



Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit? – Part 5
Various Scriptures
GCSP – 03/06/2010

Let's pray.

Probably one of the biggest problems with doing a series of sermons on God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, or God the Holy Spirit, is that we cannot truly define them, quantify them, or even come close to truly wrapping our minds around them.

Yet that is what we attempt to do all the time. We are always trying to figure things out to where it all makes sense in our minds. We desire for all three members of the Godhead Trinity to conform to our own human logic. We want a neat little formula or pattern that we can point to and follow. We want five simple steps to knowing God, and three steps to a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, and two steps to being filled with the Holy Spirit.

As I mentioned at the end of last week's sermon, we not only want God in a box of our own choosing but we actually have Him in a box of our own choosing. We have already determined how God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit operate in our lives, and thus have infinitely limited His power in our lives.

One common theme throughout the Gospel accounts is that of Jesus telling His disciples and anyone else He came into contact with (which includes us today), believe, have faith; believe, have faith; believe, have faith. And it is our lack of faith that twists and molds Scripture to our own liking (actually proving that we do not believe God's Word as we should), and causes us to create the boxes that limits not only the power of God in our lives but also the blessings of God in our lives.

Let me give you one primary example that will prove to you that your faith and mine is lacking, and that your belief and mine in God's Word is not where it needs to be.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **John**.

John 14:12-14

Don't raise your hands but answer the following questions in your mind:

- How many of you believe that you can do the same works that Jesus did?
- How many of you believe you can heal the sick?
- How many of you believe you can cast out demons?
- How many of you believe you can raise the dead?
- How many of you believe you can love others to the point of suffering and death in their place?
- How many of you believe you can preach the kingdom of God to all who will listen?
- How many of you believe you can do everything God the Father tells you to do without fail and without delay?

- How many of you believe you can make genuine, reproducible disciples that will in turn also do the same works that Jesus did?
- How many of you believe you can do all of this and more?

These are just a few of the works Jesus did, and according to **verse 12** if we truly believe in Jesus, meaning if we truly believe that He is God and that His miraculous power came from the same Holy Spirit that dwells within each us right now, that we will do the same works He did while on this earth, and even greater works because we are in essence an army of Spirit-filled disciples as opposed to Jesus being just one; or I guess I should say we should be an army of Spirit-filled disciples.

But we're not done; **verse 13** says whatever we ask in the name of Jesus will be done. How many of you really believe that one? And why don't we? We primarily don't believe it because we have in the past asked for things in the name of Jesus and haven't seen it come to pass. And that means one of three things:

1. Jesus lied
2. This was meant for the twelve disciples only and wasn't meant for us
3. Our faith and our belief in God's Word is lacking

If Jesus lied then He is not God, for God cannot lie. And if Jesus lied and it is recorded in Scripture as true, then we have no business believing the Bible at all. And if we can't believe the Bible, then why are we even meeting here tonight? I don't think I have to take this one any further; Jesus did not lie.

If this was only meant for the twelve disciples, or actually the eleven disciples, because Judas is already off the scene setting up his betrayal by this time, then we have another problem. Even though Jesus is directly speaking to these eleven men, **verse 12** says, "**he who believes in Me**" and that statement goes beyond the context of just the eleven. That statement says anyone who believes in Me, not just if the eleven believe in Me.

But some will still say Jesus was only speaking to the eleven with that statement. I then ask where do you draw the line in Scripture, and who determines what was said only to the disciples and what is for us? After all, **verse 15** then says, "**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**" Was that statement only for the eleven as well? Can we ignore the commandments and still claim genuine love for Jesus? Were the eleven the only ones who had to prove their love for Jesus by keeping His commandments?

Let's take this train of thought a step further.

John 3:16

Jesus is directly talking to Nicodemus in this passage. Why is this verse any different? Why not consider it in the same way that some, try to explain away **John 14:12-14**? Why is this verse to be accepted as universal but not the others? I'm just asking.

John 6:44

In this passage Jesus is speaking directly to Jewish unbelievers. Are they the only ones that the Father has to draw to Jesus in order to believe? Did we draw ourselves to Jesus then since we are not Jewish? Are all Gentiles responsible to draw themselves to Jesus?

John 8:10-11

In this passage Jesus is directly speaking to the adulterous woman. Is she the only one who should take to heart the command to go and sin no more? If not, then is it okay for us to go and sin some more since Jesus is speaking directly to her?

John 8:31-32

In this passage Jesus is directly speaking to Jews who have believed. Again, since we are not Jews does that mean we do not have to continue in or obey His word to prove we are truly His disciples? Do we get a pass on obedience because we are Gentiles?

I hope you see the point I am attempting to make because it is utterly ridiculous to pick and choose what we should apply to our lives and what we should explain away as being only for the disciples, or Nicodemus, or the Jews, etc.

And obviously there are instances in the Bible where Jesus told specific individuals to do specific things that were only for them. When Jesus told the man who was born blind to go and wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam that was not a universal command for all people who were born blind. When Jesus told His disciples, in preparation for His entrance into Jerusalem, to go and fetch a young donkey from off the street that was not a command for all of us to fetch young donkeys off the street. Instances like these are very obvious, but it should be just as obvious that the other passages we have looked at, including **John 14:12-14**, are just as much meant for us to follow as they were for the immediate audience Jesus was speaking to.

Does that make sense?

That was introduction.

Last week I started laying some important groundwork to ensure we are all well aware that the power available to us from the filling of the Holy Spirit is the same power we see being displayed in the lives of the disciples. Nothing has changed and nothing has happened to limit what the Holy Spirit desires to do through you and me.

I talked about the fact that many churches and denominations teach that certain gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased when the last of the Apostles died (John), or at the very least when the canon of Scripture was completed somewhere around 100 A.D. I showed you their argument for why they believe that and I showed you the biblical argument for why that simply cannot be true.

If you have any doubts in your mind concerning the power of the Holy Spirit being meant for you, and/or if that power meant for you is somewhat inferior in quality and quantity as compared to what we see in the biblical account, then most of the rest of this series will be somewhat senseless and definitely difficult, if not impossible, for you to apply to your life; and if you cannot apply God's Word and the preaching of God's Word to your life then why are you here?

I also showed you from Scripture last week that being baptized with the Holy Spirit is the same as being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is the same as being clothed with power from on high and the same as the Holy Spirit being poured upon you. We worked through the progression from **Luke 24:49**, **Acts 1:5**, **2:4**, and **2:17** to clearly see how the different terminology used in each verse referred to the exact same event.

Over the last two weeks together I have shown you from Scripture that the first and foremost reason for being Spirit-filled is to be witnesses for Jesus Christ and to boldly proclaim the gospel message to the nations, regardless of the personal danger or consequences. And since we can all attest to the fact that the gospel message has not been proclaimed to every people group across this world, and thus the Great Commission has not yet been fully accomplished, that it is ridiculous to believe that God has determined to lessen or remove certain aspects of the power of the Holy Spirit, since it is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to carry out this commission.

If it took the full measure of the Holy Spirit's power for the 1st century disciples to fill the world with the gospel message, what makes us so special and different that we can do it with only half of His power? Because we are in essence saying we are better and bolder and more spiritual than the disciples we read about in God's Word if we think we can fulfill the Great Commission with Holy Spirit light – tastes great, less filling, if you will pardon the pun.

I then gave you the hypothesis that the reason we do not see the power of the Holy Spirit as it is displayed in the Bible is because of the spiritual state of the church, not that His power has been curtailed or lessened in any way. This led to the statement that we are simply too comfortable with our own personal beliefs, and that led to the illustration of how we put God in a box of our own choosing – determining for ourselves how much power we are to receive in this time.

So turn with me in your Bibles again to the Book of **Acts**.

Acts 1:1-14

So after Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gives orders to the disciples, after He proved His resurrection by being with them and teaching them about the kingdom for forty days, and after He promises to baptize them with the Holy Spirit, the disciples ask a reasonable question: **"Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"**

The question was not foolish. Jesus doesn't scold them for asking such a question as He has scolded them in the past when they did ask foolishly. But instead He simply tells them, **"It is not for you to know the times..."** In other words, don't assume the long awaited outpouring of the Holy Spirit will immediately bring in the fullness of the kingdom.

But, Jesus says, it does mean power! And it means power to the ends of the earth! Don't let the fact that the fullness of the kingdom is not immediately on the horizon burst your bubble; you will receive unimaginable, unquantifiable power from on high and you are going to be My witnesses!

And beloved, I don't want you to imagine this scene in your mind with a solemn-faced Jesus telling them this in an expressionless monotone voice; not in the least! I picture Jesus with an irresistible smile on His face and an infectious enthusiasm in His voice! I picture Him almost bursting at the seams with excitement as He reveals to them that in a few days they are going to be infused with this infinite power from on high!

I think we miss that about Jesus. I think we miss that He smiled and laughed and expressed tremendous enthusiasm when the moment called for it; and this is one of those moments, folks. Wow! How exuberant Jesus must have been!

I mean, think about how excited you get when you give a present to someone you love. Sometimes you almost want to tear off the bow and rip through the wrapping paper for them so they can get to the gift inside quicker. And our excitement is over something temporal and of very little value in the scope of eternity. And here we have Jesus giving His disciples the ultimate gift of the infinite power of the Holy Spirit; you better believe Jesus was excited!

"And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Oh man, what a sight! Talk about your halftime speeches, this was one for the ages! We talk about charging hell with a squirt gun; the disciples had to be motivated like never before and at the same time a bit bewildered after the speech Jesus gave and the awesome spectacle of witnessing the ascension.

Then in verses 10-11 two angels follow up on Jesus' words with some words of their own; and beloved, I believe the angels were excited when they spoke as well! The angels understood this power that was coming because they have a taste or semblance of this power. I can't point to any verses that equate the power of the angels with the power of the Holy Spirit, but the power of an angel is off the charts!

Which beckons another question: Why are we so quick to believe the accounts in Scripture about the displays of power from God's angels and yet disbelieve or even deny the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives? I've never heard any Christian explain away the power of God's angels. Why hasn't their power lessened or disappeared after the canon of Scripture was completed like many say the Holy Spirit's power has?

v. 12-14

There are many things I could touch on in this passage but I simply want you to focus on the beginning of verse 14: **"These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer..."** The two characteristics mentioned here that must have some connection to the coming power are, unity of mind and devotion to prayer.

This gathering of disciples, which includes many more than the eleven (about 120 in total according to verse 15), were unified in mind; and we need to stop right here for a moment.

Unified in mind does NOT mean everyone comes in line with your way of thinking. As long as we are looking to our way as the standard and the compass, unity of mind will NEVER happen.

Beloved, let me clue in on a little secret. All of us are sinful and selfish and opinionated and we all think our way is best in almost any given situation. We all think our interpretation of Scripture is best most of the time. We all think we hold some keys to a right relationship with God that may or may not align with what others think. We can't get unity between two people with attitudes like that, let alone the 120 gathered in the upper room or the 30 or so gathered here tonight. Unity of mind is impossible when it is based on individual standards because every one of us has different standards.

Let me give you an example. During the sermon last week in the frustration of the moment I said a word I shouldn't have allowed to escape my lips. If you weren't here, it wasn't a curse word but it was in essence a milder replacement of a curse word. The range of comments I have received this week were from, that was hilarious, to, that was passionate, to, is there any way you could delete that from the CD's. Why so many different opinions? – Because we all have different standards even on issues like that.

Now that is not an excuse for my poor choice of wording last week by any means; I should not have said what I did. But it is an illustration of how when we go our own way we will never have unity of mind.

Unity of mind comes from **Romans 12:1-2**, which says, **"Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."**

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Philippians**.

Philippians 2:1-11

Unity of mind comes as an act of the will; an act of laying down your will and picking up and applying the will of God, **"intent on one purpose."** And that one purpose is to be like Christ in every way, shape, and form; to not do anything from **selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.**

And beloved, that means you aren't pursuing your own personal agenda or holding others up to your own personal standards; you aren't turning your nose down at others who rub you the wrong way; you aren't rolling your eyes when someone gets up to testify that you don't approve of in some way; you don't talk about your brothers and sisters in a negative way behind their backs.

It's funny how Jesus didn't regard being equal with God as something to grasped and yet the majority of the Body of Christ is always trying to grasp that equality with God by the way we judge our brothers and sisters and hold them up to our own personal standards.

Jesus showed us the way; His example of having unity of mind is emptying yourself and taking on the form of a slave, and being obedient even unto death.

And lastly, the characteristic of the 120 disciples who were gathered together awaiting the baptism of the Holy Spirit was they were **continually devoted to prayer**.

If you replaced the 120 in the Book of Acts with us, I wonder if the rest of the account would have come out the same, if it depended upon our unity of mind and our continual devotion to prayer.

Let's pray.