



# The Holy Spirit

Romans 8:1-9

As many of you know, we enjoy travelling abroad and part of my background as a former Geography teacher is to explore interesting geographic anomalies, particularly borders. If you travel between most EU countries now, there are very few border posts and controls left – in fact in the Benelux countries, it's been decades since they had border controls and going from one country to another is rather like going from one county to another in the UK.

So for example, if you'd have taken the autoroute north from Calais a few years ago (PICTURE) you would have been directed off it at Bray Dunes and to a border post (BORDER POST) as you got to Belgium. Now, on the new motorway, the most obvious evidence you get that you've crossed a border is the Belgium sign (BORDER).

But at least the border is clear. In some Benelux border towns, you may only know the border is there because some bright spark has actually marked it on the street (CROSSES ON THE STREET). It gets even more ridiculous, when it passes through, buildings and even the police station! (3 PICTURES). In most places, only the locals (and of course the taxman!) knows where the borders are.

Why do I say all this. If you are a Christian this morning, then you crossed a border when you accepted Jesus into your life. (DEATH TO LIFE) The way the Bible would describe it would be from death to life. (OUR WORLD TO HEAVEN) It's a different land, with an new language and customs, an new citizenship and new powers and responsibilities as a citizen. (NEW THINGS)

If you've accepted Christ into your life, that's you this morning. Maybe you can easily point back to a time when you clearly crossed the border. I know many Christians are like those places in Holland and Belgium where they know they crossed the border, but you can't recall quite when they did it. They just know they are in.

The interesting thing about border country, is that it can be quite strange. Flanders border territory looks much the same whichever side of the border you are on. (FLANDERS PICTURES) It's when you cross from France into Belgium that you know you're in another country. The architecture and environment is classic Flemish in a way that French Flanders is not.

The thing is that God wants us to have all the pleasures, joys and advantages of living in His country, but so often many Christians never leave the border. They've trusted Jesus but somehow that doesn't make any difference to their lives. There's nothing special or significant about their faith: it's just a small and not particularly relevant part of their lives.

Living in God's land is brilliant! Perhaps you have trusted Jesus at some time in the past. But you've never left the border. God wants to lead you into something more dynamic, something different, something amazing. How does He do that – by His Holy Spirit.

So what do you need to know about the Holy Spirit this morning:

1. He's given to all Christians (SLIDE)

(SLIDE) *Romans 8:9 But you do not live as your human nature tells you to; instead, you live as the Spirit tells you to — if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

God in us. Grab that if you can! God becomes part of us. If you are a Christian this morning, you have the Holy Spirit. So what does He do?

## 2. Is God's guarantee that we are His.(SLIDE)

(SLIDE) **Ephesians** 1:13 And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. 14 The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!

God wants us to understand that everything he has said to us about Jesus is true – about forgiveness, about eternal life, about all the blessings that God has brought to us in Christ. How do we know that's true? Because the very presence of God is in us. It's rather like a guarantee we get when we buy something. It's there to give us confidence that we made the right decision in buying it. In fact there, the translation we have in the church doesn't express it as well as it could. The Spirit is described more in terms of being a down-payment guaranteeing all the rest of God's promised. How should we know our faith is true? We should be aware of God's Spirit. What else?

## 3. Guides us into all truth (SLIDE)

**John** 16:13 When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth.

The Navigator. These days we have technology in our cars to help us on our way – sat nav. However in the olden days we relied on a map or the person next to us to show us the way – which is a real problem if they have no idea where we are!

In motor sport, teams employ a professional navigator whose job it is to guide the driver so that he or she can concentrate on the driving. The driver trusts the navigator implicitly. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and becomes our navigator. We can either chose to listen to Him or ignore Him. One of the things that sadden me a lot is that there are so many Christians that ignore the navigator and do things their way – and worse, they blame God when things don't work out.

(SLIDE) **1 Cor** 2:12 We have not received this world's spirit; instead, we have received the Spirit sent by God, so that we may know all that God has given us.

How did you ever get to understand anything about God – by the Holy Spirit. How are you going to understand anything about God now? By the Holy Spirit. It's why you get what the Christian faith is all about and other people don't seem to have a clue however well you explain things.

God's put His Spirit in us to teach us about everything but are we listening? Are we following the navigator or doing our own thing?

## 4. Changes our Behaviour (SLIDE)

(SLIDE) **Romans** 8:4 God did this so that the righteous demands of the Law might be fully satisfied in us who live according to the Spirit, and not according to human nature. 5 Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to, have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants. 6 To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace.

I find the most amazing thing that happens when people really and truly find Jesus, particularly in their adult years, is the change that occurs in their lives. Sometimes it's a massive change – so much so, that everyone sits up and looks and listens. On the day of Pentecost, God turned a group of scared disciples into people who said and did amazing things. Their lives were changed and 2000 years on, the Jesus continues to change lives. How does He do that? By His Holy Spirit. His Spirit changes people. His Spirit is there to guide us and empower us to be the kind of people God wants us to be. But He doesn't do that by force, but by our consent.

What difference does having the presence of God in our lives make to us this morning? Is it big, is it small, is it nothing? Why accept the second best of feeling like we're drowning in life, that our situation never seems to change, like our problems hang on to us, the guilt of the past won't go away, that there seems to be no hope; when the Holy Spirit is there to change us, to empower us, to give us peace, to give us joy – yes, being a Christian should be the most exciting thing you ever do!

## 5. Empowers our lives (SLIDE)

You heard what I just said. Empower. Look at the Book of Acts and you'll see the Holy Spirit doing powerful things through the lives of the apostles and others. Jesus once said (John 14:12): I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And how did He plan to get them to do that? The Holy Spirit.

(SLIDE) Acts 1:6 When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?" 7 Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. 8 But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

So where are His works of power? We don't often see them. Whose fault is that. It isn't God's. You don't have to look very hard to find real people whose lives have been touched in profound ways. Amazing stories of lives changed, sicknesses healed, impossible things sorted by God's power. Just because it isn't happening much with us doesn't mean it isn't happening. God wants us to know more of His power in our lives, because He is the God who is a Father who desires to pour out His Spirit on us. So why doesn't that happen? If you feel far from God who moved? He's in us. He's still here. If we're not experiencing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then we are the problem.

(SLIDE) Do you know the Spirit?

If not, you need Jesus. Pure and simple. Today you can know what it means to have the Holy Spirit in your life, changing you, giving life meaning, dealing with your situations, revealing the things of God to you, navigating you through life. It starts when you accept that because of your sins, you are the one that's far from God, but that in His love God has made a way for you to find forgiveness and find life and that's through the death of Jesus on the cross. Cross the border this morning. Find forgiveness, turn to Jesus, follow Him, accept Him into your life.

(SLIDE) do you know the Spirit well?

No – be filled with the Spirit. God wants to fill you. He wants to fill you with that assurance of the fact you're His. He wants to fill you with the understanding of who He is and what your life is all about. He wants to fill you so those things that are an anxiety to you are pushed away and replaced by His peace. He wants to fill you and radically change your life. But you can only do that if you are filled with the Spirit of God. One of the pictures of the Holy Spirit is flames, fire. Because fire is a great picture of power. If you have a gas cooker or heater, you know the energy that's released if you turn it on. On older appliances, the gas was lit using a pilot light – a small flame which was always lit. Someone once compared the Holy Spirit to a pilot light. The pilot light – He's in our lives but just a small flame. If we want that flame to burn, we turn up the gas! How does that happen? How do I get filled with the Spirit? Ask!

Prayer

*Eph 1:17* I .. ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him. *18* I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, *19* and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.

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MRBC Felixstowe 31/5/09  
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