

## **The Holy Spirit in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians**

Special Follow-Up Lesson on the Holy Spirit

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### **I. Review from Recent Lessons on the Spirit**

- a. At our recent house church retreat in PA (July 5-7, 2019), we had three foundational lessons on the Holy Spirit.
  - i. Following that time, I have been thinking a lot more about that, and this past week have been reading and re-reading Ephesians, where Paul speaks a great deal on the Spirit throughout that letter.
  - ii. Based on the foundational things we studied earlier, I was able to see much more than I had previously; and wanted to share that via this lesson.
  - iii. I encourage you to review lessons or notes (being posted online) from the three prior studies; especially those who were not able to participate in the retreat. Then read Ephesians, and I think you will see a lot more.
- b. A brief overview of things we covered in those three lessons on the Spirit.
  - i. The Churches of Christ have downplayed the role of the Spirit, coming out of a heated internal controversy over the Spirit about 100 years ago.
    - 1. For many years, many Churches of Christ taught that Spirit does not even dwell in Christians.
    - 2. They taught that the Spirit inspired the Scriptures, and we just need to study and follow the Scriptures.
    - 3. Emphasis on teaching about the Spirit is what it does not do (teaching against Pentecostalism, miraculous gifts, etc.)
  - ii. Consequently, most of us do not have strong background or clear understanding of the nature and ministry of the Spirit.
  - iii. **Isaiah 11:1-2** was an important passage to early Christian writers. Great place to start from. Seven characteristics.
    - 1. Jesus was given the Spirit without measure.
    - 2. Prophets were given limited aspects of the Spirit.

3. Spirit “rested on” Jesus. No further prophets among the Jews.
  4. Jesus now makes the Spirit available to His disciples.
- iv. Holy Spirit is divine, uncreated, one of three persons of God. Has thoughts and feelings. Inspired the prophets. Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit (lied to God).
- v. Holy Spirit described as “Lord and giver of life” in Nicene Creed (381).
1. Associated with giving life, raising the dead, and spiritual rebirth.
  2. Recall God breathed life into the first man, created from the earth (**Genesis 2:7**).
  3. God’s Spirit brought life to dry bones (**Ezekiel 37**).
  4. God’s Spirit brought a child into the womb of the virgin Mary (**Luke 1:35**).
  5. God’s Spirit brings about our own spiritual rebirth as we are born again of water and the spirit (**John 3:3-8**)
- vi. We see very helpful pictures and foreshadowings of the Spirit in the Old Testament.
1. Pillar of cloud and fire in the Exodus journey.
    - a. Appeared right after the Passover Lamb was slain.
    - b. Led the people the whole way to the Promised Land.
    - c. God’s comforting presence among them.
    - d. Lighted the way at night, provided covering from heat of the sun in the day.
    - e. Showed them exactly how and when to go.
    - f. Center of the community; 12 tribes camped around it at the center.
  2. Rock in the desert that the people drank from
    - a. Water in a dry desert; gives life, sustains.
    - b. **1 Corinthians 10** “drank from the rock...Christ”

- c. Jesus promised He would provide living water welling up to eternal life, referring to the Spirit (**John 4:10-15** and **John 7:37-39**).
3. Lampstand that burned always, before the Lord
    - a. The elements of the tabernacle foreshadowed heavenly things (**Hebrews 8-10**).
      - i. The High Priest is Jesus.
      - ii. The blood that the High Priest brings into the Most Holy Place is Jesus' blood
      - iii. The veil of the temple (ripped from top to bottom when Jesus was crucified, **Matthew 27:50-51**) represents Jesus' body. His death opened up a way for us to enter into presence of God.
      - iv. And the lampstand, with its seven lamps providing fire and light always lit in the Holy Place, represents the Holy Spirit.
    - vii. Spirit dwells in all Christians
      1. Jesus told the apostles that the Spirit would be *in them*. "...the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive... He dwells with you and *will be in you*." (**John 14:17**, NKJV)
      2. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (**1 Corinthians 3:16**, NKJV)
      3. In Acts **2:38-40**; Peter gives the promise of Spirit to all those who repent and are baptized; and says that promise will be open to all people, everywhere.
    - viii. Yet Jesus also told His disciples that we should *pray for* the Spirit (**Luke 11:5-13**)
      1. Through the example of the man banging on the door late at night, Jesus calls us to pray *persistently, boldly, "with importunity"* (KJV), *to receive the Spirit*.
    - ix. Our body is temple of the Holy Spirit
      1. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (**1 Corinthians 6:19**, NKJV)

2. Consider the picture of the cloud coming down and filling the tabernacle with God's presence. (**Exodus 40:34**)
3. We must treat this temple with honor.
4. Paul's primary application here: Christians must not get involved in the sin of sexual immorality (a sin against one's body, a temple of the Holy Spirit).

## II. Back to the Foundation

- a. A foundational Scripture about the Holy Spirit, according to early Christian writers. Let's read it from a translation based on the Septuagint (LXX):
  - i. "There shall come forth a rod from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall grow out of his root. The Spirit of God shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and godliness. The Spirit of the fear of God shall fill him..." (**Isaiah 11:1-3a**, LXX, OSB)
- b. Note that there are *seven* characteristics (in LXX, the version used by apostles and early Christians). Early Christians saw connections with *seven Spirits* mentioned elsewhere (as in **Revelation**).
- c. Let us consider all seven of these characteristics when we read what Paul said about the Spirit in his letter to the **Ephesians**.

## III. Paul's Prayer

- a. Read **Ephesians 1:7-14**
  - i. They (all) have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. "Guarantee" of their inheritance.
    1. Can you void the guarantee?
    2. **Question:** Are "lifetime guarantees" generally totally unconditional, or are there stated (or implied) conditions involved?
      - a. An example: Imaging buying new flooring for your kitchen that comes with a "lifetime guarantee". After installing it, you take a blow torch to the flooring and ruin it. Will the guarantee hold, or will it be voided?
      - b. Another example: You purchase a new car with a guarantee that covers the engine and drive train.

However, you don't ever add or change the oil; and you pour *sand* into the crankcase!

- c. In these two examples, I think we all realize that we would have voided the "lifetime guarantee"! Clearly there were stated or implied conditions in the guarantee (that we would not abuse the product). The "lifetime guarantee" was a *conditional* one.
3. **Question:** Are *guarantees of our salvation* that we find in Scripture *unconditional*, or *conditional*?
- a. Read **Ezekiel 33:14-16**
    - i. God says (promises) to the wicked man: "you will surely die". However, if that man changes and repents, *he lives*.
      1. Why? Did God go back on His promise?
      2. No; there was an implied condition associated with God's promise of death to the man: *it assumed the man would be continuing* in his life of sin.
    - ii. Consider also in the story of **Jonah**. The prophet preached that "In X days, Nineveh will be destroyed". However, the people repented; and the city was spared destruction.
      1. God did not go back on His promise; the promise of destruction had an implied condition (that the Ninevites would continue in their sinful ways).
  - b. **2 Timothy 2:11-13**
    - i. *If* we endure... we will reign with Him.
    - ii. *If* we deny Him... He will deny us.
    - iii. Clearly, Paul believed that the security of our salvation was real, *but conditional*; based on our continuing to live faithful to Jesus.
  - c. Jesus taught the same thing (our salvation is conditional upon our walking faithfully to the end).

- i. “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But *he who endures to the end* shall be saved.” (**Matthew 24:12-13**, NKJV)
      - d. Also consider what Paul said in **Ephesians 5:3-7**. With the same letter where he speaks of this guarantee, he warns that Christians in Ephesus can lose their salvation.
    - iii. We have been redeemed/ purchased by Jesus’ blood.
  - b. Read **Ephesians 1:15-22**
    - i. Paul prays to God for the Christians, that they will receive (more of) the Spirit. (Note many of the seven characteristics of the Spirit we saw in **Isaiah 11:1-3** are discussed here.)
      1. Wisdom, knowledge, understanding
      2. Power (raised Jesus from the dead)
  - c. Also read **Ephesians 3:14-19**.
    - i. Paul says that he *gets down on his knees and prays* that the Spirit might strengthen them in their inner man.
    - ii. This also reminds me of what Jesus said in **Luke 11**, about praying for the Spirit.
      1. Paul is speaking to Christians who already have the Spirit within them (**Ephesians 1:13-14**). Yet he is praying that they be *filled with the Spirit!*
      2. Therefore, it appears that while we receive the Spirit when we become Christians, we need to ask that God fill us with *more of His Spirit*.
    - iii. This reminds me of Harding’s analogy of trolley car: *without electricity* (mysterious, life-giving power within; in that way similar to the working of the Spirit in us) it is just “a rusting hulk of iron”.

#### IV. More Workings of the Spirit

- a. Read **Ephesians 2:1-10**
  - i. He made us alive, we who were dead.
  - ii. Recall that the Spirit gives life, including spiritual rebirth (**John 3:3-8, Titus 3:5**).

b. Read **Ephesians 2:11-22**

- i. We have access to the Father through Jesus, by the Spirit.
- ii. The *church* also is to be a temple for God's Spirit. This provides a beautiful picture of the church as a stone temple, a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

c. Read **Ephesians 3:1-6**

- i. God revealed the mystery of Christ to the apostles and prophets through the Spirit.
- ii. We can rely on teachings of apostles and prophets because they were inspired by the Spirit.

d. Read **Ephesians 4:1-6**

- i. Paul urges us to keep "the unity of the Spirit".
- ii. Foundation of Christian unity: "There is one body (the church) and one Spirit..."
- iii. The Holy Spirit seeks to bring unity among all true believers in Christ.
- iv. Consider the picture of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, the centerpiece around which all twelve tribes were encamped (with three tribes on the west, three on the east, three on the north, three on the south). It drew the twelve tribes together as one people of God.

e. **Ephesians 4:25-32**

- i. Don't grieve the Spirit (by sin).
- ii. The Holy Spirit has personality; He can be *grieved* by how we live.
- iii. How can we ask for more of Spirit if we are grieving Him right now by the way we are living?

**V. A Missing Characteristic of the Spirit**

- a. Many of the seven characteristics of Spirit from **Isaiah 11:1-3** are touched on by Paul in Ephesians (wisdom, knowledge, understanding, power...)
- b. I wondered: Is "fear of God" the 7<sup>th</sup> characteristic of the Spirit, mentioned anywhere in this letter?
- c. Read **Ephesians 5:17-21**

- i. Christians are called to be "*filled with* the Holy Spirit".
  1. This is a command, something we need to decide to do (not something that happens automatically).
  2. This entails wisdom and understanding the Lord's will.
- ii. The motivation for submission: the 7<sup>th</sup> characteristic of the Spirit: *fear of God* (in KJV and NKJV; other NT manuscripts have "fear of Christ").
  1. According to Paul, this *fear* is the basis for:
    - a. Wives submitting to husbands
    - b. Slaves submitting to masters
    - c. Children obeying parents
  2. Note that some translations say, "out of reverence for" instead of "out of fear of". However, the Greek word here rendered "fear" in the KJV and NKJV is φόβος (phobos), from which we get our English word "phobia".
    - a. This is the same word used in **Philippians 2:12**, where Paul admonishes us to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling".
    - b. The Greek word "phobos" means fear!
- iii. The reason for this teaching on Biblical submission has nothing to do with prevailing social customs. It is based on the fear of God.
- iv. I believe that the bottom-line problem with modern teachers and preachers who strive to gut these unpopular teachings:
  1. They have *little or no fear of God*.
  2. They do not have very much of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of the fear of God) within them.
  3. They do not respect what the Spirit has revealed through the apostles and prophets.

## VI. The Spirit in Our Battle

### a. Read **Ephesians 6:10-20**

- i. We are involved in an unseen spiritual war. This is the real battle we are engaged in – a spiritual battle against the powers of darkness. We



must fight the battle equipped with offensive and defensive spiritual weapons.

- ii. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is our effective weapon with which to attack Satan (**Ephesians 6:17**).
  1. Recall that when Jesus was tempted by Satan three times, He replied by quoting the word of God (**Matthew 4:1-10, Luke 4:1-13**).
  2. Also recall that when Peter, Paul, Apollos, Stephen, Phillip and others were trying to convert unbelievers, they used the word of God (prophecies of the Old Testament, fulfilled in Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit).
- iii. Paul admonishes us to be “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (**Ephesians 6:18**).
  1. Paul asks specifically that they pray that he might be *bold in proclaiming the gospel*.
  2. I think of Paul, here in chains, as being extraordinarily bold; yet he prayed for *even more boldness*. This is an upward call to me!

## VII. Summary of Conclusions

- a. The Holy Spirit needs to be at the very center of a Christian’s own life, and at the center of the church. As individuals and as a church, we are referred to as temples of the Holy Spirit.
- b. Just as pillar and cloud led the Israelites in the wilderness every day of their journey for forty years, we must seek the guidance and direction of the Spirit daily, on our journey to the Promised Land (heaven).
- c. We should pray for more of the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit.
  - i. We need more of the Spirit of unity
  - ii. We need more of the fear of God that will move us to submission and to obeying the other hard teachings of Jesus.
  - iii. Let us live holy lives, so that we do not grieve the Spirit.
  - iv. We need more of the spirit of power, the boldness Paul wanted prayers for.