

Ephesian Practicality of the Holy Spirit

by J. Sidlow Baxter

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives, highlighting His various ministries and our responsibilities towards Him.

Duration: 46:50

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker provides a recapitulation of the book of Ephesians, dividing it into two parts: chapters one to three being doctrinal and chapters four to six being practical. The first thing believers are instructed to do is to keep the unity of the spirit, regardless of social or theological differences. The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in believers' lives, sealing them, illuminating them, unifying them, occupying and sanctifying them, intelligizing them in God's purposes, and strengthening them with supernatural strength. The speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining unity and recognizing the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Transcript

My dear friends, your friend and mine, Dr. Alan Redpath, in his opening prayer spoke about mind and heart and will being ready to receive what our dear Master has for us. It is good that we should be continually reminded about the importance of our response. It is an axiomatic law of the spiritual life that we get by being got.

We possess by being possessed. When my dear Lord has all of me that there is, then I have all of him that I can contain. But it is one of the fundamental laws of the spiritual life that there is this human divine reciprocity.

We receive by giving. We possess by being possessed. And it is particularly appropriate that we should have that consideration in mind as we come again to Ephesians.

Most of you, if not all of you, will need no reminding that this morning we continue and I hope complete a study which we commenced yesterday morning in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, to which will you kindly turn again now. I will not waste time by retreading the already traversed pathway which we covered yesterday morning. That would not be fair to those of you who were then present.

But I will recapitulate preparatorily to what I now have to add. Repetition is a waste of time, but recapitulation can be a strategic economy. Well now, by way of preliminary recapitulation, this Ephesian document, in our English presentation of it, consists of six chapters.

Quite obviously they divide into two trios consisting, that is, of part one, chapters one, two, and three, and part two, chapters four, five, and six. Part one is noticeably, indeed almost entirely, and quite dogmatically, doctrinal. Part two is equally conspicuously practical.

By doctrinal we mean truth stated. By practical we mean truth applied. Now the subject of the doctrinal first half is the believer's wealth in Christ.

The subject of the more practical second half is the believer's walk in Christ. Just one further observation. We noted that this epistle to the Ephesians, and perhaps the first epistle of John, more than any other of the New Testament writings, are characterized by what we call chain themes, C-H-A-I-N, chain themes.

Link by link great truths are developed until by the time you come to the final link there is a wonderfully complete presentation of some aspect of evangelical truth. And one of the wonderful chain themes, by the way friends, can I set your minds going a little? Why don't you go through some of the chain themes in Ephesians? Have you ever gone through Ephesians on the riches of divine grace? Have you ever gone through Ephesians as to what it teaches about the believer's inheritance in Christ? Have you ever gone through Ephesians in its teaching concerning the ecclesia, the mystic body and bride and temple of God's dear son? Oh, you never get to the end of these wonderful themes in Ephesians. Now we're going through, of course, on the teaching of this letter concerning the Holy Spirit.

And we noticed that the Holy Spirit is mentioned in it twelve times. Six times in part one, and six times in part two. Yesterday, shall I say, alas, or what? We only got through the first, the first, well, how many? All right.

I wondered if you knew. I'm not sure that you do. I feel I'd better quote Paul here.

Brethren, I stand in doubt of you. Anyway, we did, we got through the first four. And these are they for the benefit of those who were not here yesterday.

Reference number one in chapter 1 verse 13, the Holy Spirit seals believers. Reference number two, chapter 1 verses 17 and 18, the Holy Spirit illumines believers. Reference number three, chapter 2 verse 18, the Holy Spirit unifies believers.

And reference number four in chapter 2 verse 22, the Holy Spirit occupies and sanctifies believers. And now we come to reference number five. It comes in chapter 3 verses 5 and 6, and several verses on from there.

Verse 5, chapter 3. Paul speaks about the mystery or sacred secret, 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, by the Spirit. Well, now here we find the Holy Spirit intelligizing Christian believers concerning the deepest counsels of the divine purpose. The mystery, the hitherto hidden secret, which was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed by the Spirit.

Now, dear fellow believers, there are certain brethren in these days, they are called amillennialists, and among them there are some of the finest evangelical exegetes. But I shall not hesitate to say, quite

frankly, that I for one decidedly differ from them in some of their exegetical peculiarities. I won't go into the matter of there being no prophesied future for the Jewish people, or there being no prophesied millennial empire of our Lord as David's greater son.

I'll only mention this, that with passages like this, our beloved amillennialists do have a problem. And I find that one of them translates it like this, the mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men to the same extent as it is now revealed. But Paul never said anything about to the same extent.

The Apostle Paul clearly says that the mystery was a completely hidden secret until the Holy Spirit brought it out in the times of the New Testament apostles. I'm not being unduly dogmatic, I'm only being definite when I say that if language here means anything, it means that the church of the New Testament was never revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament. Why? Glance down the context if you have your New Testament open.

Look at verse 9, "...and to make all men see what is the common sharing of the sacred secret which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God." Well don't you agree with me that that's didactic and definite and unmistakably clear. The church of the New Testament was never revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament. The Ecclesia, the called-out, blood-bought, born-again people of Christ who constitute the true Ecclesia, they and the church of our Lord Jesus Christ were a secret hidden in the purposes of God until revealed in New Testament times.

And why was the kept so guardedly a divine secret? Shall I surprise anybody when I say it was so that Lucifer, who became Satan, Diabolus, Apollyon, Beelzebub, the devil, should not know about it in advance. That's why. Let me ask you, if Satan had known in advance that the crucified Jesus would rise from the dead, and that upon the very ashes of Jewish unbelief and failure God would begin to raise this new and mystic building, the church, if Satan had known that in advance, and if he had known that there would be a period of approximately 2,000 years during which a worldwide gospel of saving grace would be preached all around the planet, and if Satan had known that at the end of that 2,000 years there would be a multitude that no man can number, from all nations and kindreds and tongues singing round the throne in heaven, this is our God.

We have recognized him in Jesus. We have learned to like him, and to want him, and to know him, and to serve him, and of our own free choice we have made this God our God, and we will love him and serve him and be his people forever. By the way, friends, that's part of God's inheritance in the saints.

He doesn't have that kind of inheritance in the angels, but he does in ransomed human sinners. If Satan had known all that in advance, and if he had known that our Lord would then come back with all his redeemed people and reign for a thousand years in a global Christocracy, do you think that Satan would ever have hounded our Lord to the cross as he did through his human dukes? On the contrary, he would have exercised all his satanic wiles and powers to keep Jesus from ever getting to that cross. When Jesus rose from the dead, Satan got the biggest blow of his nefarious career.

You say, you want scripture for all this? Oh, well, it's here in this context. Have a look at the context. Verse 5 again, the mystery 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, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel, of which I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Yes, unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given that I should proclaim among the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ, now listen, and to make all men what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, with this purpose in view, to the intent that now, since our Lord's resurrection, that now, unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly spheres, that Satan and all the multifarious myrmidons of his insurrection movement against Jehovah, that now, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly spheres, there might be made known by the Ecclesia, the church, the many-sided wisdom of God, and the secret is out, and Satan's doom is certain. Are you following? Say yes, or out you go. Well, there it is, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

So there in the fifth place, the Holy Spirit intelligizes believers in the deepest mysteries of the divine counsels. And now reference number six. In chapter three again, verse 16, Paul prays that God would grant you according to, note the gauge here, the standard of measurement, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with strength, a grammatical tautology to indicate the inexhaustible here, to be strengthened with strength by his Spirit in your inner man.

Now here we find the Holy Spirit supernaturally strengthening Christian believers with a supernatural strengthening in their inner being. The Holy Spirit is the inexhaustible replenishment by which we become more than conquerors through him that loved us. This verse is teaching us not some isolated crisis, but a delightful prolongation of receiving, receiving, receiving this inwrought strength by the Holy Spirit.

And this supernaturally imparted strength, which we are meant to experience day by day and hour by hour and moment by moment, is meant to be our all-sufficiency for all the emergencies and extremities and exigencies and necessities of our pilgrim walk and our present spiritual warfare. Now my dear brother, dear sister, let me look at you and ask you, how much do you really know about this continually imparted strength of the Holy Spirit? As I move in and out among the churches of USA and sometimes up here in Canada, I don't seem to find too much vivid experience of the Holy Spirit. I'm sure that in these days one of our deepest needs is to know more and experience more of the Holy Spirit as the believer's continual strengthener.

Don't you think so? Well I won't dilate on that because the clock goes tick, tick, tick, and we have six other references to get through, you know, and I have to have you out before two o'clock this afternoon. Now I want to ask you a question. Are you listening? Are you ready? We said that the Holy Spirit is mentioned six times in part one and six times in part two, twice in each chapter.

We have gone through the first six, that is, through the doctrinal half of Ephesians. Have you noticed anything that all these six references have in common? I haven't time to wait for your reply, so let me quickly point it out. In this first half of Ephesians, all these six references to the Holy Spirit are exclusively concerned with what he is and what he does to us Christian believers.

There's not a thing about what we are to be or what we are to do in relation to him. It's all what he is and what he does in relation to you and me. 1, chapter 1, verse 13, he seals believers, the mark of ownership and security.

2, in chapter 1, verse 17, he illumines believers with that wonderful threefold ministry of illumination which we considered yesterday morning. 3, in chapter 2, verse 18, he fuses all true believers into one wonderful spiritual unity. He unifies believers, making us a family.

And 4, in chapter 2, verse 22, he occupies and sanctifies believers, making them nothing less than the habitation of God through the Spirit. And 5, as we have just been reflecting in chapter 3, verse 5, he intelligizes Christian believers in the deepest purposes of God. And 6, in chapter 3, verse 16, he strengthens believers with a never failing supernatural strength to make them a match for all the demands of this present life.

What a wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit that is, isn't it? Isn't it? Say yes. Right. Can you think, can you think of any spiritual need that you or I can have between now and when we meet the King? Can you think of any spiritual need that is not anticipated and adequately matched by this sixfold provision? I can't.

What spiritual millionaires we ought to be. What a wonderful provision. Well now, let's go through the remaining six, and when we get to the end, I'm going to ask you another question.

So get ready. And I'd better tell you, I'll only just linger a minute on each one, because we might need the time at the end. Are you ready? Now for the six in part two.

1, in chapter 4, verses 3 and 4, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is the one body and the one Spirit, even as ye have been called in one hope of your calling. So the first thing believers are to do is to keep the unity of the Spirit. We can't always succeed in achieving social unity.

We can't always somehow manage to attain theological unity. We can't always somehow manage to attain theological unity. And certainly I seem to find that we have not yet arrived at eschatological unity.

But whatever else we can't do, we are to keep the unity of the Spirit. And the way that we keep the unity of the Spirit is by having our hearts and mind filled with the life and the love and the grace of Jesus. Keep the unity of the Spirit.

Now chapter 4, verse 30, And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Christian believers are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Have you noticed in the New Testament there are three principal names for the Holy Spirit? One, he is the Spirit of light.

Two, he is the Spirit of life. And three, he is the Spirit of love. And going with those three names, there are three outstanding New Testament prohibitions concerning the Holy Spirit.

One, quench not the Spirit. Two, resist not the Spirit. And three, as in our text here, grieve not the Spirit.

Do you see the parallel there? One, he's the Spirit of light. Quench him not. Two, he is the Spirit of life.

Resist him not. Three, he is the Spirit of love. Grieve him not.

Now when you have a moment or two of leisure, if they allow you any such elusive commodity at the PBI, if you have a little leisure, and if you travel up and down the context preceding and following this 30th verse, you'll find a list of do's and don'ts concerning the Holy Spirit. The context is meant to tell us how not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Well that is the second thing, believers are not to grieve the Spirit.

And now chapter 5 verse 9, here is the third reference in part 2, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Now if some of you may be using the English Revised or the American Standard or the American Revised version or some other more recent translation, you may find it says, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness. I can't go into a matter of grammar and exegesis, but I have looked up all the manuscript evidence, and so far as I can find, the King James Version wins.

I'm quite sure that according to manuscript authority, the reading here is correct. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Goodness is what we are meant to be in our own character.

Righteousness is what we are meant to be in all our relationships and dealings with others. Truth or reality, as the Greek word indicates, is what we are to be before God. And the life under the monopoly of the Holy Spirit has that threefold fruit bearing.

It fulfills all obligation to self, to others, and to God. The fruit of the Spirit, goodness, righteousness, and truth. And now next in chapter 5 verse 18.

The second half of the verse. I always think that the first half should be the end of the preceding paragraph, and this divisive but should start a new paragraph. But, over against all that has gone before, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And although it may sound very clumsy, the nearest translation to the Greek that we can get here is, be being filled. Speaking again, not of some isolated crisis, but of a continuity of replenishment. Be being filled all the time, all the time, all the time.

Continual in filling by the Holy Spirit. You know, dear brothers and sisters, you only have to pause and encounter many of these statements in the Word to realize how spiritually impoverished many of us are. That is meant to be our normal experience.

Be being filled with the Holy Spirit. And now our next reference, chapter 6. Yes, chapter 6 verse 17. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Christian believers are to wield the sword of the Spirit. We are meant to become Spirit-taught experts in the Word, and in the soul-saving use of it. Christian believers are to wield the sword of the Spirit.

And now finally in chapter 6 verse 18. Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, or as one translator presents it, sticking at it with steady tenacity. What a call attention to that.

Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit. But even though it is Spirit-guided and Spirit-filled praying, there is a place for the human will. There needs to be resolution and determination.

We must never let our prayer life be dragged at the chariot wheels of our changeful emotions. There are many dear Christian believers who never know the deeper meaning and richness and power of prayer, because their prayer life is at the mercy of their mood. We are to pray always, and never mind our emotions, we are to stick at it with steady tenacity, and keep praying in the Spirit, believing that all prayer in the name of Jesus, and under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit, has a prevailing power at the throne of the universe.

I'd like you younger men and women to learn that while you're young, I wish I'd learned it when I was younger, that even with the most spiritual-minded Christians, the prayer life is a matter of the will. The Christian life is not lived in the emotions, it is lived in the intellect and the will, and our emotions are meant to be the obedient servants of the crown, the intellect, through the Prime Minister, the will. And our prayer life was never meant to be at the mercy of our emotion.

Sticking at it with steady tenacity. Do you know some of you look deeply guilty, beloved scoundrels? Well, we've got through. Did you notice anything about the six references to the Holy Spirit in part two? I rather think you did.

In this second part of Ephesians, there's nothing now about what the Holy Spirit is, and what he does in relation to the believer. It's all now what the Christian believer is to be and to do toward the Holy Spirit. Think of the references again.

Chapter 4, verse 3. Christian believers are to keep the unity of the Spirit. Chapter 4, verse 30. Believers are not to grieve the Spirit.

Chapter 5, verse 9. Believers are to yield the fruit of the Spirit. Chapter 5, verse 16. Believers are to be continually filled with the Spirit.

Chapter 6, verse 17. Believers are to wield the sword of the Spirit. And chapter 6, verse 18.

Christian believers are to pray in the Spirit, and to stick at it with steady tenacity. Well, that in brief, is the Ephesian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Six times in part one, the doctrinal half, all about the Holy Spirit in relation to the believer.

Six times in part two, all about the believer in relation to the Holy Spirit. Listen, dear brothers and sisters, if all the evangelical churches of America and Canada were living in the experience of that wonderful sixfold provision in part one, and if all our evangelical churches were measuring up to the requirements of those six passages in part two, instead of bemoaning our numerical paucity and our spiritual poverty, our evangelical churches would pick up their dragging banners and go forth again like an army, conquering and to conquer, in the name of the risen Christ. You only have to read some of these epistles to see how far we've wandered from the New Testament original, and bringing it down from the collective to the individual.

My dear brother, my dear sister, what about you? I'm not only a preacher of sorts, often I'm a listener, and I know the peril of keep listening, listening, listening, to one preacher after another, and one sermon or exposition after another. It's fearfully possible to listen and listen and listen, and very often to enjoy the exposition, and yet go away again and live far below the privileges that are ours. Now don't you find the same peril, or am I peculiar? And one of the purposes, dear younger men and women, one of the purposes of a conference like this, is to remind ourselves again all the treasures that are ours.

Do we read about the Ephesians anywhere else? Oh yes we do. What's the first reference to Ephesus and the Ephesians? Oh, it's in, it's in the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul makes his first visit to the great city of the goddess Diana, Ephesus, and he is welcomed there by twelve professing Christian believers, upon whose necks the benignant Apostle is just about to fall with a kiss of benediction, when he becomes disconcertingly aware of a barrier, an invisible but unmistakable barrier between him and them.

At once he's conscious that there's something wrong with those twelve men. Either they've got spiritual measles, or nervous debility of the prayer life, or some other spiritual malady. He's not quite sure, but he gets to it with one penetrating question.

He says this, my brothers, when you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit? He found that those twelve men were wrong about the Holy Spirit. Now I'm not within a million miles of suggesting that when Paul

wrote this Ephesian letter, he mentioned the Holy Spirit just twelve times, because on that occasion there were just twelve men. That's just a happy coincidence.

But I am deeply persuaded of this, that when Paul began to write Ephesians, he said to himself, ah yes, that's the church where they were wrong about the Holy Spirit. If they read this epistle, they'll never go wrong there again. Do we read about Ephesians anywhere else in the New Testament? Yes, we do.

What's the last reference to Ephesus in the New Testament? Oh, it's in the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse, chapters 2 and 3, in the letters to the seven churches. And the first of the seven is Ephesus. And what's the message? It's this, nevertheless I have this against thee, thou hast left thy first love.

Remember the heights from which thou art fallen. The heights? Which height? Well, you know, that American expositor of a couple of generations ago, Dr. Arthur T. Pearson, he always called the epistle to the Ephesians the Switzerland of the New Testament, because in this Ephesian letter you're among the Alpine peaks and towering heights of Christian doctrine and experience. They were the heights where the Ephesians had originally lived and communed with heaven.

But something had come in between them and the risen masters. They'd left their love. And they'd come down from those sun-bathed heights into the shadowy valleys.

Remember the heights from whence thou art fallen. Is there some elderly man or woman here this morning, and once your Christian life was aflame of spiritual enthusiasm, and your prayer life was a glow of communion, and your testimony for Christ was a fiery witness to his saving grace. But somehow, although you're not outwardly a backslider, you've got away from that first lovely early love, and you've got away from those hours of lingering prayer, and somehow you're not where you were, and you're not as you used to be.

This morning the Holy Spirit is here calling you back. Remember the heights. Thank God we can always go back there, if we will.

Well, believe it or not, sir, I finished, and I see it, Mr. Chairman, we finished on time this morning. So I'm going to make a suggestion. I think we should have, and I think you will agree, let's have two or three minutes in silent prayer.

Wait a minute. We'll close our eyes, and for the first half minute or minute, don't pray. Don't pray.

Just rest. Close your eyes, and relax. Wait a minute.

You're too anxious to go to sleep. Just relax, and don't try to go over this exposition. Just relax, and let your mind be at rest.

And then, in mind and thought, be at the feet of Jesus. Remember our Savior, he is omnipresent. That means he is simultaneously everywhere, and it means that you and I can have him all to ourselves, just as truly, if there were nobody else in, in this auditorium.

And after a minute's rest, get mentally isolated with Jesus, and look up into his face, and tell him again that you love him. Don't try to love him. Love him.

And if you really look at him, you will. And if you see those pierced hands and feet, and think again, you'll love him. And then pray, and say, Dear Savior, thou knowest all things, all the things in my life that seem

to contradict my love for thee.

You know that deep down underneath, Dear Savior, I do love you. I love you. And help me to love you so much, that quietly, unemotionally, deliberately, I may give everything to thee, and believe that what I give, you take.

And when you do that, let me tell you what not to do. Don't run round to the back of your own mind, and start looking in from the rear, and saying, Am I sincere? Have I done it? Did I mean it? Has he taken what I've given? You must not only have faith in him, in this matter, many of you need to have faith in your own sincerity. If Satan can keep getting you to run round to the back, and start asking, Did I do it? Did I mean it? He will gradually bring you into such a condition of chaos, you'll never do it.

Give him everything, and do it unemotionally. I find that the less emotionally I transact with God, the clearer it is, and the deeper it goes, and the longer it lasts. Never mind your emotions.

The Holy Spirit doesn't come to do his work in the shallowest part of us. Give him everything, because you love him, and believe that what you give, he takes. And count it settled.

Well you say, What if I go on sin later on today, in thought, well I'll tell you what. When you give everything to Christ this morning, which part of you is it that's expressing itself? It's the deepest in you. Later on, if and when you go and fall into that possible sin, even if you do it willfully at the time, which part of you then is it that's expressing itself? The deepest in you? No, the weakest.

Very well, does that which is weakest cancel out that which is deepest? Not at all. There's a provision made. If you go and fall into sin, you haven't to keep reenacting this giving yourself to Christ.

The precious blood of Christ cleanses from sin. When we are walking in the light, you must practice yourself in saying, Savior, I've sinned, but that doesn't alter the fact my deepest, dearest love is for you. Please let thy precious blood cleanse this stain away.

Are you following? You don't have to keep reenacting the transaction, but you can keep renewing the covenant, as I myself do a million times. But this morning is the morning for some of you and for some of you older people. And I'm simply saying that as unemotionally, but as determinately and sincerely as we are capable of, let's give him everything and believe that he takes it and count it settled.

Now we'll have that minute's quiet rest and then you all get to praying to him. Let's bow.

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