

"What Is The Holy Spirit?"

by Wayne Goff

A Kansas City Star article by Billy Graham applied John 14:16-17 to every Christian. Can you imagine believing that?!

Wednesday's issue of the **Kansas City Star** carried the usual Billy Graham article on religion. Someone wrote in and asked "What is the Holy Spirit?" Was it simply good feelings you experience when you think God is near?

Mr. Graham answered that the Holy Spirit is God Himself, and that He is at work in our lives. But the shocking application of John 14:16-17 is what caught my attention! That Scripture quoted by Mr. Graham was: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth..." So according to this, every believer has the Holy Spirit residing directly in him as a guide into all truth.

Read The Context

There is **one sense** in which the Holy Spirit is with every believer, and that is through the revelation of the New Testament. That Holy Spirit-inspired Book will guide us into all truth because it is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). It is the revelation given to the apostles which guided them into all truth -- reminding them of what Jesus said to them while He was on the earth (Jn. 14:26), teaching them additional things which Jesus did not teach them (Jn. 16:12-13), and guiding them into all truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). So when you and I read the New Testament -- the written version of the Holy Spirit's revelation -- we have all truth (Jude 3).

But to apply John 14:16-17 to **every believer** is a gross misapplication of the Scripture! If you read the context *carefully*, you can see that Jesus is talking to His "disciples" (apostles) and giving them words of encouragement and comfort prior to His death and departure from this earth.

These men were to "bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning" (Jn. 15:27). Believers today were **not** with Jesus from the beginning, so He did not include them. But one of the qualifications of an apostle was a disciple who had been with Jesus from the beginning of His earthly ministry until His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). The apostles were instructed by Jesus to remain in Jerusalem until they had been given the Holy Spirit, by which they could be infallible witnesses to the whole world (Acts 1:8).

Jesus announced to the twelve that He would be leaving them to prepare a place in heaven for the faithful (Jn. 14:2-3). The men to whom Jesus spoke are identified in the context: Thomas (14:5), Philip (14:8), Judas {not Iscariot} (14:22), the "scattered" (16:32). These are the apostles, **not every believer!**

Jesus furthermore identifies these men as those whom He chose and appointed (15:16). He appointed the apostles to be eyewitnesses of His resurrection, and proclaimers of His Gospel message (Jn. 14:26-27; cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-18; 1 Jn. 1:1-3).

Only by a careless reading of John 14-16 can one conclude that Jesus is making these promises to everyone who believes in Him. Even John 17:20 distinguishes between the apostles ("I do not pray for these alone") and those who would believe in Jesus because of their work ("but also for those who will believe in Me through their word").

Billy Graham's Calvinism

Lest someone think I am misapplying Mr. Graham's article, read the following paragraph in that article:

"Apart from the spirit, we will never come to God because he convicts us of our sins and convinces us of the truth of the Gospel. Apart from the Holy Spirit, we cannot overcome temptation and live the way God wants us to live. Apart from the Holy Spirit, we will never become more like Jesus, which is God's goal for us. And *apart from the Holy Spirit, we will never understand the truth of God's word*, the Bible, and how it applies to our lives." (emphasis mine, wg).

This is the same old Calvinism that says the Holy Spirit must operate directly on the heart of man in order to make him a believer and help him to understand God's Word. **Be warned and beware!**

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