

Luke and Acts: Abundant Presence of the Holy Spirit

A) **Introduction:** The ancient Greek word *pneuma* has a variety of meanings and translations: "wind, breath, ghost, spirit."

- The English adjective "pneumatic" and other words that are derived from *pneuma* all have something to do with "air" or "spirit" or "lungs": pneumatic drills/pumps/ tires; pneumonia (a lung disease); pneumatology (the study of spiritual beings/ phenomena), etc.
- The related verb *pneo* ("to blow") always refers to the wind, while *ekpneo* ("to breathe out") is used in the NT only of Jesus' death.

Greek	English	Matt	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Paul	Heb	Cath	Rev	NT Total
πνευμα	spirit, breath, wind	19	23	36	24	70	146	12	25	24	379
πνευμα αγιον	Holy Spirit	5	4	13	3	41	15	5	3	0	89
πνευμα Κυριου	Spirit of the Lord	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	4
πνεω + υποπνεω	to blow + blow gently	2	0	1	2	1+1	0	0	0	1	7+1
εκπνεω	to breathe out	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3



B) **The Role of the Holy Spirit (and other spirits) in the Gospel according to Luke:**

- The angel Gabriel says of John the Baptist: "Even before his birth, he will be filled with the **Holy Spirit**" (1:15); he will act "with the **spirit and power** of [the prophet] Elijah" (1:17); later, the child grows and becomes "**strong in spirit**" (1:80).
- Gabriel tells Mary of God's plan: "**The Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (1:35).
- When newly-pregnant Mary visits her pregnant older cousin, Elizabeth is "filled with the **Holy Spirit**" (1:41).
- In the Magnificat, Mary proclaims, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and **my spirit rejoices** in God my Savior" (1:46-47).
- After the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah is "filled with the **Holy Spirit**" and utters a prophecy (1:67).
- In Jerusalem, "the **Holy Spirit** rested on" Simeon (2:25); the **Holy Spirit** had revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Messiah (2:26); so the **Spirit** guides Simeon to the Temple, where he encounters the infant Jesus and his parents (2:27).
- John the Baptist distinguishes between himself and Jesus: "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the **Holy Spirit** and fire" (3:16).
- After Jesus is baptized, "the **Holy Spirit** descended upon him *in bodily form like a dove*. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" (3:22).
- Before beginning his public ministry, "Jesus, full of the **Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led by the **Spirit** in the wilderness" (4:1), where he is tempted by the devil. Jesus then returns to Galilee "filled with the power of the **Spirit**" (4:14).
- In the synagogue at Nazareth, his hometown, Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah: "**The Spirit of the Lord** is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (4:18); after finishing the reading, Jesus declares, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21), implying that he is indeed a prophet and the Messiah, enlivened by God's Spirit.
- Jesus casts out many "**unclean spirits**" and "**evil spirits**" (4:33, 36; 6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 8:29; 9:39, 42; 10:20; 11:24, 26; 13:11).
- Soon after the seventy disciples return from their mission, Jesus "rejoiced in the **Holy Spirit**" and thanks God (10:21).
- While teaching his disciples about prayer, Jesus says, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask him!" (11:13).
- In response to criticism from his opponents, Jesus tells his disciples, "Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the **Holy Spirit** will not be forgiven" (12:10).
- Jesus tells his disciples not to worry if arrested, "for the **Holy Spirit** will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say" (12:12).
- As Jesus is dying on the cross, he utters his final words: "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend **my spirit**.' Having said this, *he breathed his last* (Gk: *exepneusen*)" (23:46).
- When the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples, they are at first afraid, thinking that they were seeing a **ghost/spirit** (24:37); but Jesus assures them that he is not merely a **ghost/spirit**, but can be seen and touched, since he has flesh and bones (24:39).

C) **The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles:**

- God's Spirit inspires/guides *most* of the action in the Acts of the Apostles, which might better be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."
- Jesus instructs the apostles "through the Holy Spirit" (1:2).
- The first disciples are "baptized with the Holy Spirit" at Pentecost (1:5, 8; 2:1-4; 11:15-16).
- The apostles are "full of" or "filled with" the Holy Spirit, esp. when they preach (1:8; 2:4; 4:8, 31; 11:24; 13:9, 52).
- Similarly, the Holy Spirit spoke through King David and the prophets in ancient Israel (1:16; 4:25; 28:25).
- God "will pour out" his Spirit on all people and all nations in the last days (2:17-18, 33; 10:45).
- Believers, including Gentiles, receive the Holy Spirit when they repent and are baptized (2:38; 15:8; 19:5-6).
- Sometimes the reception of the Holy Spirit even precedes baptism (10:44-48).
- Some people "test" or "lie to" or "oppose" the Holy Spirit, with dire consequences (5:1-11; 7:51).
- Deacons and other ministers must also be "full of the Spirit" (6:1-6), esp. when they prophesy (6:10; 7:55-59; 11:28; 21:4).
- The Spirit is conferred through the "laying on of hands" (8:17-19; 9:17; 19:6).
- The Spirit "speaks to" the apostles and prophets (8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:1-4; 21:11).
- The Spirit leads and guides the decisions and actions of the Christian leaders (15:28; 16:6-7; 19:21; 20:22-23).

The Holy Spirit in Paul's Letters

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts are very prominent and important in the Letters of St. Paul.

God's Spirit dwells in believers, making us adopted Children of God:

- **1 Thess 1:4-7** – “For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the **Holy Spirit** and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the **Holy Spirit**, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”
- **Romans 5:3-5** – “We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that *suffering* produces endurance, ⁴ and *endurance* produces character, and *character* produces hope, ⁵ and *hope* does not disappoint us, *because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*”
- **Galatians 4:4-7** – “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, *so that we might receive adoption as children.* ⁶ And because you are children, **God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts**, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” [See also the very similar and more extensive text in **Romans 8:1-17**]

God's Spirit helps us to pray, and to understand God's ways:

- **Rom 8:26-28** – “Likewise *the Spirit helps us in our weakness*; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but *that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.* ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the **Spirit**, because *the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* ²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”
- **1 Cor 2:10-16** – “These things God has revealed to us through the **Spirit**; for *the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.* ¹¹ For what human being knows what is truly human except the *human spirit* that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the **Spirit of God.** ¹² Now *we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.* ¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but *taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.* ¹⁴ Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of **God's Spirit**, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are **spiritually** discerned. ¹⁵ Those who are *spiritual* discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶ “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

We are the “Temple” of God's Spirit:

- **1 Cor 3:16-17** – “Do you not know that *you are God's temple* and that *God's Spirit dwells in you?* ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For *God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*”
- **1 Cor 6:19-20** – “Or do you not know that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?* ²⁰ For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”

God's Spirit provides a diversity of gifts, but unity in the community, the Body of Christ:

- **1 Cor 12:1-13** – “Now concerning **spiritual gifts**, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the **Spirit of God** ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the **Holy Spirit.** ⁴ Now there are *varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;* ⁵ and there are *varieties of services, but the same Lord;* ⁶ and there are *varieties of activities, but it is the same God* who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* ⁸ To one is given through the **Spirit** the *utterance of wisdom*, and to another the *utterance of knowledge* according to the same **Spirit**, ⁹ to another *faith* by the **same Spirit**, to another *gifts of healing* by the **one Spirit**, ¹⁰ to another the *working of miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another the *discernment of spirits*, to another *various kinds of tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues.* ¹¹ All these are activated by **one and the same Spirit**, who allots to each one individually just as the **Spirit** chooses. ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the **one Spirit** we were all made to drink of **one Spirit.**”
- **1 Cor 14:1-19** – “*Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.* ² For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the **Spirit.** ³ On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴ Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church... ¹² So with yourselves; since you are eager for **spiritual gifts**, strive to excel in them for building up the church...”

Paul contrasts the “Works of the Flesh” with the “Fruit of the Spirit”:

- **Gal 5:13-26** – “For *you were called to freedom*, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but *through love* become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”... ¹⁶ **Live by the Spirit**, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the **Spirit**, and what the **Spirit** desires is opposed to the flesh... ¹⁹ Now the **works of the flesh** are obvious... ²² By contrast, **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** There is no law against such things...” (The Vulgate Bible adds *goodness, modesty, and chastity*, for a total of twelve; see also Rom 13:8-14).