

THE COMING OF THE COMFORTER

Julio grew up in the slums of a large city. By the time he was 13, he'd been arrested four times. By 16, he was immersed in a gang. At 19 he was shot and almost died. Within six months, Julio was back on the street living his life of immorality and crime.

Then one evening while walking down the street he passed a church. He saw a sign out front advertising some gospel meetings. He heard a voice urging him to go in. He obeyed and became a changed man.

The speaker talked about Jesus and how He died for their sins. No matter how sinful their lives had been, the speaker said, because of the sacrifice of Jesus they could be forgiven. They just had to choose Jesus. And Julio did and now was a Christian.

Today he's married and has become a minister. How do we account for this? God's Holy Spirit came into his life and made him a different person.



We can't see the Holy Spirit, but we can see the results of His work in the lives of people.

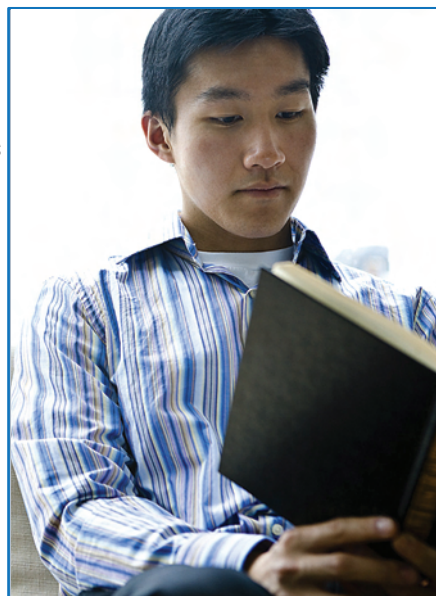
KEY POINTS

Just before He returned to heaven Jesus said: "My children, I will be with you only a little longer.... Where I am going, you cannot come." (John 13:33) Though He would leave them He promised that one day He would come back. And then He said, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20).

How do we reconcile those two statements? The answer is found in one of the greatest promises of the Bible. It's the promise that, although Jesus has gone back to heaven, He hasn't left us alone. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." (John 14:16; see also John 14:26; 15:26) The Holy Spirit provides a different kind of power. Though we don't see the Holy Spirit, we can see the results of His work in the lives of those in whom He is working, like Julio.

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit is God, just as Jesus and the Father are God. We're talking here not about three gods, but three manifestations of one God. One of the most famous lines in the Old Testament comes from the book of Deuteronomy about this very subject. Listen! "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." (Deut. 6:4) The word translated "one" comes from the Hebrew word that's often used for something composed of parts. For example, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) One flesh, made up of two parts, a man and a woman. The word for "one" is the same word for "one" in Deuteronomy 6:4. (See also Gen. 1:5 and Matt. 28:19)

The Holy Spirit accomplishes many things in our lives. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand truth. Jesus said: "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)



The Holy Spirit is also the voice of conscience in people. The Spirit also is given to us to help us have the power to obey God's commandments. But, being drawn and convicted by the Holy Spirit is one thing. It's totally another matter to follow those convictions. For instance, we've been convicted by the Holy Spirit that Jesus died for our sins. But we still have to make the choice to follow Jesus. Have you sensed God speaking to your heart in these meetings? Don't resist that conviction.

Have you ever had calluses on your hands? How did you get them? As you worked on a project, at first your hands were sore. But after a while they began to toughen, until one day you could feel nothing when you worked. It's the same with the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The more we resist, the more we harden ourselves to the wooing of the Spirit and as such we are heading toward committing the "unpardonable sin," the sin God cannot forgive.



The Holy Spirit is the voice of conscience in people.

"Wait, you say, doesn't the Bible tell us that God can forgive all sins – even adultery and murder? So what are we talking about when we refer to the unpardonable sin?" The Bible tells us in the words of Jesus: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12:31, 32) Then what is the sin against the Holy Spirit? So what sins can't God forgive? Only those we don't confess. So, the sin against the Holy Spirit is the sin of continuously not responding to His promptings until we can no longer feel them.

You may have had a Christian friend ask, "Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?" Or they may say, "Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" Often what they mean by their question is, "Do you have the gift of speaking in tongues?" Let's see what the Bible says about the gift of tongues.

In the book of Acts, after the Holy Spirit fell, look at what happened: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language..." (Acts 2: 4-8, 11)

What do we see here? We see that the early Christians were given the gift of speaking in known languages. People from all around the world each heard the disciples speaking in their own language. Why was this gift given? To communicate the gospel.

Who did Jesus say would receive the Holy Spirit? Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." (John 14: 15, 16; Acts 5:32)

Another way we can know if we have the Spirit is to have the fruits of the Spirit spoken of in Galatians 5:22-23.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

The Holy Spirit is a real person, one of the three-in-one Godhead. Upon the ascension of Jesus to heaven, He has been sent to comfort us, to convict us of sin and to lead us to the foot of the cross. He also gives us power to have victory over sin and have the promised gifts of the Spirit that reflect the character of Jesus.

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

The promised Spirit will lead you into all truth. He will comfort and guide you. He will gift you for good works and the strengthening of His church. He will convict you of sin and give you power over sin. Won't you open your heart now to Jesus and His promised Spirit?