



**What Christians Believe**  
**The Apostles Creed**  
**(10) I Believe in the Holy Spirit**  
**Acts 2:1-13**  
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**Introduction - Peter**

When I turned my laptop on, on Thursday morning, it came up with the story of Nathan Tankus, someone I'd never heard of before. Bloomberg was writing a piece on him because without all the normal credentials, this ordinary 28 year old has become a must-read whiz kid on the economy: markets, banks, money. When I read his story, I was reminded of fisherman Peter, in the New Testament who was transformed from being a cowardly nobody from Galilee into a fearless pioneer of the church.

Old Peter had said things like this to Jesus , *"Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."* (Luke 22:33), but when the heat was on old Peter buckled under the pressure and denied that he even knew prisoner Jesus. Fifty days later New Peter was prepared to stand up on the day of Pentecost, in front of a crowd and accuse them: *"You with the help of wicked men put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross!!"* (Acts 2:23) All of a sudden he became as bold as a lion! This new Peter refused to obey the authorities, *"We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

What made the difference between old and new Peter was not personal study—that's what Nathan Tankus did: he began reading books on economics—No, what transformed Peter the Coward into Peter the Brave was the Holy Spirit of God, given to him and to the whole church on the Day of Pentecost!

When you & I hear the story of Peter, how do we respond? Many will respond with yearning: How I wish I had more life-changing power! Other may respond with trepidation —not sure I want that kind of upside down change! And others may mock in unbelief! How do you & I respond?

For the last few months or so, we've been making our way through the Apostle's Creed, a wonderful old summary of the Christian faith. I have so enjoyed preparing it, and I really hope that you haven't become weary of it! We've arrived at the third section, which begins, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." The Apostles' Creed is "Trinitarian". The first part begins with *God the Father*, the second begins with *God the Son* and the third part begins with *God the Holy Spirit*. The Bible teaches that while there is only one God, there are three Divine Persons in the Godhead, and in today's sermon we're going to think about the Third Person of the Godhead, the ever-blessed and glorious Holy Spirit.

What does a Christian affirm, when they "I believe in the Holy Spirit?" Well, let's break the question down into three:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Holy Spirit do? And then, vital:
- How should I respond?

## Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person in the Godhead, along with God the Father and God the Son. He is *co-equal* with God the Father and God the Son, and *fully divine* to the same degree, and so is worthy of our worship and adoration. Many believers *often find it hard to understand* the Holy Spirit. We find it easier to comprehend God the Father and God the Son, and feel we can relate to them, but more difficult to relate to God the Holy Spirit. Two reasons:

(1) The first reason is that, he is *not an Upfront Person* in the Godhead. As *the Third Person* of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit *plays a vital but behind the scenes role*. He doesn't talk about himself, for example: instead he talks about Jesus.

(2) And we find it harder to relate to the Holy Spirit, because his *name and the symbols* used to describe him are *not as personal* as God *the Father* and God *the Son*. Symbols like wind and water and oil and fire and a dove seem less than personal, don't they, and his very name, Holy Spirit, adds to that sense of mystery and maybe distance.

But we need to take our lead from the Scriptures and not frail human understanding: The Holy Spirit is a Person because he does all the things that a Person does, he reminds, he teaches, he speaks, he makes decisions, he comforts, he can be grieved, he can be lied to, he can be angered, he prays for us—only a Person can do all those things. The Holy Spirit is not a Force or a Power, although he is all-powerful, he is a glorious Person, who is God himself.

And this is THE KEY to experiencing his loving influence in our lives. If we think of him as a force or a Power—like gravity or electricity—then we will never feel able to relate to him, or ask him, because a force is distant. But if we keep in mind that he is a warm, loving, assuring Person, that will open the door of relationship. Isn't the Personal nature of the Holy Spirit one of the reasons Jesus said that it was better for him to go away? *"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."* (John 16:7) If the warm loving Jesus was being replaced by a Force or Power how could that be a good thing? No the warm and loving Jesus was going to be replaced by the warm and loving Holy Spirit.

Christians will spend hundreds of pounds to visit Israel and try to imagine what it must have been like to listen to Jesus' teachings and watch his miracles. But Jesus says that it is better to have the Holy Spirit's invisible presence with us than to have Jesus' bodily presence... because the Holy Spirit is a Person too!

Perhaps this truth—that the Holy Spirit is a Person - is the most important truth we need reminding of this morning!! And it's what we affirm when we say "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

## What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

You may remember in Genesis chapter 1, that the Spirit was "hovering over the waters" of creation. The Holy Spirit was involved in creating this marvellous universe! And then in the rest of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit empowers people to do mighty works. He empowers judges like Samson to win battles, Kings like David to rule, and prophets like Isaiah to give messages and predict the future. The Holy Spirit enables people to do great things! But - and this is so important - in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God works only in a few people, mainly great people, not in the many ordinary people. But the prophet Joel, predicted that one day God would send his Spirit *on everyone* who believes: *"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughter will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.."* (Joel 2)

After Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent his Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, on all sorts of people, old and young, men and women, great and small! What a wonderful day that was: *"Suddenly a sound like the blowing*

*of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:3-4)*

On the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus had risen from the dead, the church was born! People from all over the world who had gathered for the Jewish feast of Pentecost heard the good news of Jesus in their own language through the miraculous gift of tongues. And after the Holy Spirit had convicted the crowd about their rejection and murder of Jesus, Peter said to the crowds: *“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)*

The Holy Spirit began a new and powerful and glorious work in the world and in the church that day. And he continues to do so many wonderful things that I fear missing out one! But let's try...

- ***The Holy Spirit Convicts us of Sin*** (John 16:8) People don't admit that their ways are wrong automatically or easily, no it takes a mighty power to convince them they are sinners!
- ***The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus (John 16:14) to us.*** Thousands of people saw the mighty miracles of Jesus but failed to grasp that he was the Son of God. But the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of some, and it is the same today. One of the greatest marks that a church or a Christian is filled with God's Spirit is that they talk, not about the Holy Spirit, but about Jesus.
- ***The Holy Spirit gives us a new heart (John 3:8).*** This is how we become followers of Jesus in the first place, The Holy Spirit performs a mysterious powerful miracle in our hearts which makes us new creations in Christ!
- ***The Holy Spirit lives within us.*** (1 Corinthians 16:9) Our salvation has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. And he never leaves us! Do not let Satan deceive you into thinking that you can do something to send the Spirit of God away! Yes we can grieve the Spirit by our actions, make him sad, but we can never send him away! Praise God!
- ***The Holy Spirit gives us gifts to serve others, (1 Corinthians 12).*** We all have a gift to use for the building up of each other. One of the downsides of this pandemic is that just a few of us are serving the church through our online service. It's like a football match without the crowd who all play a part in the game. I can't wait to get back to normal life, where everyone can serve everyone else.
- ***The Holy Spirit assures us that God is our Father*** (Romans 8:15), and that we are his much loved children.
- ***The Holy Spirit makes us holy*** (1 Peter 1:2) We can't clean up our loves by willpower or therapy, but the Holy Spirit can purify us. Only the Holy Spirit can make us holy like Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can produce in us the fruit of the Spirit, like joy and peace and patience!
- ***The Holy Spirit leads us into truth*** (John 16:13). With just our human minds or Google, we will go astray, but with the Holy Spirit, we will be led into truth.
- ***The Holy Spirit guides us.*** When Philip the evangelist wanted to know who to speak to, the Holy Spirit sent him to an Ethiopian official (Acts 8) when the church in Antioch wanted to know what to do with Paul and Barnabas, the Holy Spirit told them to send them out as missionaries (Acts 13).
- ***The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of heaven.*** (Ephesians 1:14). Deep within our hearts, the Holy Spirit gives us joyful foretaste of the glory to come, while we live in these frail bodies!

## How can I respond to the Holy Spirit?

With that long list of wonderful works; I have run out of time this morning! And I am sure I have missed some of his works out. So let me close with these two notes of exhortation:

### **(1) First, the Christian life is 100% supernatural!**

We cannot accomplish *anything* on our own, in our own strength!

*“Without the Holy Spirit” wrote someone, “God is distant, Christ is in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is simply an organisation, authority is domination, mission is propaganda, worship is going through the motions, and Christian action is the morality of slaves.”* But oh how different when we rely on the Holy Spirit!

The Christian life is 100% supernatural, so what are you lacking today? Guidance? A spiritual gift? Truth? Self-control? Assurance? Joy? Peace? Holiness? Love? Perhaps Patience to make it through this long pandemic!?

A missionary was sent to The Embankment in London for training but she just couldn't pluck up the courage to share the Gospel with people. So she prayed and prayed for courage. And the Holy Spirit gave her supernatural courage one day—and if you had ever seen her in action, you'd have seen a woman filled with Holy Spirit boldness. What are we lacking today? Let us ask God to fill us with his powerful Holy Spirit and give us what we lack.

### **(2) If you want this gift**

And finally, if you want the new life that Jesus offers through the gift of his Holy Spirit, then you can receive it today. Jesus met a woman at a well whose heart was empty without God. She was trying to fill that emptiness with one man after another. She was on number 6, because the human heart can never be filled with people or things. Jesus said to her; *“Everyone who drinks this water (read: relationships money, career, family....) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him (Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit) will never thirst. Indeed the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* (John 4:14)

*“How do I receive the gift of God's Spirit?”* you ask? Acts 2:38, *“Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

May the Lord bless his Word to us today.

Join me if you can as we sing a prayer:

*Holy Spirit, living breath of God,  
Breathe new life into my willing soul.  
Let the presence of the risen Lord,  
Come renew my heart and make me whole.*