

Introduction



His Person



His Works

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His Indwelling



His Baptizing



His Sealing



His Filling



His Gifting



His Helping



The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, July 31, 2011

The Holy Spirit’s Work in The Church

No one should ever despise the church, or say that it’s an outdated institution, or declare it to be unnecessary to a true life in Christ. The gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the church is proof enough of how precious a thing it is.

When it comes to the body of Christ, we see the Holy Spirit’s work¹ in . . .

I. ITS FORMATION.

- A. The Holy Spirit is deeply involved in the formation of the church. He not only regenerates those who believe on Jesus, but also unites them into one body. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free --and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” This refers to a spiritual “baptized” for which a physical baptism is an outward symbol. To be “baptized” into the church, in this sense, is to be placed into it by the Holy Spirit and permanently identified as a member of it.
- B. This spiritual institution--the church--is made by God; and made specifically to be His dwelling place. It’s true that each individual believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19); but the full body of all His redeemed people together is His dwelling place as well. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:19-22, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

II. ITS UNITY.

- A. There is a wonderful bond of unity between those who have been truly redeemed in Christ. That’s why one of the tests of a true believer is whether or not he or she loves their brothers and sisters in Christ (see 1 John 4:20). This unity is so deep that it crosses all social, gender and ethnic boundaries (Galatians 3:27-28; Colossians 3:11). And it’s the Holy Spirit who brings about this unity. We are not called upon to create unity in the church; but rather, as it says in Ephesians 4:3, endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. This we can do, because, as the next verse asserts, “There is one body and one Spirit . . .” (v. 4).
- B. This wonderful unity is characterized by diversity. There are differing gifts among us; but as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:11-12, “one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”
- C. This unity is so great that it transcends national boundaries (John 10:16; 1 Peter 5:9; Revelation 7:9-10), the boundaries of time (John 17:20-21; Hebrews 12:1 [the “cloud of witnesses being the saints described in chapter 11]), and even the boundaries of heaven and earth (Hebrews 12:22-24).

III. ITS MINISTRY.

- A. As we’ve already seen, it’s the Holy Spirit who gifts the individual mem-

bers of the church for ministry as He chooses (1 Corinthians 12:11). But this is not for the benefit of the individual to whom the gift is given, but for the benefit of others in the body; “that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another” (v. 25). It is not for the gifts themselves that we are to be “zealous”, but “for the edification of the church” that we are to “seek to excel” (1 Corinthians 14:12; see also Ephesians 4:11-16).

- B. Not only does the Spirit gift the church for ministry; but He also governs its ministry. It was the Holy Spirit who appointed the early missionaries; and who told the church, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). They therefore went as missionaries “sent out by the Holy Spirit” (v. 4). They even found that the Holy Spirit would forbid them from going to one place or prevent them from going to another (Acts 16:6-7). The Holy Spirit was the one who was said to have made men to be “overseers” in the churches that were started, and who commissioned them to “take heed” to themselves “and to all the flock” (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit even guided the church in its important decisions; so that leaders could say that a course of action “seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us . . .” (Acts 15:28).
- C. The Holy Spirit has an ongoing ministry of protecting the doctrine of the church. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would “guide” the apostles with regard to the doctrine the church was to hold to and teach (John 16:13). In Revelation 2-3, “he who has an ear” was told to “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Even today, the Holy Spirit ministers to the church as “the anointing which you have received from” Christ, “and that abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 John 2:27).

IV. ITS GROWTH.

- A. Where the Holy Spirit is at work in the church, there is growth. In Acts 9:31, we’re told, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.”
- B. As Rene Pache wrote, “This is easy to understand; the Spirit conveys to those who witness for Jesus Christ His power and wisdom, He convinces men of sin, regenerates them, makes them members of his Body causing them to grow in faith and sanctification. It is indeed by the assistance of the Spirit and not by human effort alone that the Church increases. This holds good for the present day; a greater number of workers, more abundant material resources, administrative reorganization, more frequent meetings and more urgent addresses will not of themselves bring an advance in the work, whose progress springs from the profound working of God’s Spirit in all the members of the Body, who together hold themselves in submission to His will and faithful to His Word. May God grant us this for herein is true awakening.”³

¹Much of the material from this lesson was drawn from Rene Pache, J.D. Emerson, trans., *The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), pp. 163-172.

²All Scripture readings are taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³Pache, pp. 170-171.