

## On the Holy Spirit (Part 7 of 7: Unity of the Spirit)

Historic Faith Series on Holy Spirit

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### XV. Receiving More of the Spirit?

- a. Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray, in **Luke 11**. He starts by saying, “When you pray, *say...*” and then gives what we commonly call ‘The Lord’s Prayer’.
- b. After giving The Lord’s Prayer, Jesus immediately follows with more teaching on prayer. He gives the example of a man unrelentingly pounding on his neighbor’s door late at night, asking for loaves of bread when his neighbor is already in bed.
  - i. Read **Luke 11:5-13**.
  - ii. After giving the example of the bold, persistent man and pointing out that any father will give his children good things that they ask for, Jesus concludes:
    1. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (**Luke 11:13**, NKJV)
  - iii. This concluding statement by Jesus here puzzled me. After all, the Bible teaches *that all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them*, and that it is received when we believe and are baptized (**Ephesians 1:13-14, Acts 2:38**).
    1. When people ask me if I have the Holy Spirit, I answer, “Yes”.
    2. If I am asked, “Well, how do you know you have the Spirit? Can you feel it?” I reply, “I know that I have it *by faith, based on a promise by God* (that promise being given in **Acts 2:38-39**).
      - a. That promise is available for *all people* who meet the conditions stated by Peter.
      - b. I can be confident that I have the Holy Spirit dwelling within me for the same reason I can be confident that my sins were forgiven. My confidence is based on a promise of God, who always keeps His promises.
      - c. The confidence I have is *not* based on my (often unreliable) feelings, nor is it based on some type of a subjective personal experience.

- iv. Note that the picture of the person asking, in Jesus' illustration, is not just asking once. He keeps asking, pounding on the door and not going away. That is the whole *point* of the example.
  - 1. The man refuses to depart until he receives the requested loaves.
  - 2. The NKJV reads "because of his persistence"; however, the KJV (and some other, older translations) may be more accurate in translating this: "because of his importunity".
    - a. Importunity conveys the idea of boldness, almost to the point of embarrassment (or perhaps to the point of being obnoxious).
    - b. Jesus calls us to have this kind of approach (boldness, perseverance, importunity, not giving up until you get what you asked for) *in asking God for the Holy Spirit!*
- c. Now let us consider what Paul said in **Ephesians 5**.
  - i. "Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God." (**Ephesians 5:17-21**, NKJV).
  - ii. Here Paul is *speaking to Christians* who already have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them (**Ephesians 1:13-14**); and he is telling *them* to "be filled with the Holy Spirit"!
  - iii. It seems that we can have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, yet also can (beyond that) we also can be *filled with* the Holy Spirit; we can have *even more* of the Spirit.
- d. Based on this, I have been praying that God would allow me to be *filled with* the Holy Spirit; that He would give me *more of* the Spirit.
  - i. Some from our background may be uncomfortable with this idea of asking God for more of the Spirit. Where will this lead?
    - 1. Coming from a Church of Christ background, I was taught 'cessationism' regarding the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (that the miraculous manifestations or gifts of the Spirit passed away soon after the first generation of the church).
    - 2. I did not find the Scriptural arguments I was given for cessationism to be convincing. However, at the same time, I

have not *personally observed* anything that seemed to me like a genuine miraculous manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit.

3. I know people who believe that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are available today, and others who do not believe that is possible. I am not sure, either way. However, I do know this:
  - a. Ability to perform miraculous signs in the name of Jesus is no proof that the person performing those signs is saved, nor that they have any relationship with Jesus at all!
  - b. Jesus said, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, '*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*'" (**Matthew 7:22-23**, NKJV)
  - c. The one who will enter the kingdom, according to Jesus, is *the one who does the will of His Father*. An ability to perform miraculous signs is no indication of spirituality nor of salvation!
    - i. Recall that even Balaam had the gift of prophecy; however, he was a wicked man. (**Jude v.11** and **2 Peter 2:15-16**)
  - e. Whether God will bring back miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit (or is already doing so), I do not know. However, I do know that God wants us to be *filled with* the Spirit!

## XVI. Our Bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit

- a. Read **Exodus 40:28-32**.
  - i. After Moses sets up the tabernacle, the cloud fills it.
- b. When Paul is speaking to a largely Gentile church (in Corinth) about the problem of sexual immorality within their church, he uses three examples from the Exodus journey to address this problem.
  - i. Recall **1 Corinthians 10:1-13** (which we discussed in a prior segment).
    1. All the Israelites were "baptized" and ate the spiritual food and drink; however, most of them did not make it to the Promised Land.

2. Paul reminds them that in one day 23,000 people died as a result of the sin of sexual immorality (with the Moabite women; see **Numbers 25**).
3. This is an important lesson *for Christians* regarding the dangers of sins such as sexual immorality.

ii. **1 Corinthians 5:1-8**

1. Paul points to the slaughter of the Passover Lamb, after which the people were told to get rid of all the yeast (pointing back to the directions given in **Exodus 12**).
2. Anyone in Israel who continued to eat yeast would be cut off from the community (**Exodus 12:15**).
3. Yeast represents sin (which can grow, spread and take over the whole loaf).
4. Therefore (Paul reasons), now that Jesus has been sacrificed, we must stop committing the old sins; and anyone who keeps on sinning must be cast out of the church.

iii. The third example: Read **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**.

1. The body (of a Christian) is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in us.
  2. This points back to the account from **Exodus 40** we read from, where the cloud (the Spirit) enters and dwells in the tabernacle.
  3. **Question:** Would we ever want to desecrate the temple of God, for example by spray-painting graffiti on it or by taking a wrecking hammer and defacing it?
    - a. **Answer:** Of course not!
  4. A sober reminder for us is that God *destroyed the temple* of the Jews (more than once) when His people turned to unrighteousness. If we desecrate this temple of God (our bodies), *He will destroy us as well*.
- c. With this in mind, let us also consider what it says in **Hebrews 10** regarding the Holy Spirit and sin.
- i. “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy

on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (**Hebrews 10:26–31**, NKJV)

- d. Understanding that the Holy Spirit dwells within us, that our bodies are temples of the Spirit, should motivate us to lead holy lives, set apart for God. Our bodies are special; we have been purchased by God at a great price.
- e. We must not keep on sinning. As Paul says,
  - i. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." (**Ephesians 4:30–31**, NKJV)
- f. **Personal challenge:** Today, take a personal inventory of the temple (your body, in which the Spirit dwells).
  - i. Is there anything in your life today that *grieves* or *insults the Holy Spirit*?
  - ii. Is there anything in your life that defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit, your body? Consider especially what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 6**, related to the sin of sexual immorality (which also would apply to internet pornography, so prevalent and readily accessible today).
  - iii. If you need to clean out, cleanse and rededicate the temple: *confess your sins* to a trusted brother (men) or sister (women), as we are admonished in **James 5:16**; and *repent*.
- g. **Question:** How on earth can we be asking for *more of the Holy Spirit* if we are currently *grieving and insulting* the Spirit by the way we are living?

## **XVII. The Holy Spirit and Unity**

- a. I consider this last topic, the unity of all Christians, to be the 'Last Frontier', or like a Mount Everest of all the things that radical 'kingdom-Christians' are seeking to restore.
  - i. This in some ways may be the hardest teaching of all to implement. However, it is one of the most important things of all, according to Jesus.
  - ii. Unfortunately, there are not many people nor groups that are seriously pursuing this today.

- b. This is the final thing Jesus spoke about in His Farewell Discourse, the night before He was crucified. After praying for the apostles, He then prays for us. Let us consider what He prays for.
  - i. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (**John 17:20–23**, NKJV)
  - ii. Here Jesus is praying for us (those who will believe in Him through the word of His apostles).
  - iii. Jesus is praying that all of His future disciples *will be one*, unified with the perfect (= complete) kind of unity that He shares with His Father!
  - iv. I believe Jesus is concerned that Satan will attack His followers in the future in many ways; however, if all else fails *Satan will attack the unity of the followers of Jesus*.
    - 1. Disunity of the followers of Jesus will discredit Jesus and His mission, in the eyes of the world. Which is why Satan will focus on creating and encouraging disunity.
- c. If we look around us and take inventory regarding the state of the Christian world today, regarding Jesus’ desire for unity of all His followers, the church overall, worldwide, is *in terrible condition*!
- d. Several *worldly* approaches have been attempted to restore some type of unity among Christians. Let us consider some of these approaches that have been attempted.
  - i. The Roman Catholic church’s approach to unity:
    - 1. Prevailing thought: “There is only one church, *we are that one church*, the original church; so, every believer should join with us (and be under our authority).”
    - 2. Let’s have one person in charge (the Pope), and everyone must do what he says.
    - 3. This certainly is one way to get unity! However, it reminds me of the type of unity the Jews sought when they asked for a king to lead them and to be like all the nations around them, in **1 Samuel 8** (rather than to have God as their king).

- a. I don't think this is the type of unity that Jesus had in mind, when He was praying in **John 17**.
- ii. The ecumenical, 'big tent' approach to unity:
  1. Prevailing thought: "Let's water everything down; and omit any controversial or hard teachings of Jesus."
  2. Base the unity on just a few very simple beliefs, such as Jesus being the Son of God and being resurrected on the third day.
  3. Anything that believers disagree on (including inerrancy of Scripture, eternal judgment, Jesus being the only way to God, sexual immorality, homosexuality, roles of men and women, etc.) we will consider to be non-essential "disputable matters" and sweep under the rug.
  4. Let the church be like one gigantic tent, where virtually anything is allowed in. Let's just believe in Jesus and sit around singing 'Kum-ba-yah'.
  5. Of course, this kind of "unity" is worthless!
- iii. The outward uniformity approach to unity:
  1. Prevailing thought: "Let's define unity as everyone following the same set of man-made rules."
  2. Focus on outward things, so everyone *looks* the same.
  3. This can produce an outward appearance of unity within a particular group. However, it produces disunity between different groups. Each group comes up with its own self-enforced rules, which conflict with the rules other groups have come up with. Examples I have been told about:
    - a. Some conservative Anabaptist groups require adult men members to have full beards.
    - b. Other similar groups require men to have chin-beards, but no facial hair above the lips.
    - c. Still other similar groups require the men to be clean-shaven, with no facial hair at all!
    - d. Clearly this approach may produce an outward appearance of local unity; however, in reality it creates *even more division* in the body of Christ!
- iv. The sectarian, doctrinal uniformity approach to unity:

1. Prevailing thought: “Let’s come up with a very long list of dozens of very specific doctrinal positions (including on some things the Bible says little or nothing about) and require our members to agree with us on all of these items.”
  2. If you only agree on 99 out of the 100 official doctrinal positions, that is not good enough; in that case, you will need to leave and find (or start) another group!
  3. Then the group can point to itself as being (internally, anyway) completely unified. However, outside their own small circle they are disunified with all other Christians.
  4. Among the conservative Churches of Christ, churches have divided over things like having a kitchen in the church building, mission societies and musical instruments.
- v. The cultic, ‘ostrich-like’ approach to unity:
1. Prevailing thought: “Those in *our* group (a denomination or fellowship of churches) are the *only true* Christians.”
  2. The group essentially sticks its head in the sand (like a frightened ostrich) and pretends that outside of itself, there are *no other true Christians* on the planet today!
  3. If anyone within the group challenges any of the tenants or beliefs held by that group, they are pushed out and considered to be ‘non-Christians’ from that point forward.
  4. This certainly is NOT the *unity of all believers* that Jesus was praying for!
- e. In contrast to all of the above humanistic approaches, consider what Paul said in **Ephesians** about the *kind of unity* Christians are called to have.
- i. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (**Ephesians 4:1–6**, NKJV)
  - ii. The Spirit desires the unity of all Christians.
    1. Recall the way that the pillar (representing the Holy Spirit) guided the Israelites and kept them unified as one group, as they were travelling through the wilderness.

2. The kind of unity Paul speaks of here, the unity of the Spirit, is not based on having the right church rules or structure. It comes through humility, gentleness, and bearing with one another in love.
  3. This kind of unity *does not involve compromising on truth*. However, I can still have true unity with *a true brother in Christ* with whom I don't necessarily agree on every single point of doctrine.
- iii. The Christian faith is in reality simple and uncomplicated.
1. Anyone who *either adds to* any of the commands of the New Testament, *or who takes away* from any of them, is guilty of causing disunity in the worldwide body of Christ.
- f. To promote real unity in the body of Christ:
- i. Let us just follow the simple faith, as it was handed down by the apostles; neither adding to it nor taking anything away from it.
  - ii. Let us have a loving attitude toward other believers.
  - iii. Look for opportunities to promote unity in the overall body of Christ, especially with those who already share many core convictions of the kingdom message. Seek to build bridges and break down barriers of sectarianism and suspicion, to the fullest extent that we are able.
  - iv. Many groups have at least some strength that we can learn from (evangelizing the lost, holiness, family life, devotion to the word of God, concern for the poor and needy, etc.).
    1. In building unity, we have more opportunities to grow and learn from others who have strengths to offer.
    2. In promoting unity among all Christians, we can create a much stronger church that combines the great strengths of different groups who have been separated from one another.

## **XVIII. Concluding Remarks**

- a. The three main lessons on the Holy Spirit from this course will hopefully provide you with a deeper appreciation for the Holy Spirit: a foundation upon which you can build in your own Bible study and devotional life.
- b. The Christian faith is not intended to be a mechanical exercise in just reading a Book following a long list of rules. It is a walk, a relationship in which we are filled with the Spirit and are guided by the Spirit on our journey.

- c. We are called to be filled with the Spirit, to have more of the Spirit operating within us.
- d. The Holy Spirit *cannot* lead us in a different direction than what was handed down by the apostles. The Spirit inspired the Scriptures. Anyone or anything leading in a different direction is *not* from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.
- e. May the Spirit lead us to unity as the body of Christ, and lead each of us all the way to the Promised Land!