

A Brief Study of References to the Holy Spirit in Ephesians

The Holy Spirit plays a major role in the life of every believer, in local assemblies and in the universal church which is the body of Christ. Paul gave important teaching concerning the work of the Spirit in Ephesians.

The nature of the Spirit: The Spirit is a member of the Godhead and equal with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and with God the Father. He has a distinct personality and is responsible for advancing the purposes of God in creation, salvation and glorification. Because He is God, He is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. John 16: 13, 14: outlines seven actions of Spirit that would be associated with a person: He comes, guides, speaks, hears, glorifies, receives, shows. The Spirit does His work with a servant attitude and magnifies the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. He also works to protect us and prepare us for a future place in glory.

1. The Holy Spirit of Promise: 1: 13 -14: ¹³In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

An external seal was commonly used in both OT and NT times to signify ownership. It also indicated that the contents of a sealed container were known and documented so anyone breaking the seal and removing the content was in legal peril. The seal of the Holy Spirit is internal within our beings and indicates the transaction required for our redemption is complete and no other rightful claims can be laid against us. The moral order is outlined – we heard, we trusted/ believed and we were sealed. These events happened at one time. (Better rendering “on believing ye were sealed” (see Rom. 5:5). As a result of this seal God’s mark of ownership is upon us and we move under the authority of the one whose seal we bear.

The seal is also an indication of security. The sealing preserves us against the powers that are against us. The seal is a witness to a believer that we are saved because “His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The seal keeps for God what is His and will be to His glory in a coming day.

The Holy Spirit is also the earnest of our inheritance. We have full confidence that we will receive the inheritance, and the promises of God will be fulfilled because He has given us the first installment. (see 2 Cor. 5:5). The earnest gives us a clearer vision of what we shall be in a future day. He brings joy, appreciation, worship, desire to witness to others, etc. into our lives. This earnest will be ours until the day we arrive in glory (the day of redemption of the purchased possession).

2. Spirit of wisdom and revelation 1:17: ¹⁷That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

This verse mentions the spirit of wisdom and revelation which can be none other than the Holy Spirit. The Father, the source of glory, has glorified the Lord Jesus Christ by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him far above all. We cannot know God apart from the Spirit of God who gives wisdom and revelation. Wisdom involves making wise choices, which the Spirit

enables us to do. Revelation is knowledge that we gain from outside ourselves. The Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus to us so we will join in His worship and service.

3. One Spirit who gives access: Eph. 2:18: ¹⁸ For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

All three members of the Godhead are referenced here. Our goal is to come to the Father. The Son is the way for His death has opened up a new and living way. The one spirit (the Holy Spirit) is the guide who ushers us through the open door. Those who are near (Jews) and afar off (gentiles) have access by the same Holy Spirit to the Father. The Spirit conveys us there time after time.

4. The Spirit's construction: 2: 21,22: ²¹ In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: ²² In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

There is a new dwelling place for God being constructed and growing here on earth. It is the church which is the body of Christ. Ye also – this involves gentile believers together with Jewish believers. Builded together – the body like a building requires unity in which different parts work to mutually support each other. We live in God and God dwells in us (in each believer as a member of the one body). The Spirit takes possession of it, organizes it and serves as its authority.

5. The Spirit's unfolding of the mystery: 3:4,5: ⁴ Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). ⁵ Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; A mystery is something hitherto concealed which is now disclosed. The mystery of Christ (here and in Col. 4:3) is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ saving both Jews and Gentiles through the gospel and bringing them into one united body. Christ is the hope of glory and fellow-heir with all. Paul was an apostle (born out of due season) and a prophet (with the gift used in the early church) who would make this known as it was revealed to him by the Spirit.

6. The Spirit's strengthening: 3:16: ¹⁶ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; Left to ourselves we are filled with instability, vulnerability, and fear. The Lord Jesus Christ grants to us, in keeping with the grace we have received, the Spirit who gives us strength in the inner man. This might is in the inner man, not in an external self-confident appearance, it roots us (like a tree that cannot be blown over) and grounds us (like a building with a deep foundation) that gives us strength to face every situation be it our physical needs, challenges of more responsibility, or hardness and trials that would come into our lives. Strengthened with might – Through the Spirit they can be strengthened to receive the fullness of the blessing in Christ. The inner man is the true and enduring self which delights in the law of God.

7. The Spirit's unity: 4:3: ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Pentecost was marked by unity – With the coming of the Spirit the believers were baptized into one body (the church) and the effect on the believers was to have all things common.

People were bound together for a purpose. As part of an organism, they were held together by the bond of peace. In this context, peace between the Jew and Gentile in the Lord Jesus Christ was emphasized. Col. 2:19, 3:14.

Today, It is our responsibility to keep (watch, preserve, maintain) the unity which is authored by the Holy Spirit and preserved by moving under His guidance. While this unity cannot be broken it can be disrupted. It is specifically seen in the local assembly but also has general application to all members of the body. When believers are together in the bond of peace because of love (Col. 3:14) they are maintaining this oneness. When believers sow discord among each other then they are working against God and their work is an abomination.

8. The Spirit's uniqueness: Eph. 4:4: ⁴*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

Paul emphasizes there is one body (of Christ) – composed of all believers including Jews, Greeks, and every other race and nationality; One Spirit – may give many gifts but His purpose is one – to honour the Lord Jesus Christ and One hope – sharing with the entire body of Christ in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unity is observed by keeping the unity that the Spirit has formed. One Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit which is the life of the body and dwells within each member. (1 Cor. 12:13) What Christ has bound together we are to keep together. Even as – places emphasis on the hope. We have one hope which is real and substantial (not many hopes that avail nothing). It is the hope of your calling – the hope that flows from your vocation. One spirit emphasizes the unity and oneness of the Spirit here in contrast to the spirit in Revelation which is seen in his seven-fold functions as He does the future work of God.

9. The Spirit's sensitivity: 4:30: ³⁰*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

The Holy Spirit is sensitive to opposition. The Holy Spirit can be vexed (Is 63:10), blasphemed against (Mk. 3:29), lied to (Acts 5:3), resisted (Acts 7:51), quenched (1 Thess. 5: 19, 20) as well as grieved (here). Paul stresses that we could: 1) Resist the Spirit – this is used in reference to people who are not saved. 2) Grieve the Spirit - because the Spirit is a personality He can feel slighted when we ignore Him. 3) quench the Spirit. In the assembly by organizing the gatherings so that there is no room for Spirit's movement and individual exercise.

The Holy Spirit is grieved if we speak ill or do things which are not in accordance with his leading. we grieve him and we thwart his purposes for us. We can grieve him by having our hearts filled with things of this world, with our own interests, spending our time listening to things that are not edifying, being untruthful, stealing, lying, lust. Sin in our lives (including our thought life and occupation with other things will cause Him to leave off his fellowship with us. In this case our first duty is to confess and pray and ask the Lord to enable us to be attentive to His word.)

Sealed unto the day of redemption –The day of redemption refers to the redemption of the body when our bodies will either be raptured or raised from the grave to enter into his presence.

10. The Spirit's (or light's) fruitfulness: 5:8, 9: ⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹ (For the *fruit of the Spirit* is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

The fruit of the Spirit connects this thought with Gal. 5:22. Goodness <virtue, beneficence> is listed in both verses although the fruits of righteousness and truth are different in this verse. However, JND and other older manuscripts render this the “fruit of light.” This fits the context better because we are exhorted to walk as children of light and the fruit of light would involve walking as we ought. This would refer to light produced in the believer by the Lord and the Spirit dwelling within each one so that they become characterized by goodness and righteousness <justice, rectitude> and truth <veracity, sincerity, love of the truth>. This is a contrast to the unfruitful works of darkness (v.11).

11. The Spirit's filling: 5:18: ¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

The Spirit's work in an individual is contrasted with the work of wine here and in Acts 2:13. The Spirit is not a substance with which the personality can be filled (glass must be empty of self so the Spirit can fill it) in the same way that a body can be filled with wine. There are two thoughts brought forward in connection with this: One is let your fullness be that which the Holy Spirit produces and we should let what fills us be the things that the Holy Spirit produces (2:22, 3:5; 6:18). The second is that we allow the Spirit to “fill” our beings so He has full control over every aspect of our lives. The person who is filled with wine gives up control over himself.

The Spirit will produce praise – praise glorifies God and edifies man. The praise would include Psalms – from OT psalter; Hymns – Christian canticles; Spiritual songs - unpremeditated words sung in the Spirit and making melody – plucking the strings of a lyre. (1 Cor. 14:15; James 5:13)

12. The Spirit's weapon: 6:17: ¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

The sword of the Spirit is the source of power in our lives. We need to be dependent on Him at every stage of our lives. God's provision is open to every believer. Verses and thoughts appropriate to the occasion which the Spirit puts into our hand (mind) to be wielded as a sword to put to flight the enemy. See the example of the Lord Jesus Christ – “It is written....”

13. The Spirit's burden: 6:18: ¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Prayer is wrought in the Holy Spirit. We enter the presence of God through the Lord Jesus but the Spirit ushers us there time and time again. The Spirit teaches us what to pray for. Always – in every season of life. Supplication involves entreaty.

RGL (18/3/18)