

The Unity of the Spirit

by Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray's sermon emphasizes the necessity of maintaining the unity of the Spirit through love, humility, and active fellowship among believers.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1

Topics: "Unity in the Spirit", "Christian Fellowship"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the importance of maintaining the unity of the Spirit within the Church, as outlined in Ephesians 4:1-4. He explains that believers are called to walk in humility and love, recognizing that the Holy Spirit unites them not only to Christ but also to one another as members of His body. Murray highlights the need for Christians to forbear one another in love, despite differences, and to actively cultivate fellowship that reflects the unity of the Spirit. He urges believers to pray for the Church's unity and to recognize the divine life in each other, which transcends personal differences. Ultimately, he calls for a deep reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit both within oneself and in fellow believers.

Transcript

'That ye walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit.'--Eph.4:1-4.

' Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . All these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.' -1 Cor.12: 4,11,13.

We know how, in the first three chapters of the Ephesians, Paul had set forth the glory of Christ Jesus as the Head of the Church, and the glory of God's grace in the Church as the Body of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, growing up into an habitation of God through the Spirit, and destined to be filled with all the fulness of God. Having thus lifted the believer to his true place in the heavenlies, with his life hid in Christ, he comes with him down to his life in the earthlies, and, in the second half of the Epistle, teaches how he is to walk worthy of his calling. And the very first lesson he has to give in regard to this life and walk on earth (Eph.4: 1-4) rests on the foundation-truth that the Holy Spirit has united him not only to Christ in heaven, but to Christ's body on earth. The Spirit dwells not only in Christ in heaven and in the believer on earth, but very specially in Christ's body, with all its members; and the full, healthy action of the Spirit can only be found where the right relation exists between the individual and the whole body, as far as he

knows or comes into contact with it. His first care in his holy walk must be, therefore, to give diligence that the unity of the Spirit be maintained intact. Where this unity of the one Spirit and one body is fully acknowledged, the cardinal virtue of the Christian life will be lowliness and meekness (vers. 2, 3), in which each would forget and give up self for others; amid all differences and shortcomings, all would forbear one another in love. So the new commandment would be kept, and the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Love sacrificing itself wholly for others, would have free scope to do His blessed work.

The need of such teaching the first Epistle to the Corinthians remarkably illustrates. In that Church there were abundant operations of the workings of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit were strikingly manifested, but the graces of the Spirit were remarkably absent. They understood not how there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; how, amid all difference, one and the same Spirit divides to each severally as He will; how all had been baptized in one Spirit into one body, and all made to drink of one Spirit. They knew not the more excellent way, and that the chief of all the gifts of the Spirit is the Love that seeketh not its own, and only finds its life and its happiness in others.

To each believer who would fully yield himself to the leading of the Spirit, as well as to the Church as a whole, in its longings for the experience in power of all that the indwelling of the Spirit implies, the unity of the Spirit is a truth fraught with rich spiritual blessing. In previous writings I have more than once made use of the expression of Pastor Stockmaier: 'Have a deep reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit within thee.' That injunction needs as its complement a second one: Have a deep reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit in thy brother. This is no easy thing: even Christians, in other respects advanced, often fail here. The cause is not difficult to discover. In our books on education we are taught that the faculty of Discrimination, the observing of differences, is one of the earliest to be developed in children. The power of Combination, or the observing of the harmony that exists amid apparent diversity, is a higher one, and comes later; as the power of Classification, in its highest action, it is only found in true genius. The lesson finds most striking exemplification in the Christian life and Church. It needs but little grace to know where we differ from other Christians or churches, to contend for our views, or to judge their errors in doctrine or conduct. But this indeed is grace, where, amid conduct that tries or grieves us, or teaching that appears to us unscriptural or hurtful, we always give the unity of the Spirit the first place, and have faith in the power of love to maintain the living union amid outward separation.

Keep the unity of the Spirit : such is God's command to every believer. It is the New Commandment, to love one another, in a new shape, tracing the love to the Spirit in which it has its life. If you would obey the command, note carefully that it is the unity of the Spirit. There is a unity of creed or custom, of church or choice, in which the bond is more of the flesh than of the Spirit. Would you keep the unity of the Spirit, remember the following things.

Seek to know that in thyself in which the unity is to find its power of attachment and of victory. There is much in thee that is of self and of the flesh, and that can take part in a unity that is of this earth, but that will greatly hinder the unity of the Spirit. Confess that it is in no power or love of thine own that thou canst love; all that is of thyself is selfish, and reaches not to the true unity of the Spirit. Be very humble in the thought that it is only what is of God in thee that can ever unite with what appears displeasing to thyself. Be very joyful in the thought that there is indeed that in thee which can conquer self, and love even what seems unloving.

Study also to know and prize highly that in thy brother with which thou art to be united. As in thyself, so there is in him, but a little beginning, a hidden seed of the Divine life, surrounded by much that is yet

carnal, and often is very trying and displeasing. It needs a heart very humble in the knowledge of how unworthy thou thyself art, and very loving in the readiness to excuse thy brother, for so did Jesus in the last night: 'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' 'to look persistently at what there is in the brother of the image and Spirit of the Father. Estimate him not by what he is in himself, but by what he is in Christ, and as thou feelest how the same life and Spirit, which thou owest to free grace, is in him too, the unity of the Spirit will triumph over the difference and dislike of the flesh. The Spirit in thee, acknowledging and meeting the Spirit in thy brother, will bind thee in the unity of a life that is from above.

Keep this unity of the Spirit in the active exercise of fellowship. The bond between the members of my body is most living and real, maintained by the circulation of the blood and the life it carries. 'In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body! 'There is one body and one Spirit! The inner union of life must find expression and be strengthened in the manifested communion of love. Cultivate intercourse not only with those who are of one way of thinking and worshipping with thyself, lest the unity be more in the flesh than the Spirit. Study in all thy thoughts and judgments of other believers to exercise the love that thinketh no evil. Never say an unkind word of a child of God, as little as of others. Love every believer, not for the sake of what in him is in sympathy with thee or pleasing to thee, but for the sake of the Spirit of the Father which there is in him. Give thyself expressly and of set purpose to love and labour for God's children within thy reach, who through ignorance, or feebleness, or waywardness, know not that they have the Spirit, or are grieving Him. The work of the Spirit is to build up an habitation for God; yield thyself to the Spirit in thee to do the work. Recognise thy dependence upon the fellowship of the Spirit. in thy brother, and his dependence upon thee, and seek thy growth and his in the unity of love.

Take thy part in the united intercession that rises up to God for the unity of His Church. Take up and continue the intercession of the Great High Priest for all who believe, 'that they may be one.' The Church is one in the life of Christ and the love of the Spirit. It is, alas ! not one in the manifested unity of the Spirit. Hence the need of the command: Keep the unity. Plead with God for the mighty workings of His Spirit in all lands and churches and circles of believers. When the tide is low, each little pool along the shore with its inhabitants is separated from the other by a rocky barrier. As the tide rises, the barriers are flooded over, and all meet in one great ocean. So it will be with the Church of Christ. As the Spirit of God comes, according to the promise, as floods upon the dry ground, each will know the power in himself and in others, and self disappear as the Spirit is known and honoured.

And how is this wondrous change to be brought about, and the time hastened that the prayer be fulfilled, 'that they all may be one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me' ? Let each of us begin with himself. Resolve even now, beloved child of God, that this shall be the one mark of your life, the proof of your sonship, the having and knowing the Indwelling Spirit. If you are to unite, not with what pleases you, or is in harmony with your way of thinking and acting, but with what the Spirit in you sees and seeks in others, you must have given yourself entirely up to His way of thinking and acting. And if you are to do this, He must have the mastery of your whole being. You need to abide in the living and neverceasing consciousness that He dwelleth within you. You need to pray unceasingly that the Father may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. It is in the faith of the Triune God, the Father giving the Spirit in the name of the Son, and the Spirit dwelling within you; it is in this faith brought into adoring exercise at the footstool of God's throne ; it is in direct contact and fellowship with the Father and the Son, that the Spirit will take full possession, and pervade your entire being. The fuller His indwelling and the mightier His working is, the more truly spiritual your being becomes, the more will self sink away, and the Spirit of Christ use you in building up

and binding together believers into an habitation of God, Christ's Spirit will be in you the holy anointing, the oil of consecration, to set you apart and fit you to be, as Christ was, a messenger of the Father's love. In the humility and gentleness of daily life, in the kindness and forbearance of love amid all the differences and difficulties in the Church, in the warm-hearted sympathy and self-sacrifice that goes out to find and help all who need help, the Spirit in you will prove that He belongs to all the members of the body as much as to you, and that through you His love reaches out to all around to teach and to bless.

Blessed Lord Jesus ! in Thy last night on earth Thy one prayer for Thy disciples was, 'Holy Father, keep them, that they may be one.' Thy one desire was to see them a united flock, all gathered and kept together in the One Almighty Hand of Love. Lord Jesus! now Thou art on the Throne, we come to Thee with the same plea: Oh, keep us, that we may be one ! pray for us, Thou Great High Priest, that we may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that the Father hath loved us, as He loved Thee.

Blessed Lord! we thank Thee for the tokens that Thou art wakening in Thy Church the desire for the manifestation to the world of the unity of Thy people. Grant, we pray Thee, to this end the mighty workings of Thy Holy Spirit. May every believer know the Spirit that is in him, and that is in his brother, and in all lowliness and love keep the unity of the Spirit with those with whom he comes into contact. May all the leaders and guides of Thy Church be enlightened from above, that the unity of the Spirit may be more to them than all human bonds of union in creed or church order. May all who have put on the Lord Jesus above all things put on love, the bond of perfectness.

Lord Jesus! we do beseech Thee, draw Thy people in united prayer to the footstool of Thy Throne of Glory, whence Thou givest Thy Spirit to reveal Thy presence to each as present in all. Oh, fill us with Thy Spirit, and we shall be one I one Spirit and one Body. Amen.

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