



# TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

October 2010

## IS THE HOLY SPIRIT A PERSON, OR JUST A FORCE?

We first read about the Holy Spirit in the Bible in Genesis 1:2, where He is identified as "the Spirit of God." He is further known as "the Spirit of the LORD" or "the Spirit of Jehovah" (2 Samuel 23:2, ASV), "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), and "the Helper" or "the Comforter" (John 14:26, KJV). Without question, the Holy Spirit is the "one Spirit" about Whom we read in Ephesians 4:4.

Should we describe the Spirit of God as a person, or simply as a force? We are not asking if He is a human being – we know that the Holy Spirit is not a human and does not take on the form of a man. But, we ask again, is God's Spirit a person, or a thing? Should we say "He" or "It" when we speak about the Holy Spirit and His activities?

A person possesses intelligence, will/desire/purpose, moral consciousness, and individual existence. Since the Holy Spirit meets such criteria, then He is a person. Consider the message of Acts 13:2, where it is written, "*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*" (Acts 13:2; emphasis here and elsewhere mine, *rdc*). In this verse, the use of the personal pronouns "me" and "I" to refer to the Spirit clearly show that He is a person.

Some in the religious world, however, do not accept this conclusion. For example, those that call themselves "Jehovah's Witnesses" do not believe that the Holy Spirit is God. In their publications, they continuously write "holy spirit" (with small letters). The following three quotes from the writings of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society clearly show what they think of God's Spirit:

"While men were used to write the Bible, they did so under the direction of God's powerful active force or holy spirit . . . so God's invisible active force directed the writers of the Bible . . ." [*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, page 8].

"He accomplished the creation . . . by means of his holy spirit, which is his invisible active force" [*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, page 20].

"As for the 'Holy Spirit,' the so-called 'third Person of the Trinity,' we have already seen that it is not a person, but God's active force (Judges 14:6)" [*The Truth That Leads To Eternal Life*, p. 24].

As these quotations indicate, the "Jehovah's Witnesses" consider the Holy Spirit to be God's invisible, active force. Per their doctrine, He is not a person, but simply a force. Their claims do not harmonize with the teaching of the Bible. Numerous attributes and actions of the Holy Spirit are mentioned in the New Testament, and these help us to see that He is, indeed, a person. The Spirit of God has the capacity both to teach and remind: "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit . . . he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you*" (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit also has the power to testify, guide, and speak: ". . . *the Spirit of truth . . . he will testify of me . . . when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth: for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak: and he will tell you things to come*" (John 15:26; 16:13).

We further read that the Holy Spirit was to glorify Jesus (John 16:14). That does not sound like something that a mere force could do, does it? As we already noticed, the Holy Spirit gave the charge for Saul and Barnabas to leave Antioch and go on a mission which He had for them (Acts 13:2). A force of some sort might influence, but no mere force can give commands as the Spirit did.

In Romans 8:27, we read about "*the mind of the Spirit*," and 1 Corinthians 12:11 declares that the Holy Spirit worked as He "will." With His mind, the Spirit searches and knows "*all things, yes, the deep things of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:10,11). This truth helps us understand that not only is it the case that the Holy Spirit is a person, but it is accurate to refer to Him as a *divine* person, seeing that He knows all things and possesses the qualities of God. The Holy Spirit is not God the Father, just as the Father is not the Son, but each of them possesses the unique qualities of God, and together they constitute what the Bible calls "*the Godhead*" (Acts 17:29).

In view of all the facts that we have observed from the New Testament, we properly conclude that the Holy Spirit is a person and not merely a force or influence. The Holy Spirit is not a thing. Thus, we do not ask, "*What is the Holy Spirit?*," but rather, "*Who is the Holy Spirit?*" We do not talk about what "It" is or does, but what "He" is or does.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## LESSONS FROM THE LIVES OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

Jacob was blessed with twelve sons, through whom came the twelve tribes of Israel. In order, Joseph was the eleventh of Jacob's sons. Much of the history recorded in Genesis 37-50 is connected with the life of Joseph and his ultimate role in Egypt. However, the divine record also allows us to see a number of things in the lives of his brothers. As we think about them, not one by one, but as a group, what lessons can modern-day Christians learn from their lives?

**When we observe the older brothers of Joseph, we see a family with serious internal issues.** When people deal with people, even when they are close relatives, at times there will be tension, conflict, and disruption of harmony. Jesus spoke about what happens when a house is divided against itself (Mark 3:24). We certainly observe a divisive spirit in Joseph's older brothers. Oh, they were often united in their plans and deeds, but their actions caused division in the family. Satan must be happy to see such happen.

For sure, Jacob's partial treatment of son number eleven was a key factor in producing the turmoil which wrecked his home. Here is the blunt truth: "*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children . . . Also he made him a tunic of many colors*" (Genesis 37:3). How did Joseph's brothers respond to that situation? "*But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him*" (Genesis 37:4). Notice the change in verbs from verse three to verse four: Jacob *loved*, but his ten oldest sons *hated*. After that, at least two times the Bible text tells us that Joseph's brothers "*hated him even more*" (37:5,8). Their hatred was growing.

We again see Joseph's brothers' displeasure with him when we read that "*his brothers envied him*" (37:11). What can you expect to see when hearts are filled with hatred and envy? "*For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there*" (James 3:16). The resentment that Joseph's brothers felt for him led them to make every effort to get rid of him. At first, ". . . *they conspired against him to kill him*" (37:18). Due to the pleading of Reuben and Judah not to kill him, they instead sold Joseph into slavery (37:28). Make no mistake about it. The fruits of hatred and envy are 100% wicked. Surely we can see that in the case of the brothers of Joseph.

**When people do not really care about others, they are capable of doing horrible, unthinkable things.** How do people turn against their own loved ones or former closest friends? How can people intentionally sell their own family members, as Joseph's brothers did with him? How can people kill their own flesh and blood, as evil Athaliah did her grandsons? (2 Kings 11). Such action is ungodly through and through, but it happens. It is repeated in modern times when parents sell their daughters into prostitution or do other self-serving, loveless things.

Have you ever considered the calloused attitude that the brothers of Joseph showed toward their father?

They took Joseph's tunic and dipped it in the blood of a goat. Then they brought that tunic to Jacob, saying, "*We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?*" (37:32). Their deception was despicable. They knew exactly what had become of their brother and his gorgeous tunic. When Jacob saw the tunic, what did he conclude? "*A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his clothes . . . and mourned for his son many days*" (37:33,34). How cold-hearted were Joseph's older brothers? Cold-hearted enough to sell him, and cold-hearted enough to allow their father to believe and cling to the falsehood that Joseph was no longer alive. Do you know how long Joseph's brothers concealed the truth about Joseph from their father? For *twenty-two years* they allowed their father to suffer the mental anguish of thinking that his son was dead! Loving children do not inflict such torment on a parent.

When love – genuine care and concern for others, is missing, every sort of evil deed can be found. Let us not deceive ourselves. It happened in the case of Joseph's older brothers, and it can happen in modern-day families as well, even good ones. Not only that, it can happen among the members of local churches. In the ancient church in Corinth, there were envy, strife, and division. The presence of such revealed that they were carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3). Let us not allow the devil to erect such walls between us or among us.

Let us close on a high note. **From the lives of Joseph's brothers, we learn the truth that people can learn from their past mistakes, mature, and do better.** Long after Joseph was sold by his brothers, when a famine struck the land of Canaan and it became necessary to take Benjamin, the beloved youngest son of Jacob, to Egypt, Judah interceded. Out of concern for his father's peace of mind, he pledged that he would take care of Benjamin (43:8,9). When Benjamin received special, partial treatment from Joseph (he got five times more food than his brothers), the elder brothers did not hate or resent him (43:34). What a change that was from how they treated Joseph!

Again, when Joseph threatened to imprison Benjamin (which would have meant separating him from his father, Jacob), Judah pleaded with Joseph to free Benjamin and imprison him (Judah) instead. With Joseph, the brothers' attitude was, "Who cares what happens to him?" By the time they face the prospect of losing Benjamin for the rest of his life, their heart has changed. Where brotherly love had been lacking, it is now present. Where concern for their father's feelings and happiness had been absent, it is now shown in a moving way. Yes, in the case of Joseph's brothers we learn that people really can stop being "*hateful and hating one another*" (Titus 3:3). Like all of us, Joseph's brothers made mistakes. At least in some instances, though, they showed that they learned from their wrongs, matured, and made better choices in the future.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## ARE YOU A GOOD WORKER?

Parents are proud when someone praises their child with the words, "He/she is a good worker." Such words might come from a teacher, a coach, or simply someone whom their son or daughter has helped with some type of physical labor or special project. And, when the kids are old enough to be employees, dads and moms enjoy hearing their children's employer say, "They are really good workers. I wish I had ten more just like them."

What about you, brother or sister, are you a good worker? I am talking now about the work that you do in the Lord's Kingdom. Does the Lord count you as a good worker in His Cause? "Oh, I try to be a good neighbor." If you truly are a good neighbor, then good for you. That seems to be a lost art in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. God surely wants each of us to be a good neighbor, *'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself''* (Galatians 5:14).

Are you a good worker? "I try to be a good person." The Lord certainly wants us to be kind to others (Ephesians 4:32), be courteous (1 Peter 3:8), do good to others (Galatians 6:10), and refrain from harming others (1 Peter 4:15). If you are one that others honestly see as "a really good person," then you are special, indeed. The world certainly needs more "good people."

Are you a good worker? "I try to be a good friend that others can count on." Jesus said, *"Greater love has no man that this, to lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). If you are a genuine, loyal friend, that is admirable.

Are you a good worker? "I know I am not perfect, but I try to be a good husband/father [or wife/mother]." In far too many cases today, husbands/fathers and wives/mothers do not fit into the category of "good" simply because they do not treat other family members the way the Lord wants them to be treated. Husbands and wives, as well as parents and children, are to love one another (Ephesians 5:22-33; Titus 2:3-5). If you are a good spouse and/or parent, then by all means, keep it up.

Are you a good worker in the church? "I do my best to attend every service of the church." The Lord knows that we need our brothers and sisters to serve as a good pattern for us (Titus 2:7), and we are encouraged by their commitment not to be a forsaker of the assembling of God's people (Hebrews 10:25). It is a genuine delight to see brethren in the Lord putting God first and arranging their other activities around the services of the church and not vice versa. Yes, seeking first the Lord's righteousness and kingdom is still Jesus' desire for each of His disciples (Matthew 6:33).

Are you a good worker in the church? This is the question to which I am pointing, but when I ask it, I

seem to always get an answer that speaks of some other aspect of life. Being a good neighbor, a good person, a good friend, a good spouse/parent, and one that attends the services of the church – that is wonderful. In reality, that is just how it *should be* for every child of God. But what about being a good **worker** in the Kingdom? Should not each member of the church consider this question? We think so.

If I have been bought by the blood of the Lamb, then the Master wants me to work for Him. *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). If my Lord wants me to work for Him, then shouldn't I have a desire to do that very thing in order to please Him? Even Jesus said about Himself, *"I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work"* (John 9:4).

In the work and activities of the church, there are so many opportunities for us to get involved. Matters pertaining to the worship, evangelism, edification, and benevolence of the church are areas in which each of us can be helpful to the Cause. It may still be true in the world-wide scheme of things in the church that, *"... the labourers are few"* (Luke 10:2), but let us make certain that **here in this place, in our home congregation**, there will never be a shortage of workers because each one of us remains committed to working with and for Jesus!

Many of us have sung the song "I Want to Be a Worker for the Lord" an untold number of times. What a great sentiment the words of that song express! If you claim that you work for the Lord, would there be enough evidence in your life to prove it? If everyone in this congregation worked in the Kingdom just like you do, how much work would get done? If every other saint of God approached the work of the church with the same enthusiasm that you participate in that work, how enthusiastic would this congregation be? If each brother or sister in the Lord spent the same amount of energy and time working for Jesus' spiritual body that you do, how much work would we be getting done?

The work of the Lord is too large for any single person or group of people. It takes all of us working together, with each one of us doing his/her part, whatever that "part" might be. The Lord deserves our best effort, does He not? By the way, what was **your** final answer to our question, "Are you a good worker?" If you do not like the answer that you give, then what can you do? Simply do what it takes to become and remain a dependable worker. May God bless you for your conviction and commitment to please the One that gave Himself for us.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## Luke 18:9-14 – THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

*Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess'. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:10-13).*

Our Lord was the Master Teacher. One of His most noted forms of teaching was His use of parables. A parable was a story, but more than “just” a story, it was a story about earthly events that contained within it a *spiritual truth* that Jesus wanted to get across. Jesus would tell a story and “throw alongside it” a spiritual truth. What memorable teaching tools they were! What about the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector? Let us break it down and search for some lessons.

**The Setting** of the Parable – When we study the Bible, it is often the case that just prior to the beginning of a parable we find a thought or statement that helps us understand what point the Christ was seeking to emphasize in that particular story. That is definitely true in this instance. Why did Jesus tell this parable in *that* place at *that* time to *that* group of hearers? Here is the Bible’s clear answer: “*Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*” (Luke 18:9). That declaration helps prepare our minds to see the spiritual truth which Jesus wanted His audience to see and accept. His listeners on this occasion included self-righteous people who looked down their noses at others.

**The People** of the Parable – There are only two: a Pharisee and a tax collector. In this case, both of them believed in God, both went to the temple, both prayed, and both evidently believed in God’s power and willingness to hear prayers. In general terms, our Lord described the Pharisees as “*blind leaders of the blind*” (Matthew 15:14). Jesus warned His disciples and others to beware of the Pharisees’ hypocrisy (Luke 12:1; Matthew 23:2,3). What about first-century tax collectors? In general, the Jews strongly disliked those who worked as tax collectors for the Roman government, considering them as corrupt, dishonest, and traitors to the Jewish cause.

**The Prayers** of the Parable – The first prayer was the Pharisee’s. He went to the temple to pray, so he was a religious man. If his words about himself were true, then from a moral standpoint he was a decent

man (18:11). Furthermore, he fasted regularly and gave tithes of all that he had (18:12). He is not to be faulted for any of those habits.

Notice how the Pharisee’s prayer began: “*God, I thank You that I am not like other men*” (18:11). In reality, he did not have a heart of appreciation for what God had done for him. Instead, he talks about how great *he* is! When the Pharisee thought he had done something good, his words were “I,” “I,” “I,” “I.” His prayer manifests the attitude of self-righteousness (18:9). The Pharisee makes the mistake of boasting about what he feels he has done right, but fails to mention his sins. Could it be that he does not see himself as a sinner, while at the same time he easily sees the sins of others?

The Pharisee also makes the mistake of comparing himself to others in order that he might look good and make others look bad (2 Corinthians 10:12). Brothers and sisters, we need to evaluate *ourselves* each day (2 Corinthians 13:5). Remember, faithfulness in God’s sight is not based on comparison with other humans. We will be judged by God’s standard, His word (John 12:48).

What a refreshing contrast we see in the prayer of the tax collector. The man’s prayer consisted of a mere seven words, but the Christ praised him. He was an example of a person that is “*poor in spirit*” (Matthew 5:3). Instead of boasting about his good qualities, he labeled himself as “*a sinner*” (18:13; Romans 3:23). He confessed his need for God, pleading for God’s mercy (18:13). After He finished telling the story, Jesus said that this tax collector was justified, whereas the Pharisee was not (18:14).

**The Main Lesson** of the Parable – We have no trouble identifying the main point of this story. Jesus declared that the tax collector was justified “*for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*” (18:14). The main lesson of the parable is ***the need to be humble***. Humble people recognize their weaknesses and strive to do better. They count others better than themselves (Philippians 3:13,14; 2:3,4). The humble do not seek after man’s glory and praise, but God’s. Indeed, the *truly* humble will humble themselves before the Lord and obey Him, being His servant rather than the servant of self: “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up*” (James 4:10).

The church needs humble servants, not self-righteous boasters. Let us look to Jesus as the supreme model of humility (Philippians 2:5-8).

-- Roger D. Campbell

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