

Bradford Houdyshel

Title: "OIC Statement of Faith, Part 4: We believe in the Holy Spirit"

Key verse: John 16:7-8 (NASB) – "But I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I am leaving; for if I do not leave, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment."

Good morning, everyone. It is good to see you all again. Last year, I began a sermon series on the Christian doctrines outlined in our church's Statement of Faith. There are ten paragraphs in that statement, and my plan has been to do ten messages, one for each paragraph. Today, I will speak on the fourth paragraph of our Statement of Faith, which is about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

As followers of Jesus Christ, there are certain essential doctrines that we must stand on if we are to remain true to the Holy Scripture, which is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is in the pages of the Bible where we learn of God's creation of this world and His dealings with us human beings. We learn about God Himself and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. In the Bible we learn about sin and the solution for sin and how to be restored to a right relationship with our Creator. Christian communities such as ours draw up what's called a "Statement of Faith," outlining the basic doctrines to which they adhere. The Statement that we have at Osaka International Church shows us to be within historic Christian orthodoxy, in the evangelical and Protestant tradition.

I have embarked on this sermon series in order to outline the basic doctrines we stand on and where in Scripture these doctrines are supported. Thus far, I have covered the first three paragraphs of our Statement of Faith and today I will do the fourth. As a review, I would like to read the first four paragraphs:

Paragraph 1:

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life. II Timothy 3:16.

Paragraph 2:

We believe in one God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 1:2.

Paragraph 3:

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into

heaven, where at the right hand of the majesty on high, He is now our High Priest and Advocate. Luke 1:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:1-2.

Paragraph 4:

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men of sin, regenerate the sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service. John 16:7-14.

Before I go into detail on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, I would like to review a bit about the doctrine of the Trinity. We say that God exists as three distinct persons, each with the same essence, each existing eternally. In the ancient church and in our own day, there are people who do not accept this doctrine and who say that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not eternal but was created at some point. And there were and are people who say that the Holy Spirit is not a person but some kind of impersonal force emanating from God. A modern manifestation of these ideas can be found among the Jehovah's Witnesses, which is why we would say that they are not orthodox Christians.

People have struggled to understand the Holy Spirit as a Person, and some have denied the idea altogether. Let me tell you a story I heard in a sermon once. This was the story of a man who had once been a high-ranking leader in the Jehovah's Witnesses but had rejected that group and embraced orthodox Christianity. The man said that the reason he had eventually rejected the group was because of what he found in Acts chapter 5 regarding the Holy Spirit. This man had been taught that the Holy Spirit was not a person but a kind of impersonal force emanating from God. But something in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 bothered him. In that story, Ananias and Sapphira conspire to deceive the church by selling a piece of property and donating the money to the church, claiming that they were donating all of the money from the sale, but in reality they were secretly holding back a portion of the money. God does not like deception and He revealed the true facts to Peter. In verse 3, Peter says, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" In verse 4, Peter says, "You have not lied to men, but to God." Ananias lied to God. Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit. How can you lie to an impersonal force? You can only lie to a person. When Sapphira came to see Peter, she told the same lie that her husband did. Peter replied, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?" How can you "test" something which is not a person by making a false claim? You can only do that with a person. By looking with open eyes at the Biblical material, the man I mentioned a moment ago, the high-ranking member of the Jehovah's Witnesses, realized that the Holy Spirit is a person and he rejected the teaching of the group.

There is another passage that impresses me. Let's look at 1st Corinthians 12, when Paul begins his discussion of spiritual gifts. Verses 4-6 (NIV) say this: "There are different kinds of gifts,

but the same Spirit distributes them.⁵ There are different kinds of service [ministries], but the same Lord.⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” The same God, the same Lord, the same Spirit. All equally involved in distributing gifts. God the Father in verse 6; the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 5; and the Holy Spirit in verse 4 – each active in distributing gifts.

And at the end of the introduction on spiritual gifts, the Apostle Paul says in verse 11 (ESV): “All these [gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each person individually as he wills.” Notice how the gifts are distributed: as the Holy Spirit wills. It is His choice how the gifts are distributed. The Holy Spirit cannot be an impersonal force because here we see that He is making choices . . . He has a will. Therefore, He must be a person. He is an equal member of the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Let us now return to the main topic of today’s message: the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Let me quote again Paragraph 4 of the OIC Statement of Faith:

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men of sin, regenerate the sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service. John 16:7-14

Let me repeat the main activities of the Holy Spirit as found here in the Statement of Faith. Firstly, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the current church age, the Holy Spirit has several crucial tasks: to convict men of sin, to regenerate the sinner, then for believers the Holy Spirit indwells, instructs, and empowers Christians for godly living and service.

Paragraph 4 of our Statement of Faith references John 16:7-14. Shortly after the Last Supper, on the night before Jesus was crucified, He speaks to His disciples in a long discourse from chapters 14 to 16 of the Gospel of John. In chapter 16, verses 7-14 (NASB), Jesus says this – “But I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I am leaving; for if I do not leave, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment:⁹ regarding sin, because they do not believe in Me;¹⁰ and regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you no longer see Me;¹¹ and regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.¹² I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time.¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you.”

In this passage, Jesus tells His disciples that when He leaves them, He will send “the Helper.” This word in Greek is *Paraklētos* (παράκλητος) and it is a difficult word to translate. Other

English Bibles translate this word as Comforter, Advocate, Counselor, Encourager, or Mediator. Basically, this word means “someone who is called alongside to help.” In John 14:16, Jesus says, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.” Another helper. The Greek word here for “another” is *allos*, meaning “another of the same kind.” It might have been possible here to use the Greek word *heteros*, meaning “another of a different kind,” but instead what is written is *allos*, indicating that the Helper that Jesus sends will be another person distinct from Himself but of the same kind as Himself. Here is another indication that the Holy Spirit is God, one of the three persons in the Godhead who is of the same essence as God the Father and God the Son, but also distinct from them both. What we see Jesus saying here is that He will be leaving the disciples, but another of the same kind as Him will take His place and guide them and empower them for the ministry of the gospel. While Jesus is in His earthly body, He can only be in one place at one time, but by sending the Spirit to indwell and empower His followers, they can do the work of the ministry in the various places where they are working. This is why in John 14:12, Jesus can say, “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father.” The works that the followers of Christ will do will be greater in scope than what Jesus did in Judea and Galilee during His time on earth.

In Acts 1:4-5 (NASB), we read Jesus’ final words to His disciples after His resurrection – “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Verse 8 says – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth.” After speaking those words, Jesus ascended into heaven. And ten days later on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on the large group of Christian believers, and Peter preached his first sermon and thousands put their faith in Christ and were baptized. It was the beginning of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. We call this book the “Acts of the Apostles,” but some preachers say it is better to call it the “Acts of the Holy Spirit,” because this book is the story of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles to spread the gospel in those early years of the Christian era.

Let’s return to John chapter 16. In verses 12-13 Jesus says, “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” When Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will *guide these men into all the truth* and *disclose what is to come*, this is primarily a reference to how the Holy Spirit inspires the message of the apostles and guides them to write the New Testament scriptures. Secondarily, it implies that the Holy Spirit can also illumine and guide

each one us followers of Christ. Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18 say that we can be “led by the Holy Spirit.”

John 16:14, Jesus continues speaking of the Holy Spirit: “He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you.” The first thing that Paragraph 4 of our Statement of Faith says about the ministry of the Holy Spirit is that He is “to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.” Let me share with you a portion of one of the essays in the ESV Study Bible:

The Holy Spirit’s work can easily be neglected. Perhaps the reason for this is that one of his primary roles is to glorify Christ by testifying to his kingdom and his saving work, past, present, and future ... (John 16:13–14). Because the Holy Spirit’s purpose is to glorify Christ, he is honored when this objective is accomplished. The Spirit’s deepest longing is that the Son be honored. Jesus is the focus of the Spirit’s ministry, and believers honor the Spirit by depending on his help in order to honor Christ. The Holy Spirit works to advance the work of Christ to the glory of the Father, and he empowers and anoints the people of God to do the same.

As seen in the chart, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in four fundamental ways.

How the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ:

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| The Spirit illumines the Bible (the centrality of Christ) | Luke 24:27, 44–48 |
| The Spirit empowers gospel preaching (proclamation of Christ) | Acts 1:8 |
| The Spirit brings regeneration (new life in Christ) | John 3:5–8 |
| The Spirit sanctifies the believer (transformation into the image of Christ) | Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2 |

Humans become like what they adore. The Spirit works to foster adoration of Christ so that people will become like him. Thus, sanctification flows from adoration, and both are accomplished by the Spirit in the believer’s life.”

(Excerpt From: Crossway. “ESV® Study Bible.”)

I like that last paragraph: “The Spirit works to foster adoration of Christ so that people will become like him.” Isn’t that the basic goal of living the Christian life? To become like Christ.

Let’s look at that chart again: “How the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ.”

The first way He does: The Spirit illumines the Bible – the Spirit helps us understand the scriptures. The chart cites some verses in Luke 24, shortly after the resurrection, when Jesus shows His followers how the Old Testament scriptures pointed to Him and their minds are opened to understanding the scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Second: The Spirit empowers gospel preaching. I have already shared with you Acts 1:8, where Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive the Spirit and be empowered to be witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Third: The Spirit brings regeneration. I will say more on this in a minute.

Fourthly: The Spirit sanctifies the believer (transformation into the image of Christ). We not only have the task to spread the good news to other people, but each one of us needs to look at

ourselves and get rid of bad habits and sins that may still be a part of our lives. This is a lifelong process of sanctification and our goal is to be transformed into the image of Christ.

Let's back up a little bit: the third item in the chart is Regeneration, John 3:5–8. I would like to quote something for you from the book *Lexham Survey of Theology*:

For human beings, regeneration is the answer to the corruption of moral character caused by sin. It is essential for participation in the kingdom of God (John 3:3). At conversion, God grants the believer new life and a new identity in Christ. This event is so powerful that John refers to it as a new birth, a birth “from above” (John 3:3), while Paul refers to it as a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). In either case, the change is brought about by the Holy Spirit, who comes to indwell the believer. Those born of the Spirit receive not an extension of mortal life but eternal life, a life which has the quality of God's own. Regeneration applies to the inner self, not to the body, but those who have received the Spirit's inward work can anticipate the Spirit's renovation of their physical bodies in the resurrection.

Although regeneration is an event, it need not be a conscious experience. Only God knows the precise moment in which regeneration takes place. It is not equivalent to conversion, because conversion is the human response to the gospel invitation, whereas regeneration is the divine action of renewal that (in most viewpoints) follows upon conversion.

(*Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

[*That last sentence again: Conversion is the human response to the gospel invitation, whereas regeneration is the divine action of renewal that ... follows upon conversion.*]

Let's read John 3:3 (NASB), where Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus – “Jesus responded and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again [born from above] he cannot see the kingdom of God’.”

Verse 5 – “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’.”

These two verses are parallel to each other: to be born again (born from above) is to be born of water and the Spirit. This is the new spiritual birth, and the only way to enter the kingdom of God.

What does this phrase mean, “born of water and the Spirit”? Some people have thought it may be a reference to baptism, but is the act of baptism what Jesus was pointing to? If so, would He not have said so more directly? Another idea is this: some people have thought this phrase “born of water and the Spirit” might be a reference to physical birth followed later by spiritual birth, because of what they see in verse 6. That's what I used to think, but now I think that that is not correct. What we see in verse 5 is a single birth involving both water and the Spirit.

Most likely, Jesus is alluding to Old Testament images. He could well be alluding to promises of the new covenant, which we read about in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 37:36 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. The Jews had been unfaithful to the previous covenant and God had exiled them to Babylon. But while there, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel relayed to the people God's promise of a new covenant.

Let me read a part of this promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NASB), where God says this – “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances.”

Here, water is used symbolically as a picture of being cleansed from sin and unfaithfulness. The later baptisms performed by John the Baptist and by Jesus and His followers are similarly symbolic of one’s repentance and cleansing from sin, so it’s not entirely wrong to see baptism in John 3:5, but please remember that the backdrop to that verse is likely here in Ezekiel. There is a symbolic sprinkling of water for cleansing from sin, and then a promise to give a new heart and a new spirit within the people, and that they will then be indwelt by the Holy Spirit so that they will walk in Lord’s statutes and ordinances.

Two weeks ago in my Christmas message about the magi and their search for the King of the Jews, I shared with you how the Gentiles have now been made partakers of this new covenant. The promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 was to result in a blessing for all families of the earth, and Jesus commanded that the apostles go and make disciples of all nations. The way is opened up for all of us to partake in this new covenant, to be cleaned of sin and to be given a new heart and new spirit. And to have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in us ... for the purpose that we live faithfully according to His ways. This is God’s desire for all of us.

Well, there is so much more that I could say on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but I must stop here today. Let us remember the purpose for which God gives us new life and gives us His Holy Spirit: that we may live God-honoring lives, transformed into the image of His Son, and empowered for service in the church to reach the world with the gospel.