

- ***READ Ephesians 4:1-6*** It is quite sad that in a text that seeks to emphasize the preservation of the *"unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* we have seven topics that actually seem to be quite disagreed upon. In no case is this more true than when we look at our topic of consideration for this morning pertaining to the essential truth laid out here by Paul that there is one Spirit. Out of the seven foundation elements of the Christian faith that are found here in **Ephesians 4:4-6**, the Spirit is probably the one that leaves us with maybe more questions than answers.
 - While the Spirit can be traced throughout the entirety of God's Word, there is much about His work that is left up to us simply not knowing all that much. Because of the differences in the climate from the first century to today, many are left without a solid concrete understanding of how the Holy Spirit continues to operate today. We read in the New Testament of people, by the power of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, being healed, prophesying, and so much more, and yet we look around and we simply don't see that at all. Sure we see some who profess to have the power to do such, but they are quickly found out to be frauds. So does this mean that the Holy Spirit has ceased to operate in any capacity?
 - This morning, I would like for us to take some time to examine the Holy Spirit that is spoke of in the Bible. While there is much that we might not able to say for certain, let's recognize that there is still plenty that we can know for sure. Knowing and being convinced of these points will help for us to do exactly as Paul want's done in this text...to be able to truly preserve the unity of the *"unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Let's begin by establishing who/what exactly the Holy Spirit is.
- I. The Holy Spirit is a distinct member of the Godhead along with the Father and the Son.**
- A. The Holy Spirit is a divine person unto Himself.**
1. Contrary to what some believe and teach, the Holy Spirit is not a mere manifestation of the Father or the Son. He is not some sort of mystical force or divine influence, but He is as much a person of deity as the Father or the Son. Peter equates Him with God in **Acts 5:3,4**.
 2. This type of thing is difficult to comprehend for some, especially those that come from different world religious backgrounds. The followers of Islam will actually accuse Christians of being polytheists because of our believe in the Godhead consisting of three divine persons that make up the God of heaven. To them it is nonsensical that God could be a single being consisting of three distinct persons that are equal in power and ability and yet still be separate distinct individuals. Surely we can see the confusion that can be had, and yet this is a truth that can be proven from the Bible.
 3. Consider the Baptism of Jesus and how all the persons that make up the Godhead are seen in a single place and yet they are separate from one another. (**Matthew 3:13-17**) Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, is here on earth. The Spirit is descending from heaven in the form of a dove, and the Father is heard speaking from heaven of Jesus being His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. There is no other explanation for this occurrence than for us to recognize that the Divine Nature of God is made up of three distinct members that are equal and yet not the same persons. The Son is God, but He is not the Father. The Father is God, and yet He is not the Spirit. The Spirit is God, but He is not the Son. It might be difficult for our finite minds to fully grasp how this is the case, but that does nothing to lessen the reality of the Divine Nature.
- B. The Bible speaks of qualities and characteristics that demand we understand His personhood.**
1. The Bible identifies divine characteristics of the Holy Spirit. He is eternal (**Hebrews 9:14**), omnipresent (**Psalms 139:7**), omnipotent (**Psalms 104:30**), & omniscient (**I Corinthians 2:10,11**).
 2. He also is said to have done tremendous works that are only able to be done by a person of divinity. He had a part in creation (**Psalms 104:30**). He is responsible for revealing and confirming God's will to mankind (**Ephesians 3:3-5 & Hebrews 2:3,4**).

3. His personhood can be seen in that He is able to do things any of us can do. He hears, speaks, and guides (**John 16:13**). He also is able to teach and remind as we even do. (**John 14:26**)
4. He even displays emotions and suffers as a distinct individual might. He can be grieved (**Ephesians 4:30**), insulted (**Hebrews 10:29**), and lied to (**Acts 5:3,4**). Some would argue against the divine personhood of the Holy Spirit, but these verses only confirm His distinct and divine partnership within the Godhead.

II. The Holy Spirit has played a crucial role in the giving of Scripture.

- A. Where the Father plays the role as the orchestrator of the eternal plan and Jesus serves in the role of the Lamb of God and Savior, the Spirit plays the all important role of helping men to know of such a divine plan being carried out.
 1. Possibly no other verse helps us to understand this role of the Holy Spirit better than that of **II Peter 1:20,21**. *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."* We know well **II Timothy 3:16** where we learn that the Scriptures are inspired of God, and these verses simply clarify for us how this is the case.
 2. God was able to reveal to the writers of the Bible and those who were His mouthpieces what He wanted for men to know through the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, what exactly did this look like? I simply can't tell you. I don't know if this looked like someone having their mind and body taken over. I don't know if this looked like God putting things within their minds and them seemingly writing them of their own accord. I simply don't know what it looked like, but I am confident that it happened. If God wanted for men to know something then the Holy Spirit got to work moving people to write and speak on behalf of God.
- B. The Spirit was hard at work to reveal the will of God to all of the Scriptures inspired writers.
 1. We read **II Timothy 3:16** and automatically think in terms of the Bible we have today, and while that is a true thought, we must recognize that they didn't have what we have today. They had the Old Testament assembled, and that would've been the primary reference of what Paul was stating. This should mean to us that even those writers of the Old Testament were inspired to write what they wrote and say what they said because of the Holy Spirit's influence upon them.
 2. When Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel for him, Balaam responded with *"The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak."* (**Numbers 22:38**) Balaam knew that he could only speak for God according to those things that God actually wanted Him to speak. How did God's thoughts get into the mouth of Balaam? We can be certain this happened through work of the Holy Spirit.
 3. Yet, Balaam is not the only Old Testament character that was influenced by the Holy Spirit. Moses and the sent men of the elders (**Numbers 11:24,25**), King Saul (**I Samuel 10:6**), King David (**II Samuel 23:2**), Isaiah (**Acts 28:25-27**), and others are seen to have been under the influence of the Holy Spirit as they spoke and wrote as mouthpieces of the Lord for the benefit of men coming to know the will of God. This is especially seen in the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament through the Apostles.

III. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would personally assist the Apostles in their work.

- A. Earlier we looked at **II Peter 2:20,21**, but earlier verses show the connection between the Apostles and the work of the Holy Spirit.
 1. We looked at Peter's conclusion concerning the work of the Spirit in the lives of inspired men, but notice in previous verses that Peter specifies the Apostles as being those through whom the Holy Spirit worked. In **II Peter 2:2-4**, we see Peter speaking to what the divine power gave to the Apostles. *"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the truth knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and*

excellence.” What is Peter saying? He is saying that God granted to the Apostles all knowledge pertaining to what would help men to be godly and righteous. He then goes on to say that they were able to pass along that knowledge to all disciples so that all men could become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world.

2. Then Peter goes into the necessity of growth within the life of the Christian and how a growing Christian is a useful and productive Christian in the kingdom of God. (**II Peter 1:5-11**) He then speaks to how he would continue to remind these disciples of these things to the hope that they would be able to recall these things to mind once he was gone. (**II Peter 1:12-15**) Peter speaks to how what he had shared with them wasn't cleverly devised tales of their own minds, but what they shared with them were the things they had heard from heaven. (**II Peter 1:16-19**)
 3. The basic message of Peter...our words are the Words of God. It is at this point that Peter then goes into the fact that all prophecy of Scripture isn't something given from man's mind, but it is given from the mind of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, the Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus to be a personal and invaluable aid to the Apostles in their work.
- B. The work of the Apostles was monumental, and Jesus wanted to be sure that they had the ultimate source of divine guidance as they went along their way proclaiming the Gospel and establishing and growing the church.**
1. We noted earlier two specific portions of John's Gospel account in which Jesus makes specific promises to the disciples concerning the coming Helper who would aid them in their work. *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whose the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”* (**John 14:26**) Hopefully we see the connection between what Jesus is promising here and what we see Peter writing to the recipients of **II Peter** concerning the Apostles being given all things pertaining to life and godliness.
 2. A little later on in **John 16:7-14**, Jesus speaks of His need to leave them so that the Helper can come and do His part in helping the Apostles to spread the message of the Gospel and the kingdom. *“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”* Notice in this text the connection specifically when Peter's words in **II Peter 2:21**. The Spirit Himself would only speak the words of the Father, so anyone who spoke the words of the Spirit would be speaking the words of the Father.
 3. This aid given by the Spirit was what allowed the Apostles to get busy on the day of Pentecost preaching the message of Jesus being raised and reigning as both Lord and Christ. Oh by the way...what was it that we see coming upon the Apostles in the beginning of **Acts 2**? Following the ascension of Jesus we see His promises coming to fruition as the Spirit descends upon the Apostles and empowers them to know the mind of God and reveal His eternal plan to the masses that were gather there before them all corners of the world. The Spirit was surely pivotal and crucial to the work of the Apostles in the beginnings of the church. Yet, the Spirit's work is not yet finished among man, it just looks a little different.

IV. The Holy Spirit continues to help us live transformed lives that are pleasing to God.

- A. He does so through a consistent message that has been delivered by God's inspired writers.**
1. Because we see the Spirit working in such miraculous means in the New Testament, this leads many to believe that He must work in the same way today. However, that isn't something that is demanded from what we see in Scripture. Instead, what we have is the Holy Spirit working today through what He empowered the Apostles and other inspired writers to do in the creation of the collected and assembled Word of God.
 2. Maybe the greatest evidence for the divine nature of the Bible is the consistent message that

is presented throughout its entirety. It is this consistent message that allows for all men from all different backgrounds and walks of life to know God's will and obey it the same way.

Hypothetically speaking...if what is said in **II Peter 2:20** wasn't true and what we have in the Bible was a work of the mind of men then we probably would have inconsistencies in the message because men think and want different things.

3. Just take a look around the Christian landscape and you will quickly see this as being the case. Men who allow their own desires to dictate their beliefs and practices do all sorts of things that contradict one another. This is because these people are not allowing themselves to be led by the consistent message of Scripture. Instead, they are going about their exercises of faith their own ways, and it leads to mass confusion. The God of heaven is not a God of confusion, but He wants for all men to submit to His will, and we can know that will through a humble consideration of the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has inspired men to write down and record for us.

B. Our willingness to submit and conform to the message of the Scriptures will allow us the opportunity to be changed into what God would have for us to be.

1. The influences of this world press in all around us and try to pressure us into being conformed to the ideals of this world, but Paul says, by inspiration, in **Romans 12:1,2** that we are to only do those things that are acceptable in the sight of God. We are not to be conformed to this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may live according to the will of God. But how does this happen?
2. Let me suggest that this transformation takes place through repentance and allowing the Holy Spirit to be our guide in this life. This is what we saw earlier in our opening reading from **Galatians 5:16-25**. If we want to be pleasing to God then we need to walk by the Spirit in a transformed manner of life instead of allowing the flesh to conform us into the image of the world. The desires of the flesh are at war against the desires of the Spirit for our righteousness and sanctification. The flesh would lead us to do those things that are against the will of God while the Spirit seeks to lead us in the way of God.
3. Thankfully, God has given us the ability to choose who will lead us in this life. We can either live by the flesh and be led to destruction, or we can choose to submit to the Spirit and allow it to lead us in the ways of godliness. As the Spirit was to lead the Apostles into all truth, so have the Apostles and other inspired writers relayed that truth...the mind of God through the Spirit...to us through the Holy Scriptures. It might not be all that flashy or exciting, but the words of this book are the words of God given by the Spirit. If we want to receive the Spirit and be led by Him today, then we simply need to receive these words and allow them to lead us in the way that God would have us to go.

So many people are looking with wide eyes for some miraculous and spectacular work of the Spirit in our lives, but they miss the greatest work of the Spirit that so many of us hold in our hands even this day. This divinely inspired book is the crown jewel of the Spirit's work because it is that by which man can know the mind of God and what He desires of us. May we all strive to be led by the Spirit as we consider His work on a daily basis so that we might know Him and what He and the Father and the Son would have of us to do in this life. There is truly one Spirit, and His one desire is that we live lives that show the influence that He has had on us to the glory of God.

PRAYER *Our loving Father in heaven...we are so very thankful that You have seen fit to share with us some small insight into Your mind through the revelation that has been given to godly men through the giving of Your Spirit. While He is often misunderstood or even forgotten, we pray that You would help for us to be ever mindful of the incredible work that He is doing in each and every one of our lives. May we ever lean up His guidance, and may our way only lead to a home in heaven with You for all eternity. May Your name be glorified in the lives that we live as we submit to Your Spirit's guidance. We pray especially for our shepherds that they would be Holy Spirit led men who then seek to lead us in that same way. Thank you for His guidance which leads us all to transformed bit by bit and day by day, and it is in Jesus's name we pray...amen.*