

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
Romans 8:12 - 17

¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

The Holy Spirit is often the most overlooked and least understood member of the Trinity. Often, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is shrouded in mystery and confusion. In today's Bible lesson, Paul wrote about the blessings brought into the believer's life through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit remains with the believer and serves as his/her comforter, counselor, advocate and helper in the Christian life (consider the teachings of Jesus on this matter in John 14:16, 26 and John 16:5-16).

David Jeremiah summarizes the general work of the Holy Spirit in this way. *"We are not born again by the Spirit and then abandoned by the Spirit. We are not released from bondage to the flesh and then left to struggle on our own. Rather we are ushered by the Spirit into an entirely new household of faith—of which God Himself is the Father."*

The Holy Spirit can be understood in the following ways...

- 1. Membership. He is a member of the Trinity and therefore divine.**
- 2. Mission. He works to draw people to Jesus and the cross.**
- 3. Merciful. Through the Holy Spirit, God comforts His people**
- 4. Mentor. He teaches and communicates the truth of God.**

Paul said in verse 14 that to be led by the Holy Spirit indicates that we enjoy sonship with the Father. We are His children. He shepherds and leads His children through His Spirit. To be delivered from sin and the control of sin means we have been set free by the Holy Spirit and we are now under His guidance. In his analysis of today's Bible lesson, David Jeremiah named or identified six roles or functions that the Holy Spirit plays in the believer's life. These six roles help to remove some of the mystery and misunderstanding that often surround the Spirit. These functions are:

1. The believer is responsible to the Holy Spirit. We live to honor and magnify the One who gave us life.
2. The believer is reinforced by the Holy Spirit. We put to death the old life and live victoriously this new life that the Spirit has given. We find strength to love, honor and serve Christ through the Holy Spirit.
3. The believer is ruled by the Holy Spirit. We have a new master or leader. The Spirit leads us to godly lives and through the many situations and circumstances that we face.
4. The believer is released by the Holy Spirit. We have been set free from sin and embraced by the Father. God works through His Spirit to set captives free.
5. The believer is reassured by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit confirms and assures us of our salvation. He can assuage fears, doubts and worries. The Holy Spirit testifies to us that we indeed belong to the Lord.
6. The believer is rewarded by the Holy Spirit. We are God's children and heirs. We enjoy many blessings now. But the Spirit ensures that we will one day enjoy the full range of blessings and gifts that the Holy Spirit has for us.

As we can see, the Holy Spirit is not a passive member of the Trinity. He is at work daily, faithfully and universally in the Church as a whole and among Christians as individuals. Indeed, even as we read and study God's Word in a Sunday School or worship setting, the Holy Spirit is at work. It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit is the means by whom we can call God our Father.

Applications . . .

1. Read some other passages in the Bible that deal with the Holy Spirit.
2. The next time you pray, address God by the title "Father." And thank God that you can relate to Him in that way.
3. Write out Romans 8:13. How would you explain that verse to someone else? What is the central truth of this passage?
4. Recall some of the ways that the Holy Spirit functions in the believer. Which one(s) is (are) most meaningful and essential to you?