 13:8-13 NKJV) **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25 NKJV)**

### **Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament**

The New Testament speaks of four “measures” or “manifestation of the Holy Spirit:

1. **The Unlimited Measure of the Holy Spirit.** *“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. (John 3:34-35 NKJV)* Only Jesus Christ is said to have received the Holy Spirit in unlimited fullness.
2. **The Baptism of the Holy Spirit.** {*Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:4-5 & Acts 2:17*} *“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to*



*depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5 NKJV). This was given only to the Apostles to enable them to carry out their function as the official "witnesses" of Christ and to the household of Cornelius to show that Gentiles were to be included under the New Covenant. This fulfilled the Prophecy of Joel that God would pour out His Spirit on "all" flesh – i.e. representatives of both Jews and Gentiles (Joel 2:28).*

3. **The Miraculous Gifts (CHARISMATA) Of the Holy Spirit.** "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ". (1 Corinthians 12:4-12 NKJV). *These were given by the laying on of the Apostles hands. {Acts 8:14-18; 2 Timothy 1:6, Acts 19:6 & Romans 1:11}*
4. **The Non-Miraculous Gift (DOREAN) Of The Holy Spirit** Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NKJV) This refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which God gives to all His Children. "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you". (Romans 8:9-11 NKJV)

Romans chapter 8 teaches that the Indwelling Spirit has been given to us to assist us in some way in living the Christian life. I will encourage us to study Romans 8:1-39. We are not alone in this era, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Some of the things He does in our lives among others are:

- **He helps us mortify the deeds of the flesh. (Romans 8:13)**
- **He lead us (Rom. 8:14); through the word (Psalm 119:11 & James 1:5) and through Providence (Rom. 8:28).**
- **He defends Our Sonship (Romans 8:16 & Galatians 4:6).**
- **He help us in our infirmities (Romans 8:26, Ephesians 3:16).**
- **He assists us in our prayers Romans 8:26) – the Holy Spirit help us ... for He understand our needs and longings and can make them known to God .**
- **He intercedes for us (Romans 8:27).** This must be closely linked with the assistance He gives us in our prayer. Christ intercedes for us as our High Priest. The Spirit adds His own voice in our behalf. His presence in our lives enables God to be fully aware of our problems, needs, challenges and longings. ***What we feel, God feels...The Spirit is a link between the Christian and His Father!***
- **He assures us of immortality (Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 5:5)**

The Holy Spirit is in our lives for a purpose! He gives us aid and comfort – not in any miraculous sense, but, nevertheless, in a way which helps us in living the Christian life.

## Conclusion

Jesus warned:

**"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15 NKJV)** False teachers do exist and the ideas they advocate are dangerous. **"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction". (2 Peter 2:1 NKJV),**

In this study, we have been able to draw your direct attention to some false teachings relative to the Holy Spirit. If we are to avoid error, it is essential we integrate careful study of the Bible to know more about the Spirit of God and proclaim that truth to others wallowing in error.