



SECRET CHURCH

EXPLORING THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Heather and I had been dating a few years, it became clear that God was leading me, so I thought and believed, to ask this girl to marry me. So, I started the process of shopping for an engagement ring at that time. If you're in college, I would encourage you to make sure to begin saving for that investment. It will cost you the farm! So, I saved up and got the ring. I remember I got it on a Tuesday morning. I'm the kind of guy who has the tendency to lose things, and I thought this is not something I want to lose. So, I got it into my possession, but knew I needed to get it out of my possession as soon as possible. My plan was to ask Heather to marry me on Tuesday night. So, I had about ten hours when I needed to hold on to this ring during the day.

I only had one errand I needed to run; I needed to go to the mall and get a CD from a music store to use in the engagement process, which is another story. So, I needed to get this particular CD and was scared to death that this was going to be the day when I walked in the mall and some guy was going to come up and mug me and take the ring. That was just going to be my day, so I decided I was going to take every precaution I could. It wasn't that cold outside, but I found the heaviest coat I had which had a little pocket inside the chest. I unzipped the pocket, put the ring in, zipped the pocket up, and put the heavy coat on. When I got out of the car at the mall, I hunched over with my hand on that pocket, so that I would have my hand on the ring at all times. I walked into the mall like this—no eye contact. I just wanted to go in, get the job done, and come out. So, I went into the music store and looked around for this particular CD but was having a hard time finding it. So, I looked around, a bit awkwardly, and decided I needed a little help, so I approach the lady who worked there and said, "I'm looking for this particular CD, can you help me?" She said, "Sure" and started walking me around the store, looking for it and making small talk. I was not in the mood for small talk, but she was, and she asked, "Why do you want this particular CD?" I said, "Well, I'm getting engaged tonight." She said, "Really, do you have the ring with you?"

It was one of those moments when you're wondering if, just in this instance, it would be okay to lie, like conditional ethics. So, I looked at her, and I didn't lie. I said, "Yes ma'am, I've got the ring." She said, "Oh, I would love to see it," and I was thinking, "This is it. I'm about to pull it out. This guy is going to be running by, he's going to take it. It's all over." We were kind of in the back of the store, so I turned my back to everybody else, unzipped that pocket, pulled out the ring and showed it to her. She leaned down, looked at it and said, "Wow, that's beautiful." Then, she stood up and yelled to all her co-workers, "Hey, everybody, this guy's getting engaged. Come check out this ring." I was just waiting. I was just going to throw it to somebody—like whoever was supposed to take it—I was going to save him the trouble and just give it to him. So, everybody in the store came over and looked at the ring. I was thinking, "Lady, just give me the CD." So, finally, she did, and I ran out the mall.

I remember on that day, everything changed about me. The way I was talking, the way I was walking, the way I was acting. Everything changed when I realized what a valuable possession I had with me.

I want to remind you tonight over the next six hours what a valuable treasure we have in the Holy Spirit of God who lives in us. He lives in us! This is the Spirit of God who takes up residence in us, and I'm convinced that our lives as Christians would radically change if we realized what a treasure is in us, if we really believed what an enormous, valuable and precious treasure we have living in us in the Holy Spirit. This topic does not come, tonight, by accident or by coincidence. Over the last year, through various circumstances and in large part through my complete and utter inability as a pastor, I've come face-to-face with my self-sufficiency that plagues me. Along the way, face-to-face with the frightening realization that I am part—and I think it would be safe to say, we are a part—of a religious system in our culture, today, that has created a whole host of means and methods for doing church that, in the end, requires little, if any, help at all from the Holy Spirit of God.

We don't have to fall on our faces and fast for the church to grow. We have marketing to do that. We don't have to bring the crowds in through prayer. We have publicity for that. We have deceived ourselves and mistaken the presence of physical bodies in a building for the existence of spiritual life. I'm convinced in my own life—in church here, in churches that are represented around this room—that it is dangerously possible for us to go through the routines and programs and stuff we do in church and get to the end and look back and realize that the Spirit of God has been almost entirely absent and completely neglected in the process. I'm convinced, more than ever, that the greatest hindrance—I know this is a bold statement, but I don't think it's an overstatement—the greatest hindrance to the advancement of the glory of God in the world today is the attempt of the church of God to do the work of God apart from the power of the Spirit of God.

What if it's not the self-indulgent immorality that surrounds us in our culture, but the self-sufficient mentality that plagues us in the church that is hindering the advancement of the gospel in the world? Exodus 33 has been a text we studied at Brook Hills earlier this year, and I want to remind you of our need for the Spirit. I'm going to do my best not to preach a whole sermon, as if we don't have enough information to cover tonight.

ONE OVER-ARCHING QUESTION

There is one over-arching question tonight: Are we—as the people of God—dependent on ourselves or are we desperate for His Spirit? Are we desperate for His Spirit? Exodus 33:1-3:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

Exodus 33:15-18:

Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

Here is Moses, beginning in this chapter, he has led the people of God out of slavery in Egypt through the desert and has come to this point. This is before the wanderings in the desert where they have seen bread come from heaven and water come from rocks. God has demonstrated His grace and majesty and led them through the Red Sea where they looked behind them and saw the water come falling down on the Egyptians.

God has shown Himself, and the story gets to this point—right after Exodus 32—when Moses is meeting up on the mountain with God. He comes down from the mountain, and the people of God are worshiping the golden calf and indulging in all kinds of revelry. It's one of the most incredible pictures of intercession in the entire Old Testament. Moses pleads on behalf of the people of God, and by God's grace in the end, only 3,000 people die. Then, God says in Exodus 33, "Listen. I've promised you this land: The Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. It's yours. It's yours to take. The only problem is, I'm not going with you into that land."

So there Moses is. He can have the blessings of God. He can have the blessings of God apart from the presence of God. How would we respond? Be careful before you answer that question. The blessings of God apart from the presence of God. Isn't this exactly the brand of Christianity we have manufactured today? Pray this prayer, go to heaven. Experience the blessings of God. You don't have to live with Him as your Savior and your God. You don't have to experience His authoritative presence in your life on a moment-by-moment basis. It's blasphemy. You don't go to heaven if you don't want God. Contrary to popular evangelistic invitations today, we don't come to Christ to get forgiveness, and the best and abundant life, and heaven and all of these things. Not that those things are not good. We come to Christ to get God, and all these things flow from God. We need God, and only the Spirit of God can reveal Himself to us.

So, Moses pleads in this chapter, "God, I cannot move one step forward without the fullness of Your presence." This is an important truth for our understanding of this topic tonight. We must be desperate for the Spirit.

Four Reasons Why We Must Be Desperate For His Spirit

There are four reasons why we must be desperate for the Spirit. First, we have an assignment we cannot fulfill. Moses looks at what God is calling him to do and the task God has put before him—to lead these people into the Promised Land, and he says, "I can't do it God. There is no way I can take this people into that land apart from your presence. There is an obvious discrepancy between what you are calling me to do and the resources you have given me to do it." He sees the depth, the magnitude, of the task that he has and that drives him to desperation.

Maybe one of the reasons we lose the sense of desperation for the Spirit is because we lose sight of the magnitude of the task to which we have been called. Let's be honest, since we last gathered together for Secret Church in early May, over 100,000 people were swept away by a cyclone in Myanmar. Over 70,000 people killed instantly in an earthquake in China. Most of those 170,000 plus had little to no knowledge of the gospel. Since we've gathered together, there have been changes in our country here. The need around the world continues to grow, like the global food crisis in light of economic woes. As long as we think we can program our way out of this in the church, then we are hopeless. When we can say, "God, this task is too great for us to do, we've got to have your Spirit," then we understand. We have an assignment we cannot fulfill. This is why we have to be desperate for His Spirit.

We have a privilege we cannot forsake. Go to Exodus 33:7-11. I want you to picture this with me:

Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.

If verse 11 does not astound us, then we don't know God. Get the picture. Moses starts walking out of his tent. You're hanging out in your tent one day talking with friends, all of a sudden word gets out that Moses is going into the tent. So, you and thousands and thousands and thousands of other people come outside your tents and you stand in silent awe as you watch this man walk in front of you. You gaze as he journeys down to this tent, and he opens this tent, walks in and closes it. Then, a pillar of cloud comes and rests on it. The whole community of faith is standing in awe because there is a man who is meeting with God. What a sight! It's one of those places you just can't leave in the Old Testament.

Ladies and gentlemen, I remind you that, by the grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, we do not have to come out and watch some man, some select leader, go in and meet with God. Every single one of us in this room who has a relationship with Christ has the privilege of being in the tent with this God. You don't have to just be in the tent, you are the tent. You are the tent! He dwells with us! What a privilege we have. A privilege that was reserved for only a select few in the Old Testament, and you and I have the privilege of living in and walking in and experiencing this on a daily basis. We've got to be people who are desperate for the Spirit. How can we get so busy with stuff and ignore this privilege? We have a privilege we cannot forsake.

We have a family we cannot forget. Moses is praying in verses 15 and 16, not just for God's blessings on him, but God's blessings on the people of God. He's calling out for God to pour out the fullness of His presence on His people, on you and me, on us. We're going to see throughout the night that the Spirit of God moves among His people. Yes, He does work in our lives individually, no question, but His work is, ultimately, about a people and conforming a people into the image of Christ. We are together in this thing.

We have a God we cannot fathom. When you get to verse 18, Moses says, "*Now show me your glory.*" I think this is one of the boldest prayers in the Old Testament. Think about it.

This is the guy who saw God's glory in a burning bush; who was on the front line of all those plagues in Egypt; who got to lead the people through the Red Sea. This is the guy who got to hit the rock so the water came out; got to intercede so the food would come down from heaven. When everyone else had to flee the mountain because it was too dangerous, Moses was the one who got to go up on the mountain and see the glory of God. If anybody had seen the glory of God, Moses had, and now he comes to this point and says, "*Now show me your glory.*" How can he ask that?

Here's how: once you taste the glory of this God, you have an insatiable desire for more and more and more and more and more. You want to experience more of His glory and this is why we have to be a people who are desperate for His Spirit. This is where John 16:12-15 is a place to look, you might want to just write it down here, but in these verses, Jesus says to His disciples, "The Spirit, when He comes, is going to take all that I have, all that is mine, and He is going to make it known to you." Jesus says, "All the Father has belongs to me. The Spirit is going to have all that I have and make it known to you." That's good news. That's a lot of stuff. All the Father has belongs to Jesus, and He's going to make it known to us, and He's going to do it through His Spirit.

You and I have an avenue to experience and know and grow in the glory of God, moment-by-moment, day-by-day, through communion with the Spirit of God. So, if we want to know the glory of God, then we have to be a people who are desperate for the Spirit of God. These are four reasons to be desperate for Him and they lead to four prayers for our time together tonight.

Four Prayers for Our Time Together

Jonathan Edwards said, in the middle of the Great Awakening, "When God has something very great to accomplish for His church, it is His will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayers of His people."

May God's presence come down. Psalm 44:23, "*Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself!...*" Psalm 80:14, "*Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see!*" Awaken us. May God's presence come down in our hearts in a powerful way tonight.

May God's Word come home. This is from Nehemiah 8 and 2 Chronicles 34. It's those times when the power of God is being displayed in unusual ways in the Old Testament. In Nehemiah 8, Ezra opens up the book and everybody stands. They lift their hands and start shouting, "*Amen! Amen!*" They bow down with their faces to the ground in response to His Word. In 2 Chronicles 34, "We found the book, the book we've neglected, the book we've ignored. We found it!" It sparks revival among the people of Israel. May God's Word come home. May we receive His Word. May we receive the Word like they did when Ezra opened the book in Nehemiah 8 and people responded and worshipped.

May we reproduce His Word. This is where I want to remind you to do this in each Secret Church. Our goal tonight is not for those of us in this room to learn about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If that's the goal tonight, then we have missed the point. That's a very self-centered goal. That's just about us in this room. The goal tonight is not entertainment for us. It is not the best method of entertainment to cram over 2,000 people into a room for six-plus hours.

This is not entertainment, it's equipping. The goal tonight is that 2,000-plus people would walk away from here equipped to teach others about the Holy Spirit of God. So, I urge you to listen with others in mind. Listen for the sake of people in your sphere of influence. Listen for the sake of people whom God will lead you to for disciple-making through your relationships with them. Listen for the sake of people around the world, that you will have the opportunity to teach the truth of Christ and the Holy Spirit of God. May we reproduce the Word.

Take good notes. Pay close attention, and, hopefully, you're sitting next to a person who is taking good notes. Stay awake; ask the Spirit to help you stay awake tonight.

May God's holiness come through. May God's Word come home, and His presence come down, and His Word be reproduced, and His holiness come through. I'm praying that our time together tonight would be a refining time, that we would be conformed more into the image of Christ, not just Bible study for the sake of Bible study. We want to be more like Christ at midnight than we are right now. We want to grow in holiness. I've prayed for you, that God would, by His Spirit, quicken our consciences tonight; that He would expose sin in our lives; that He would refine us and purify us as we look at the Holy Spirit of God tonight. May His holiness come through.

May God's people come alive. May apathy be struck down in any way, shape or form in our Christianity in this room. May complacency be struck down by a fresh eagerness and desire to know the glory of God through the power of the Spirit of God.

One of my favorite stories about D.L. Moody, a famous preacher from the past, was when he was preaching in the United States in revival meetings in all kinds of places. Many people were coming to Christ. He had started to do ministry in England, and at the beginning of his ministry there, his biographer tells the story of Moody going over to this particular church. He was preaching on Sunday morning—preaching his heart out. It was one of those moments when you're wondering if anyone is listening; when it just doesn't seem like there's much life. He got to the end and challenged people to respond to the gospel, and nobody responded. It was just as dead as could be. He was supposed to preach again that night but he was really discouraged. Part of him didn't even want to go back that night. He went back, though, and preached again.

He said in his journal that, when he preached that night, there was a whole different spirit in the room. People were sitting on the edge of their seats, listening. He got to the end and challenged people to respond to the gospel. He said, "If you want to trust in Christ tonight, I want to invite you to stand where you are." People stood up all over the room—the same people who were there in the morning when it seemed like they were asleep. Moody thought maybe they had misunderstood him, so he told them to sit down. He went through the gospel again and said, "Now if you really want to trust in Christ tonight, stand up now." More people stood up the second time than the first time. Moody was still not convinced. "Something is missing here." So, he told them to sit back down. This is a true story. He goes to the gospel again, and then says, "Now if you really want to respond to Christ tonight, then meet me and the pastor in the side room after the meeting is over." He thought he would see if they were really interested and would go over there. So, they dismissed the meeting, went into the side room, and it was packed—standing room only. Moody was still not convinced. He went through the gospel again and said, "Now if you really want to trust in Christ, you come back tomorrow night." Moody was leaving town the next morning. He said, "You come back tomorrow night and the pastor will share with you then."

So, he got up the next morning and left town; left all these people hanging. He got to the next place where he was preaching and got a telegram from the pastor of that church. The telegram said, "Moody, you've got to get back here. More people showed up Monday night than were here on Sunday night. Everybody wants to give their hearts to Christ." Moody went back and preached for consecutive weeks there, and the whole town experienced a mighty awakening. Huge percentages of people were coming to faith in Christ.

Moody was an inquisitive guy and wanted to find out what happened between Sunday morning and Sunday night. There was something so different. They were the same people, but it was a different picture. He began to do some research. He found there was a bedridden woman in that area who had read about Moody's ministry in the United States. She was not at worship that morning, but her sister was. When the sister brought her some food, she asked how the morning service was. Her sister explained, "It was kind of boring. This guy named D.L. Moody preached." Immediately, the woman's eyes lit up. She said, "I've been praying that God would bring this man to preach to our community. Put my food aside. I'm going to fast the rest of the afternoon. I'm going to pray that the Spirit of God would pour out His blessing on our church and this community through this man."

I share that with you because I believe that our time together tonight will be in vain if we try to do apart from the power of the Spirit of God. I want to invite you, with two or three people around you, to take just a couple minutes, and I want us to ask, plead, pray in desperation, "Spirit of God teach us, show us, refine us." These four prayers: may your presence come down. May your Word come home. May your holiness come through. May your people come alive tonight. Take a minute, with two or three people around you, and pray together. Then, after just a couple minutes, I will close. Pray together now.

Father, we come before you and express the depth of our need for your grace in this room. We know that not one of us sits where we find ourselves now by our own merit or work. We are saved by your grace. We have your Word by your grace. We are dependent on your grace for the next breath that we breathe. We need you in every way. We pray that you would give us the sense that Moses had of the danger in trying to move one step forward, in our lives or as your church, apart from the power of the fullness of your presence. That you would give us hearts that cry out, "Show us your glory. We want your glory." We pray that the power of your presence would be manifest in this room tonight—be clear, unmistakable. That your Word would ring in our ears and our minds and our hearts as treasure.

We pray, God, that you would purify us and, by your grace, transform us tonight. Awaken us. God, we pray that you would awaken us to your glory and to the reality of the things you say in your Word. God, awaken our hearts and our minds to see you for who you are and to enjoy you and delight in you and worship you, to stand in adoration of you and to proclaim you—along with our persecuted brothers and sisters—to the nations. Father, we pray that your Spirit would permeate our time together tonight in a supernatural, extraordinary, indescribable way. We pray, knowing that we can do nothing to manufacture that or make it happen, knowing that it is all according to your sovereign grace. We plead God, show the fullness of your presence to us in your Word tonight. Help us experience your presence in our lives and in your church tonight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Four Facets Of Our Study

Here are the four facets of our study tonight: the Holy Spirit: mystery and history—this will be just an overview. The Person of the Holy Spirit—Who He is.

The work of the Holy Spirit—What He does. We'll camp out, mostly, on this point. The Holy Spirit: Significant issues—We'll end our time together tonight talking about blasphemy against the Spirit—what does this involve. What is the unforgivable sin? Baptized in the Spirit—what first, second, third, fourth, fifth baptisms mean? Filled with the Spirit—what does this mean? Gifted by the Spirit—specifically, about certain miraculous gifts. What about prophecy, tongues and healing? It will be about 11:30 when we get into tongues. If we have extra time, we have some snakes in the back. It's going to be a good night. It's going to be good. I'm just trying to keep you around until midnight, that's all. It's going to be fun.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: MYSTERY AND HISTORY

Here's a quote by a guy named Bernard Ramm:

To profess to know a great deal about the Spirit of God is contrary to the nature of the Spirit of God. There is a hiddenness to the Spirit that cannot be uncovered. There is an immediacy of the Spirit that cannot be shoved into vision. There is an invisibility of the Spirit that cannot be forced into visibility. There is a reticence of the Spirit that cannot be converted into openness. For these reasons one feels helpless, inadequate, and unworthy to write a line about the Spirit.

Now, in a sense, that's kind of a depressing way to start the evening, but this is where I want us to really think about the challenge before us tonight in some different ways when it comes to the mystery of exploring the Holy Spirit.

The Mystery of Exploring the Holy Spirit

The Spirit is essential. The reality is—we're going to see this tonight—without the Holy Spirit we are not here. Without the Holy Spirit there is no gospel, no Scripture, no faith, no Church, no Christianity, no Christians. The Holy Spirit is essential. This is why there was such an urgency when Jesus was talking to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. He said, "Don't go anywhere until you get the Holy Spirit. You need the Holy Spirit." He's looking at these guys. They aren't the sharpest tools in the shed. "The worst thing you could do is go try to do this thing on your own. I've seen you in action. You need to wait. I'm going to send my presence to live in you, then you'll be good, but if you don't do that, this thing is hopeless from the beginning."

The same thing is true today. We are not Christians because we're the sharpest tools in the shed. We were actually called because we're the weak things of the world. So, be encouraged. God has called your name because He gets great glory through the power of His Spirit in you. Anything good that comes out of you or me is because of His Spirit. The Spirit is essential, and yet, the reality is so many of us are walking around with a fog about who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit does. It's almost like in Acts 19, a passage we're going to see at numerous points, when they say we've not even heard there's a Holy Spirit. I almost feel like that sometimes.

In much of our church culture today, we've seen a lot of movements of the Spirit. We've claimed movements of the Spirit in the world, and, as a result, many times we react, and we even begin to define the Spirit more by what He doesn't do than what He does. We need to repent of these things. The Spirit is essential. We need the Spirit. It was the cry of Evan Roberts in a 1904 Welsh revival when he said, "Honor the Spirit. Honor the Holy Spirit. Honor the Holy Spirit." The Spirit is essential.

The Spirit is intangible. Jesus talks about the Spirit, comparing Him to the wind that blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you can't tell where it comes from or where it's going. If we're honest, the picture of God the Father and God the Son are a bit easier for us to conceptualize than God the Spirit. Father—we've got that kind of image in our minds because it's a human relationship. The Son—Jesus in human flesh, but the Spirit proves difficult.

When we even go to the King James translation, we see "Holy Ghost." How do we think about the Holy Ghost? There's an intangible picture here. It's hard to get our arms around it, and when we look at Scripture, it has a lot more to tell us about who God is and who Christ is. Specifically, here are some passages that talk about who the Holy Spirit is: John 14-16, the main passage, but you don't have a lot of other passages like this that really give us a firm feeling of the Spirit all in one place. This presents a challenge. The Spirit is essential and intangible.

The Spirit is inexhaustible. Just like we talked about the doctrine of God and what Bernard Ramm was saying, we can't know the Spirit of God exhaustively, but that doesn't mean we can't know Him truly.

The Spirit is knowable. We cannot understand the Spirit of God exhaustively, just like we can't understand God in His infinite grace and infinite greatness exhaustively, but we can understand Him truly. The Spirit reveals Himself to us. He is not sitting back and hiding who He is from us. He is knowable.

The Spirit is personal. This is the beauty. Oftentimes, when it comes to God the Father, we think of the Father as almost a transcendent being that kind of removes Himself from us. We think of the Son even removed by a couple thousand years of history, but the reality is the Spirit is in a very real way in this room. He lives in us; He dwells in us in a very personal way. He's active in our lives. The Holy Spirit is where the Trinity gets very, very, very personal in our lives.

The Spirit is experiential. This is where the intangible Spirit becomes tangible, because we begin to see the power of the Spirit. When you begin to tell someone else about Jesus, the Spirit of God is empowering you for this. Now things are getting tangible. When you are going through a hard time, and you begin pray as we're going to talk about tonight, and the Holy Spirit begins to intercede for you with groans that words cannot express, there's a tangible reality there. When you're walking through life, and you have a decision to make and you pray and need guidance, and the Spirit is guiding you, this intangible presence becomes very tangible. The Spirit is experiential. This is also where the challenge comes in because a lot of people claim to have a lot of different experiences, and in the process, we make the Spirit somewhat controversial.

The Spirit is controversial. There are a lot of experiences going around and many of them are labeled with the Spirit of God. I think there's a danger when it comes to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and basing our understanding of the Holy Spirit more on experience than on truth in God's Word. We have to be careful here. Not that experience is thrown out the

window, but it's experience coupled with the truth of God's Word that we're going to look at. That's what is going to lead us into some of our discussions about how the Spirit works, and we're praying that the Spirit of God will give us great wisdom to hear His Word and think about our experiences in light of His Word.

The History of Exploring the Holy Spirit

This is where we see the controversy really come to life. Here's what I want to do. We're going to fly through this, but I'll show you why this is important. I just want to show you how people thought about the Spirit over the last 2,000 years of Christian history.

The Patristic Era ...

The Patristic Era, meaning "church fathers," from the end of the New Testament period, the first century, through about the eighth century. You have guys like Origen, Clement of Rome, Tertullian and Augustine who were talking about the Spirit, the Spirit's inspiration of Scripture and His divinity. You see people, literally, giving their lives to defend some of the truths that we're going to talk about tonight. We're really more focused around the person of Christ, but the person of the Spirit was in a lot of discussions and church councils at that time. When those formulations, understandings of the Spirit and the Word, were being established in the church, there were heresies and thoughts that rose up.

Gnosticism. This was a belief that undercut the Incarnation of Christ. So, when it comes to the Spirit, they claimed the Holy Spirit is the "mother" of Jesus and others. Abuses arose from this. The Spirit is not fully God. They were undercutting the divinity of Christ and the Spirit.

Another teaching that arose was Montanism. Montanus and his followers were "mouthpieces" of the Spirit. When Montanus was baptized, he began speaking in tongues and prophesying, so he and his two female disciples decided they were mouthpieces for God, and they would bring words from God to the people that were authoritative on the same level as Scripture. Other movements were rising up as well during that time.

The Medieval Era...

Then, you have the Medieval Era, which was about the 8th century to 15th century, and the big thing in there was a schism. This was the big thing that happened between Eastern and Western Christianity. It revolved around this question: Does the Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son? Follow me here. There's going to be a temptation at this point to think, "Who really cares about the schism, and why is it such a big deal?" Basically, the discussion was, "Does the Spirit come from the Father alone or the Father and the Son?" It's called the "filioque clause controversy." Many people were trying to picture the Trinity almost as though it had two heads – the Father, the Son and the Spirit. So, the Spirit comes from the Father and the Son comes from the Father—that's why the Eastern Christians broke off proclaiming, "We're not going to say the Spirit comes from the Father and the Son."

The Western Christians said the Spirit comes from the Father and the Son together. This is important today because there are a lot of, supposedly, Christian religions with this picture of the Spirit coming only from the Father, who are saying, "If that's true, then the Spirit can move in other faiths apart from Christ and can bring people to the Father apart from the mediation of Christ." So, there's this rampant pluralism that is alive and well in various denominations in the "supposed" church today. It's astounding some of the things that "supposed Christian leaders" will say about how the Spirit is bringing people from all kinds

of world religions to God, with Christ completely out of the picture. That's why this is important.

The Reformation Era...

Then, the Reformation Era between the 16th and 17th centuries. This era had guys like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. Calvin, in particular, is known as the theologian of the Holy Spirit. Calvinism focused on the Spirit giving us confidence in two ways: in the inspiration of Scripture and in every facet of salvation. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin really talked about the relationship between the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

Following the reformation was Puritanism. A guy name John Owen talked a lot about progressive sanctification, growing in godliness and the Spirit's role in our sanctification process.

The Modern Era...

Then, the Modern Era from the 18th century until today. There are a variety of different movements in this era. Scholasticism, which is the study of the Spirit became secondary to other doctrines. It wasn't that important. It was, basically, hidden under other doctrines.

Arminianism. This movement decreased emphasis on the sovereignty of the Spirit and placed a greater emphasis on the freedom of the will. There's more about man than the Spirit—what man does as opposed to what the Spirit incites and ignites within us.

Perfectionism. This was John Wesley and the Methodist movement. Amidst the many good things that Wesley did, he talked about believers experiencing complete sanctification in this life; that there was a work of the Spirit after you were saved where you would become completely sanctified on this earth.

Near the same time Wesley was preaching, George Whitfield was preaching as well, and that led to revivalism breaking out with The Great Awakening when many people were coming to Christ. Whitfield focused a lot on the Spirit's role in regeneration and bringing people to faith in Christ. Then, there was the transition that happened with all these revival meetings from the Spirit's role in regeneration to man's role in regeneration. Guys like Charles Finney came on the scene and began talking about what we do in order to make the work of the Spirit happen—more of what man brings to the table as opposed to dependence and desperation for the Spirit bringing it to the table.

Rationalism. Human reason is the supreme standard therefore the spiritual is not authoritative. You can't prove the Spirit, so the Spirit has no authority in any discussion.

Romanticism took things to the other side and emphasized feeling and emotion to the neglect of doctrine and truth.

Liberalism. As you get into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, you get into liberalism, which questioned the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture. They took the view that what Scripture teaches us is not inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, it's not inerrant, it's not infallible, and it's not completely true.

Pentecostalism. This really took off at the beginning of the 20th century. It started with the Azusa Street Meetings in Los Angeles in 1906. Holiness preacher William J. Seymour started preaching, and meetings were characterized by speaking in tongues, faith healing and

exorcism of demons. There are three major teachings that began and now characterize Pentecostalism:

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion. We're going to talk about this more. After you are converted, you receive a second baptism, a "baptism in the Spirit." Speaking in tongues is evidence of baptism in the Spirit, so if you've been baptized in the Spirit, then you will speak in tongues. All the spiritual gifts in the New Testament are to be sought and used today. Prophecy, healing, tongues, all of these different things that we're going to talk about later in the night.

Around the middle of the 20th century, Pentecostalism, which has basically become a denomination, really began to permeate different religious areas in different ways. Some miscellaneous movements came out of this. Some people declared themselves non-Pentecostal, and then you had Neo-Pentecostals, which was kind of a new picture of Pentecostals.

You have the charismatic movement. This came out of that picture and this was really less it's own movement over here. It was happening within already existing denominations like Lutherans and Episcopalians and Methodists and some different denominations. Even some Catholic churches began to experience charismatic tendencies. The charismatic movement, basically, affirms the availability and use of all the New Testament spiritual gifts in the church today: tongues, prophecy, healing and things we're going to be talking about today. To be honest, I'm not a big fan of the term charismatic for reasons we're going to see later, but the difference between Charismatics and Pentecostals is Charismatics are not as strict on needing a second baptism in the Spirit, and other Charismatics are not as strict on tongues being a necessity of being baptized in the Spirit.

Finally, the Third Wave Movement from the early 1980's to mid-1980's. In addition to affirming all the New Testament gifts, the Third Wave Movement emphasizes signs, wonders and miracles, which accompany evangelism. At Fuller Theological Seminary, Professor John Wimber taught a class on power-evangelism, signs and wonders. He stated that, when we do evangelism, it is accompanied by signs and wonders. This has brought about the whole Vineyard movement, which I'm guessing you are familiar with.

Now, you're thinking, "What's the point? Why do you share all that with us?" Here's why I think it's important for us to have this understanding of church history: it makes us cautious. We're not the first ones to come on the scene and think about these issues. We can look back over the last 2,000 years and see areas where the people of God have gone off into heresy and left the Word behind. We want to be careful.

The picture of church history and our understanding of church history help us, almost like guidelines to help us make sure we're staying on track, make us cautious, make us humble. I'm not, in any way, claiming to come on the scene tonight and solve this whole picture about all the questions about the Holy Spirit. I mentioned, if you were here for the doctrine of God, I'll be the first one to admit that I have some holes in my theology and some areas where I'm wrong. The only problem is I don't know which ones they are. So, be encouraged that, hopefully, most of what you hear tonight is true.

The reality is that on some of these issues—and there are some issues that are very important that are really issues of Christianity—there is, certainly, room in the body of Christ to agree to disagree. I'm pretty much resigned to the fact that some of the things I'm going to show us in the Word tonight and some of the conclusions I'm going to draw from the Word won't necessarily be agreeable to every single mind tonight, so let's just get that

out in the open. It makes us humble though, but that picture of church history doesn't cause us to throw our hands up in the air and say, "Well, why even try?" The reality is, that over the last 2,000 years, the people of God have had the Word of God in front of them and the Spirit of God inside them. The Spirit is good. He will lead us. One of His purposes is to guide us into truth. So, we can have a lot of confidence, tonight, that as we dive into these pictures in the Word that the Spirit is good in us, and He will lead us to truth together. So, with that said, here we go.

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHO HE IS

Uses of "Spirit" in Scripture...

Uses of "Spirit" in Scripture. There are five general ways the word "Spirit" is used in Scripture: A natural use—"wind." Sometimes Scripture talks about wind. It's the same word there that is often used to refer to the Holy Spirit. An angelic use—"an evil spirit." Human life—"breath" or "spirit." Human attitude—"a spirit of love" or a "spirit of discernment."

A divine attribute—"The Spirit of God" or "The Holy Spirit." In John 4, Jesus said, "*God is Spirit and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" The picture there is not saying God is the Holy Spirit, it's saying God is Spirit; it's an attribute of God. That's why I put there that it's sometimes a reference to the divine attribute, but there's a picture of the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—throughout Scripture, a little less than a hundred times in the Old Testament and then more in the New Testament. Then, there are other uses, which make it a little bit challenging, and are why in different translations, you'll see the word "Spirit" sometimes capitalized and other times not capitalized. Translators are trying to figure out exactly what is going on there. Is this a reference to an attribute of God as Spirit? Is this is reference to the Holy Spirit, or is it a reference to something else? So, it kind of presents a challenge there, but that's how Scripture uses the word "Spirit."

I want us to think about four facets of the Holy Spirit—who He is.

The Holy Spirit's Personality...

The Holy Spirit's personality. The Spirit is not a force. The Spirit is not this magical force, this magical power. That's how we often view the Spirit, as this impersonal force, and that's why oftentimes, when people talk about the Spirit, they talk about 'it.' This force, this power, that's at work. Look at Luke 4:14 and Acts 10. In both passages, you see the Spirit does have power but try to substitute the word power for Spirit. "*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the [power], and news about him spread through the whole countryside.*" That's not what Scripture is saying. The same thing in the next verse: "*...God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy [power] and power...*" Not with power and power. The Spirit is powerful. The Spirit brings power and empowers people, but the Spirit Himself is not this impersonal force that's out there.

The Spirit is not a feeling. This would make the Spirit equivalent to a human attitude. Sometimes, I think we picture the Spirit of God almost like the spirit of Christmas or the spirit of this or that. That's not what Scripture is teaching. He is not a feeling. Hear the personal language here: "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" (John 14:26)

The Spirit is a person. This is huge. Only a person can say "I" or "me." A wind or a force or feeling can't talk like that. Acts 13:2 says, *"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"* Forces and feelings don't talk, they don't call, they don't do things for themselves. This is what the Spirit does.

The Bible describes the Spirit with personal characteristics: Intelligence. Just like we looked at earlier in John 14:26. *"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* Will. The Spirit has a will. *"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines"* (1 Corinthians 12:11). Emotions. *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* (Ephesians 4:30)

He has personal affections. We relate to Him. He relates to us as a person. He can be lied to. *"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself...'"* (Acts 5:3-4) He can be grieved. *"Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit..."* (Isaiah 63:10) He can be quenched. *"Do not quench the Spirit..."* (1 Thessalonians 5:19) He can be resisted. Stephen said to the rulers and the Sanhedrin, *"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!"* (Acts 7:51) He can be blasphemed. *"And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."* (Matthew 12:31) If the Holy Spirit can be loved and adored and obeyed and offended and grieved and sinned against, then He must be a person, not an "it" but a person. He has personal characteristics. He has personal affections.

He has a personal ministry. This is just a brief survey because we're going to dive into the work of the Holy Spirit later. He leads us. *"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* (Romans 8:14) He witnesses to us. *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."* (Romans 8:16) He helps us. *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."* (Romans 8:26) So, that is His personality. The Spirit is a person, not a force or a feeling.

The Holy Spirit's Deity...

This leads to the second facet of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit's deity. This is an important truth, and again this is part of that debate in church history: "Is the Holy Spirit fully God?" Listen to what John Feinberg says:

As to the Holy Spirit, if he is not fully God...See why this is so important...the implications for salvation are again serious. Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit regenerates believers and indwells and fills them, but if the Holy Spirit is a lesser god or no god at all, how can we be sure that He can do any of these things? Moreover, unless He is coequal in being and purpose with the Father and the Son, what guarantees that even if He tried to do such things, the Father and the Son would recognize His actions as appropriate and relate to us accordingly?

So, how do we know if the Spirit is fully God? We have, previously, talked about three foundational truths that help us understand the Trinity. Foundational truth number one—God is three Persons, three distinct Persons. In Scripture, He is described as Father, Son and Spirit. Foundational truth number two—each Person is fully God. Father is God. Son is God. Holy Spirit is God. God is three Persons. Each Person is fully God. Foundational truth

number three—there is one God. We saw this when we looked at the mystery of the Trinity. God is three Persons, each Person fully God, but there is one God. Not three gods—not polytheism. It's worship of one God. You put these three together and you've got mystery. Try to explain it, you'll lose your mind; try to deny it, you'll lose your soul. That's the picture with the Trinity. So, three Persons, each Person fully God; there is one God. So, where does the Bible teach us that the Holy Spirit is God?

First, He is equated with God. This is the passage that I read, real briefly, just a second ago (Acts 5:4), when Ananias and Sapphira deceived the church with the offering they brought. *"Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit?'"* Ananias, your sin is that you have lied to the Holy Spirit. You get to the next verse and Peter says to him, *"You have not lied just to human beings but to God."* So, the Holy Spirit is equated with God. A lie to the Holy Spirit is a lie to God.

The same thing in 1 Corinthians 3:16 where the temple of God is the temple of the Spirit: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"* The temple of God equals the temple of the Holy Spirit. He is equated with God.

He is identified with God. The Spirit is identified with God. Matthew 28:19-20. This is the Great Commission: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."* They are identified together there; put on the same plane. These are just two of numerous instances in the New Testament where this happens. 2 Corinthians 13:14 states, *"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,—there's the Son—and the love of God—there's the Father,—and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."* So, they are identified together. Father—Son—and Holy Spirit.

He is linked with God. I want to show you something really interesting. These verses right here show us where things that God—Yahweh—did in the Old Testament are linked with the Holy Spirit doing those things based on what the New Testament teaches. Let me show you in Exodus 17:7, *"And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'"* Then, you get to Hebrews 3:7-9, and they're talking about what happened: *"So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did.'"* So, they tested and tried the Lord, and the Holy Spirit says, *"You were testing and trying me."* See the link there?

Next, Isaiah 6:8-9. This is when God commissioned Isaiah. He said, *"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go and tell this people: Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving'"* Then, you get to Acts 28:25-26, *"They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: 'The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: Go to this people and say, 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.'"* You see the link there between what God had done in the Old Testament as Yahweh, and what the Spirit is attributed with doing?

Next, Jeremiah 31:31-34. Go about mid-way through this passage, right after he says, *"declares the Lord."*

'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the

covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'

Then, you get to Hebrews, filled with Old Testament imagery and pictures, and Hebrews 10:15-17 says, "*The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says...*" And then He begins to quote what Yahweh had said in Jeremiah. "*...this is the covenant I will make with them after that time,' says the Lord. 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.'* Then he adds: '*Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.*'"

So, the Holy Spirit is linked with God. He is identified with God. He is equated with God, and He possesses the attributes of God.

He is omnipresent. He is present wherever we are.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:7-10)

He is omniscient. "*The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*" (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) Only the Spirit of God, there at the end, "*...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*" The Spirit of God knows all things that the Father knows. He's omniscient.

He is omnipotent. "*The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.'*" (Luke 1:35) This is a parallel picture of the Spirit coming upon you and the power of the Most High—God—Yahweh, and then He is eternal. Hebrews 9:14, "*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God...*" He is eternal.

He possesses all these things that no one else but God can possess. No one but God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and eternal, and the Spirit is attributed with these same characteristics.

He also performs the works of God. He distributes God's gifts. We're going to look at this later with spiritual gifts. He brings God's salvation. Titus 3:5, at the very end there, "*He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...*"

He inspires God's Word. "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*" (2 Timothy 3:16) Can anybody else bring God's salvation but God? Can anybody else distribute God's gifts but God? Can anybody else inspire God's Word but God Himself?

The question I have here, at the end, is one about Islam. I just want to throw this in so we understand where this whole picture fits on the landscape of religious discussions today.

Islam denies the Trinity. I've included a couple of passages here from the Koran. Let's be very clear. These are in the same place that Scripture passages are in your booklet, but they are nowhere near the authority of everything else that is in that place, but I want you to listen to what it says around the third sentence:

People of the Book [Christians], do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about Allah. The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was no more than Allah's apostle and His Word which he cast to Mary: a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His apostles and do not say: 'Three.' ...Allah is but one God. Allah forbids that He should have a son!" (Sura 4:171, 383-384)

Islam dethrones the Spirit. "We sent to her [Mary] our ruuh [angel Gabriel]..." They, basically, identify the Holy Spirit with the angel Gabriel. "...And he appeared before her in the form of a man..." (Sura 19:17-19)

Just so you know where that picture sits, and as you go into other nations with the gospel, this is a huge, huge distinction between what Christianity teaches and what Islam teaches.

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