



**Who's Afraid of the Holy Spirit? – Part 7**  
**Various Scriptures**  
**GCSP – 03/20/2010**

Let's pray.

In 1955 I believe, a small high school in rural Indiana accomplished an amazing feat. The school had an enrollment of around 130 students, 64 of which were boys. Of that 64, eight played on the school basketball team. Back in those days schools weren't slotted into conferences of other schools with similar enrollments, but instead they were all lumped together to eventually compete for the state championship.

Amazingly enough, Hickory High School made it to the championship game in Indianapolis. The school they were facing was from Indianapolis and had an enrollment of over 2,000 and a team with a full compliment of players on the bench. The players on the Indianapolis team were taller, more athletic, and had the recent experience of winning the state championship the previous year.

In the upset of the century, this small country school managed to defeat the large city school. The movie, *Hoosiers*, loosely depicts this true story.

The coach of Hickory High School taught the boys how to play unselfishly as a team. He showed them how no single player was more important than the next. If his more talented players started playing selfishly they would be pulled from the game even if it meant sure defeat. By the time the conference and regional tournaments began, Hickory was a unified team, and they accomplished something no one could have ever imagined.

In our current series on the Holy Spirit I was starting down a path of preaching on the power of the Holy Spirit and how that power should be active in our lives today. I started looking at the purposes for the disciples to be Spirit-filled and how these same purposes are true for us today as well.

We saw how the primary purpose for being Spirit-filled is to have the power to be witnesses, or martyrs, for Jesus Christ; and to be able to combat the powers of the enemy. My intention was to continue on with all the other purposes of being Spirit-filled when the Spirit changed my direction to lay some important foundation before we go there.

I was compelled to show how the argument that the power we read about in Scripture through the disciples has somehow been diminished or taken away, and thus is not available to us, is totally without merit; the Scriptural support just isn't there. And besides that, if the commission to be witnesses for Jesus Christ is just as valid for us today as it was for the disciples then why on earth would God expect us to accomplish this task with less than He provided the disciples with? Why would God give them the full power of the Holy Spirit to reach the world for Christ and only give us a little bit of the Holy Spirit's power? And how do you get just a little bit of the Holy Spirit anyway when all of the Holy Spirit lives within you?

With that fact established in our minds, the Spirit then led me to our present topic, without which we will never be the Spirit-filled church I believe all of us desire to be. And that topic is unity.

Last week we saw how discord and disunity is the poison that perpetually keeps the church in a state of spiritual sickness that thwarts and blocks the miraculous, supernatural, and extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit from being manifest as God desires. We saw how most Christians are about the business of tearing down their brothers and sisters in Christ in an effort to lift themselves up; in other words we see the sins of others much more clearly than we see our own, if we see our own at all.

We also saw that the problem of discord and disunity is more of a danger in a strong, vibrant, healthy church; churches that are active in ministry and busy about the task of seeing growth. The reason for this is we get involved in the ministries and activities in the church that we have a passion for and develop a sort of tunnel vision, which causes us to place a priority on this passion that skews our thinking and attitude a little bit. We start to see those who do not share the same passion as missing the mark or less spiritual than we are.

And let me make a remark here for the sake of clarity. I have been approached by more than one person after last week's sermon concerning the passions they have in ministry, wondering if they are off the mark. I apparently did a poor job communicating this point. And please note I will be using real examples from our church, so please do not take offence if I speak to one or more of the things you are passionate about; I am not calling you out to downplay or dismiss your passions just to give some real life illustrations of how these could turn into opportunities for disunity.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with having a passion for a certain area of ministry and there is absolutely nothing wrong with being passionate about any aspect of God's Word – I trust all of you live your life with passion about ministry and the things of God. There is also absolutely nothing wrong with sharing your passion and teaching the concepts of God's Word you are passionate about. My point was that there is a potential for discord and disunity when your passion spills over into viewing others as less spiritual than yourself when they do not share the same level of passion you do, or if you get upset or out of joint when others do not seem to be at the same place you are.

If your passion is children's ministry your attitude cannot be one in which you look down upon or get upset with those who don't get involved with children's ministry. If your passion is praise & worship your attitude cannot be one of spiritual superiority over those who don't view it as passionately as you do or who do not express their worship in the same way you do, even if you have biblical support.

For example, the Bible is chock full of examples of God's children lifting their hands in worship, individually and in a corporate setting. If your passion for worship has led you to having that freedom and comfort level to raise your hands in worship, you cannot look down upon those who don't feel the need to raise their hands, and vice versa.

Another example in this area of worship has to do with the words of the songs we sing. Many of you here tonight prefer to personalize the songs; substituting You for He or Him, etc. (i.e. "You are worthy" instead of "He is worthy"), because the Lord is right

here with us and the thinking is we should be singing to Him and not just about Him since He is in our presence. Others prefer to sing the songs as they were written and don't feel there is any disrespect in doing so.

There is nothing wrong with either view since even Scripture refers to the Lord in both ways. All throughout the Psalms, when the psalmist was worshipping the Lord, he refers to the Lord in both ways; and the Psalms are praise & worship songs. In our humanness though, seeds of disunity can be planted in something like this if we are not careful.

I'm sure Dave and Sue have a passion for missions that the rest of us would have a hard time matching or living up to, since we haven't experienced the 30-some years of being on the mission field like they have. And since Grace Church has not had a major focus on missions as of yet, Dave and Sue could get a little out of joint if they thought all the rest of us should share their same level of passion. I have mentioned to them several times that there would eventually be an opportunity for them to teach us more about missions, but other than a few Wednesday evenings, that opportunity has yet to come.

The point is there is a potential for discord and disunity because of the different views we may have on any number of topics like this; and the more passionate you are about something the greater the potential exists. Churches that are only going through the motions do not have to worry about such things. So the passion I see in our church is a very good thing, it is just also a cause for us to be cautious of how we view and respond to others.

So by all means feel free to express your passion and to teach others why you are so passionate, just be careful your passion does not cause you to look down on those who are not on the same level as you, or don't follow in your footsteps after you have spent some time teaching and explaining your views; the Holy Spirit will deal with each of us as He sees fit and in His perfect timing.

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

### **Philippians 2:1-5**

As I mentioned at the end of last week's sermon, the word "if", used four times in **verse 1**, is in a grammatical tense in the Greek that probably would be better translated as "since" or "because." Because we have encouragement in Christ, because there is consolation of love, because there is fellowship of the Spirit, and because there is affection and compassion, we are to follow through with what Paul admonishes us to do (which we will get to in a moment).

This section also begins with the word "**therefore**" which in this case refers back to much of **chapter 1** but specifically **verse 27** where we are told to **conduct** (ourselves) **in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.**

So before Paul goes into the "what" he makes very clear the "why" – because you are to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel, because you are to stand firm in one spirit, because you are to be of one mind, because you are to be striving together for the faith

of the gospel, because of the encouragement that is in Christ, because you have experienced and understand God's love, because you have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and because affection and compassion exist in your life, **make my joy complete.**

Paul calls on us to be united for the sake of Jesus Christ and to be united for the sake of the Holy Spirit, and to be united for his own sake if that wasn't enough reason already.

Paul then starts by reiterating what he has already told us: (be) **of the same mind.**

Hold your place in **Philippians** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **John.**

### **John 13:34-35**

The unity that is found in *agape* love is the way the world knows we are the disciples of Jesus Christ. Notice Jesus does not say, the miracles you perform through the power of the Holy Spirit will be the reason the world knows you are My disciples. Notice Jesus doesn't say, the sermons you preach and the lessons you teach will be the reason the world will know you are My disciples. Notice Jesus doesn't say, the songs you sing and the buildings you meet in and the offerings you give and the amount of time you spend studying God's Word is the reason the world will know you are My disciples. No, it's the *agape* love that you show to one another that will set the world on its ear; it's the unity that comes with genuine sacrificial love for one another that will be My greatest testament and testimony to the world.

What's does the most damage to the testimony of a church in the community in which it is situated? There are obviously several specific and general things, but it always comes back to the fact that most Christian's lives are not terribly different in conduct than the people we try to drag in. The lack of *agape* love and the abundance of discord and disunity and conflict is the testimony the world hears loud and clear, not the words that come out of your mouth.

Jesus makes it abundantly clear for us that the unity of love is the primary focus; but if that isn't enough, turn with me to **chapter 17** and let's look at what Jesus prayed for you and me.

### **John 17:20-21**

Beloved, this is a sobering chapter of Scripture. Jesus is about to face the horrific pain and agony of torture and crucifixion and His main concern is our unity. He doesn't ask God the Father to dull His senses so He won't have to experience the full measure of pain about to be inflicted on His body, He asks the Father for us to live in unity.

And beloved, if that isn't enough to shake your consciousness, He then says the reason for our unity is so the world will believe that God sent Him to this earth! Do you get the implications of that statement? The measure to which the lost and dying world will believe that God the Father sent God the Son to this earth for their salvation is directly related to the measure in which we are unified.

Let that sink in the next time you are at odds with one of your brothers or sisters in Christ. Read that verse the next time you gossip about a brother or sister, or speak

badly about them to someone else instead of following the mandates of scripture and going to them alone. Consider this prayer the next time you are tempted to stir up discord or disunity or conflict in order to serve your own agenda or promote your own ideas.

Now obviously we must confront sin in the church, but it must be confronted with love and with a heart that desires to see unity restored, fellowship restored, and relationships restored.

Still holding your place in **Philippians**, turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Psalms**.

### **Psalm 51:1-4**

I know this is a familiar passage and I am sure all of you have greatly identified with the words here when your own sin has weighed heavy on your heart. But have you ever applied this to a situation when someone has sinned against you? Have you ever considered the implications of the truth of this passage in regards to someone else besides you?

Yes, when we sin we are responsible to repent before God and ask forgiveness of those we have offended. But nowhere in Scripture is it your responsibility to squeeze that contrition out of the guilty party.

David sinned against Bathsheba, against Uriah, against the nation of Israel, and against his own family, yet the Scripture says, "**Against You, You only, I have sinned.**" And again, this does not relinquish our responsibility to make things right with those we have transgressed against, but the sin issue is really only between the guilty party and God.

The point I want us to consider in this is why do we allow sins against us to be the spark that lights the fire of discord and disunity? Why are we so adamant about making sure we get our way and we get our point across? Why do we feel the overwhelming need to be right in any given situation, especially at the expense of unity? Why can't we see that the sin or sins were against God, not you; and that God will deal with the situation in His perfect time and in His perfect way?

Let's get back to **Philippians** before our time is out once again.

### **Philippians 2:1-5**

Paul's first mark, or first characteristic, of unity is **being of the same mind (verse 2)**. What does it mean to be of the same mind? Literally it means to think the same way; one key to unity is to think the same way; we have to think alike. Now that's a monumental task if ever there was one. How can we possibly think alike?

As I have already told you, the church at Philippi was a solid, mature, vibrant church. There were no theological or doctrinal problems, no immorality, and no blatant sins that we are aware of; just this issue of disunity. The church in Corinth on the other hand was almost immersed in problems with their understanding of God's Word, and immorality was not only blatant and exposed but was almost celebrated.

The message is nonetheless the same: **"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).**

Let me add a wrinkle to this. Paul is not speaking about doctrine in Philippians or in Corinthians. The Philippian church didn't have any problems with doctrine; Paul wasn't telling them to get their doctrine lined up to the point that everyone agreed. If every one of us shared the exact same views about doctrine, which we don't, that would not mean that we were of the same mind or that we were thinking alike. There is something more here.

And while it is very important for us to continue to learn together so we can be in agreement doctrinally, what Paul is really talking about here is attitude; having the same attitude and the same mindset. If you drop down to **verse 5** you will see that. I know some of your translations say, **"Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"**, but the better translation for the word "mind" is "attitude." We must have the same attitude as Christ which will allow us to have the same attitude as each other.

This was the problem in Philippi and this is the problem in most churches today, and again, especially churches that are passionate about the ministry and the Word of God.

And herein lies the problem; attitude is elusive. You can easily point out problems with doctrine and you can easily point out problems with sin, but attitude can be hidden and covered over with ease. You can paste on a smile while in the fellowship of the church, you can passionately sing the songs and you can pay complete attention during the sermon, and still have a rotten and subversive attitude. And that's why it is so devastating and destructive.

We're not going to have the time to completely develop this thought but let's look at one other passage to give us at least a little something to latch onto and work on before we leave.

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

### **Romans 8:1-5**

There is a lot more to this passage beyond these first five verses that deserve our attention but the focus I want to leave us with is that we have two choices when it comes to our minds and attitudes: You can focus on the things of the flesh or you can focus on the things of the Spirit. Before your salvation there was no choice; you were of the flesh and you could only have a mind set of the flesh. After salvation you now have the choice. You can continue to allow yourself to dwell in the flesh and thus think and act how the flesh desires, or you can allow the Spirit of God that dwells in you to control your thoughts and attitudes.

There is much more to say and many other passages of Scripture to look at to help us in this regard, but the key to being of the same mind and thinking alike is tied to this battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Understand this, the flesh is no match for the Spirit, but the Spirit will not force Himself upon you.

Dwell on that and the next time we are together we will build upon being likeminded and thus unified in the Spirit.

Let's pray.