

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

Number 2 - "One Spirit"

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

We have been concerned to properly understand the apostle Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4:1-6, as he gave the seven "ones" for obtaining and keeping unity in the Lord's church. Only those who are saved by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23) are in the "one body" (the church, 1:22-23), of which Jesus is the Head. Remember, when there is only **one** of anything, you have no choice from which to choose. There is one body or church of which Jesus is Savior and we have no choice of which church we may choose, if we want to be saved. Paul's next point is that there is "one Spirit."

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Godhead is composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is but "one God" (1 Corinthians 8:4), but there are three divine persons who make up the Being of God. "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). In Ephesians 4:6 the Father is called God; in John 1:1, 14, 18 Jesus is identified as God in the flesh; and in Acts 5:3-4, 9 the Holy Spirit is identified as God. The combination of the three (often called the Trinity, meaning three in one) is found in several passages (cf. Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21). The Holy Spirit is a person, not an "it," although the old King James Version assigns this neuter designation to the Spirit in some passages such as Romans 8:16. However, Jesus refers to the Spirit with the personal pronoun "He" in passages such as John 14:26; 16:13.

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT'S WORK?

Discussing the work of any member of the Godhead is too vast to cover in detail in one lesson. In this article we will only refer to the Spirit's work in leading

us to obey the gospel and His influence on us as Christians. When Christ knew His crucifixion was near, He spoke to His apostles in detail about the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian age. The gospel of John, chapters 13-17, is a large section of Scripture which covers Christ's discussions with His apostles on the night in which He was betrayed. Although Jesus was going away, back to heaven following His resurrection (John 14:1-3), He promised He would send them the Comforter, which was the Holy Spirit (14:16, 26). This Holy Spirit would do several things **for the apostles**. The Holy Spirit was never given to each Christian to do for us what Christ said He would do for the apostles! Please remember that. What would the Holy Spirit do for the apostles? He would: (1) teach them all things; (2) bring to their remembrance all that Christ had taught them; (3) guide them into all truth; and (4) tell the apostles things to come (John 14:26; 16:13).

According to these Scriptures, the Holy Spirit would reveal to the apostles the total teaching that He wanted them to give to the world and the church. They first did that through their preaching (Acts 2:14-40; 3:11-26 and others). They also revealed and recorded for a permanent record what the Holy Spirit revealed unto them, just as the prophets of the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:10-12, 22-25; 2 Peter 1:19-21). In Ephesians 3:3-5, the apostle Paul showed that the inspiration of God to the apostles through the Holy Spirit was also present in their writings. Speaking of Christ's work, Paul said to the Ephesian church, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy

apostles and prophets by the Spirit." God does not give a revelation to every person by any direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit. He gave it to the apostles and prophets, then they preached it and wrote it down for a permanent record. When we read what they have written, we can have the same understanding and knowledge the apostles had. That is why Paul could say, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Any pretended revelation from God after the Scripture of the New Testament is not needed, nor is it truly from God. One element of the major work of the Holy Spirit was in fully revealing God's will and seeing that it was recorded in the writing of Scripture.

Also, the Holy Spirit was to empower the apostles to perform miracles to confirm that what they preached (and later wrote) was indeed God's will for mankind. The Jewish world had been subject to obey the Law of Moses for 1500 years. Since the Law of Moses was surpassed by the gospel of Christ, the apostles had to give evidence of the power of God behind their message or it would not have been accepted. After Jesus had given the apostles the Great Commission, the Scriptures say, "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them (the apostles), he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they (the apostles) went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:19-20). In Iconium, Paul and Barnabas spoke "boldly in the Lord, who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3). Hebrews 2:3-4 notes that the gospel of "great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord... was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will."

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P. O. Box 251

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Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

Phone (870) 625-3217

Fax (870) 625-3137

E-Mail tedjc@mail.oci-i.com

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These same types of miracles showed the power of the One True God over the so-called gods of the Gentile pagan world (cf. Acts 14:8-18).

So then, the major elements of the work of the Holy Spirit, Who was given by Christ to the apostles, was, **first**, to reveal the New Testament will of God, and, **second**, to confirm that that word was indeed from God, by empowering His messengers (the apostles and prophets) to perform miraculous deeds which could not be done apart from God's approval.

THE DURATION OF THE MIRACULOUS WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Although there are those who contend for the continuance of miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures themselves foretold the cessation of these gifts. When the Scriptures assign a particular function to the miraculous and that function is completed, there is no need for them to continue. This is the point, which the apostle Paul himself makes in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. In 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 Paul listed nine miraculous spiritual gifts, which existed through the Holy Spirit. These gifts were given only through the laying on of hands by an apostle (Acts 8:14-20; 19:5-7; 2 Timothy 1:6). Thus, when the last apostle died, the means which God had chosen to impart these

miraculous gifts ceased from the earth. When the last person died on whom an apostle had laid hands to impart these gifts, the miraculous gifts themselves ceased. By that time the reason for which God had given them was fulfilled. God's revelation of New Testament teaching was complete and confirmed by those who gave it (cf. Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19).

Paul noted that miraculous prophecies, tongues, and knowledge would "fail, cease, and vanish" (1 Corinthians 13:8-9). These three miraculous gifts were given as representative of all nine from chapter 12. Otherwise, why would tongues cease but the interpretation of tongues continue? When would they cease? "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (verse 10). To know what the "perfect" is, we need to know what the "part" was. The "part" was the ability to "know in part" and to thus "prophecy (preach) in part" (verse 9). Speaking in "tongues" was always an interpretation of such preaching into languages which the people in the audience could understand (cf. Acts 2:4-8). When the "perfect" arrived, that which was "in part" was done away (verse 10). The word "perfect" means "brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 618). Since the "part" refers to the ability to partially know God's will (before it was completed), the "perfect" of which Paul spoke was the finished and complete revelation of God's word to mankind. James 1:25 speaks of God's will being the "perfect law of liberty"; 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states that the Scriptures are able to make us "perfect." The Spirit-inspired word of God is full of power (Hebrews 4:12), but the power of the Holy Spirit in men to work miracles or possess miraculous knowledge has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), having fulfilled the purpose for which God gave it. See also Ephesians 4:7-16, where the miraculous gifts were to continue "Till we all come in unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (verse 13). Unity of the faith is only possible when we all have the same standard to follow, that is, God's completely revealed word.

THE PRESENT WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Since by God's choice the Holy Spirit's miraculous power in men is no longer operative, what is the present work of the Holy Spirit? Paul said, "there is one

Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4) Therefore, it cannot be that the **Holy Spirit** does all of the contradictory things which He is said to do. For example, Calvinism and Pentecostalism teach that the Holy Spirit must fall directly upon the spirit of man to make him believe. If that were the case, if one never believed it would be the fault of the Holy Spirit, not the man. However, we know that this is not the case. Regarding those who are not Christians, God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11). If a person is lost as an alien sinner, it will not be because the Holy Spirit failed to operate directly upon him to make him believe, but because men have rejected the revealed truth of God's will which the Spirit has made known. At first that word was made known through oral preaching. Note in Acts 2 the apostle Peter said, "[H]earken to my words... Ye men of Israel, hear these words... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward (crooked) generation" (verses 14, 22, 40). In Acts 13:46 Paul told the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles in Acts 10 & 11 was not to make the Gentiles at Cornelius' house believe, but to give a sign to the Jews that God was receiving the Gentiles into Christ's church just as He had the Jews (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-18). Cornelius was told to send for Peter, for "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (10:6). Cornelius said, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (10:33). When Peter retold the events, he said that Cornelius was told to send for Peter, "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (11:14). Those "words" produced faith in Jesus Christ (10:43), repentance (11:18), and commanded baptism in His name (10:47-48). God's Holy Spirit influenced Cornelius and his family, but that influence to obey the gospel came through the preaching of the word, not directly. Everyone who obeys the gospel today does so because of the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is through the Spirit's power-filled word, not any direct gift of faith or revelation. Since there is only "one Spirit," we have no choice as to which spirit we will allow to guide us.

When the word of God was put into

writing, it carried the same power of the Holy Spirit as it had when preached orally. Remember Ephesians 3:3-5? See also 1 Corinthians 14:37; John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:4; 2:1; 5:13; Revelation 2:1, 7. Paul said that "the sword of the Spirit... is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

What about those who have become Christians by following the teaching of the Spirit's word? Do Christians today receive knowledge of God's will or special direct powers from the Spirit, apart from the influence and guidance the Holy Spirit exerts through the word of God? No, they do not. Direct revelation and miraculous power were possessed only by the apostles and those on whom they laid hands to impart such gifts (see previous sections above). While the Holy Spirit is said to dwell in each Christian (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19), it is also true that God the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ dwell in us (John 14:23; 1 John 4:15; Colossians 1:27). How do the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwell in each Christian? In Ephesians 3:16-17, Paul prayed that the Christians at Ephesus "be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This same Paul had noted to the church in Rome that, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The apostle John said, "Let that abide in you, which ye have **heard** from the beginning. If that which ye have **heard** from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

Paul told the saints at Ephesus to be "understanding what the will of the Lord is," commanding them not to be under the influence of wine, "but **be filled with the Spirit**; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:17-20). Being "filled with the Spirit" is to be under the control or influence of the Spirit, just like being "drunk with wine" is to be under the influence of wine. In what surely is a parallel passage, Paul tells other brethren to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts," and commands them to, "**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom**; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of

the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:15-17). It can be seen from these parallel sections written to different locations, that to "be filled with the Spirit" is parallel to "let [ting] the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Thus, one is "filled with the Spirit" to the degree that one allows "the word of Christ to dwell in you richly in all wisdom." That is, **it is not just having knowledge of the word of God in one's mind that signals "being filled with the Spirit."** Rather, **it (being filled with the Spirit) is when Christ's word activates one's life to live according to its guidance** that it indwells us richly in all wisdom (cf. Matthew 13:23; 3 John 3-4; John 8:31-32). Those who heard the "words" Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost had the "word of Christ" in their minds, in the sense of knowing what the gospel was, but they could not be said to have received the Spirit of God until they obeyed that word. In Acts 2:41 it was those who "**gladly** received his (Peter's) word" that were baptized. Others heard the word who did not obey, but they were not "filled with the Spirit," because they did not let the "word of Christ dwell in [them] **richly.**"

In becoming Christians and living as Christians, the Holy Spirit of God still works in us today. He indwells us, guides and empowers us only as we "let the word of Christ dwell in (us) richly in all wisdom." There are no Scriptures which teach a guiding or strengthening of Christians by the Spirit in any other manner after the apostles died and God's word was completely revealed and confirmed. The Spirit completely revealed and confirmed God's word once and for all (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3). We hear the Spirit and allow Him to indwell us and guide us as we submit to God's Spirit-given written revelation called Scripture (Revelation 2:1, 7; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

CONCLUSION

If we want to abide in the truth, we will submit to the "one Spirit" of Ephesians 4:4. He does not teach one doctrine to one group of people and different doctrines to another group. We can have the unity which Paul said we should endeavor to keep (verse 3), only when we quit believing and teaching matters about the Spirit which God's word does not sustain. Too many people are not content with what Scripture does reveal. Some desire to say more than God has said about the

Spirit's work in converting men to the gospel of Christ and indwelling and guiding Christians to live acceptably before God. You cannot be wrong when you know, teach and do only what the Spirit has revealed in God's word.

This lesson has been lengthy, but I am confident that we have presented the gist of what the apostle Paul intended when he said there is but "one Spirit." To seek knowledge of God's will outside of the Scriptures given by the Holy Spirit, or to believe that the Spirit will directly empower you apart from His living word is to play into the hands of the spirit of error (1 John 2:6; 4:1, 6). If you have further questions, I will do my best to answer them as I have time to do so.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

PETER saying: "Baptism is not essential?" READ: 1 Peter 3:21

JAMES saying: "Man is saved by faith only?" READ: James 2:24

ANANIAS saying: "Brother Saul, pray through and get rid of your sins, calling on the name of the Lord?" READ: Acts 22:16

PAUL saying: "You cannot fall from grace?" READ: Gal. 5:4

PAUL saying: "It doesn't matter what you believe in religion just as long as you are honest?" READ: 2 Thess. 2:11, 12

PAUL saying: "You don't have to obey the Gospel to be saved?" READ: 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

PAUL saying: "We are sprinkled with him by baptism?" READ: Romans 6:4

PETER saying: "There is nothing in a name?" READ: Acts 4:12

LUKE saying: "Those that were saved joined the church of their own choice?" READ: Acts 2:47

JUDE saying: "I don't think it is right to argue the scriptures?" READ: Jude 1:3

Some friends are like your shadow. They are always near when the sun shines upon you; but when the clouds come and the darkness gathers about you, they have vanished.

We worry about our children, and forget that our parents used to worry about us.

WASHED IN THE BLOOD

by Bruce Stulting

In Romans 4:7, Paul quotes David as "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." In studying the Bible we learn that sin must be dealt with. The Bible teaches that God has done His part. In John 3:16 we learn that "...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." The Bible further teaches that Jesus did His part. In Hebrews 5:9 we learn that "...being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Also, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit has done its part in guiding us into all truth. In John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..." Even though all this has been done on man's behalf, there is still a part left to do in dealing with man's sin. There is man's part left to do in covering his sins!

To cover sins is the same as having remission of sins, redemption of sins, or having sins washed away. The Bible teaches that our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Speaking of Jesus in Ephesians 1:7, Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." When Jesus shed His precious blood on the cross, it flowed backward to cover the sins of the faithful in Old Testament times and also forward to cleanse the sins of all the obedient under the New Testament (Zechariah 14:8; Romans 3:23-26). In Romans 1:16, Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation..." We see then that the way to contact the blood of Jesus Christ today is through obedience of the Gospel. In order to obey the Gospel, we must: (1) Hear the word of God (Romans 10:17); (2) Having heard the word we must believe it (Mark 16:16); (3) Our faith in God's word will lead us to repent (Luke 13:3); (4) Confess Christ before men as the Son of God (Acts 8:37); and (5) Be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). It is in baptism that we come into contact with the blood of the Savior (Romans 6:3-5). Indeed, as David stated in Psalm 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

4215 Lorange Dr.
Little Rock, AR 72206

If you don't live it, you don't believe it.

"By taking revenge of an injury, a man is only even with his enemy; by passing it over, he is superior."

- Alexander Campbell

One danger of overeating - it may cause you to live beyond your seams.

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philppians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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