5-6-18

Ephesians 1:13-14

In these verses, Paul specifically brings in the third member of the Trinity; the Holy Spirit. He has been alluded to previously, as in verse 3 where Paul mentions that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. But now Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit directly which shows that He is involved, with the Father and the Son, in everything that Paul has been talking about.

As Christians, we believe in one God. We also believe that the one God has three distinct persons. Although they are distinct, they are still one. In addition, each of these three persons is fully God. This is a great mystery for us, one that the Bible tells us is fact, but does not explain how it can be. This is where faith comes in and it is not just some fantasy or fairy-tail that we foolishly decide to believe. We have a lot of evidence from the Bible that it is reliable and true, therefore we can believe what we don’t understand. We are also given the faith to believe these things by the Holy Spirit Himself. There is a mixture of natural thought and supernatural guidance in our faith.

Last week, we spoke of how the Holy Spirit is given to Christians as both a seal and a pledge or earnest. We are sealed to show that we belong to God and the pledge of the Holy Spirit promises all the inheritance we will receive from God, along with a little foretaste in our lives now. These are wonderful gifts, but they are not all. Remember that God lavishes His grace upon us. I thought it might be good to look at the Holy Spirit and see some of the things He does.

It is very important to keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is a “He” not an “it”. The Holy Spirit is a person; one of the three persons of the God-head; and He is just as fully God as the Father and the Son. Just as the Father and the Son have their own ways in which they interact with human beings, the Holy Spirit also has His ways; He has His part to play in the redemption and sanctification of people. He has His way of carrying out the plans of the Father.

Although He is not often referred to as the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, He is most definitely there and active. He actually makes His first appearance in Genesis 1:2:

The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

When reading the Bible, it is good to keep in mind that the same word that means “spirit” can also mean “wind” or “breath”. Sometimes, depending on the context, this can give a different nuance to the word.

Genesis 2:7

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

In this verse, think of the word “breath”. Certainly, there is a reference to normal breathing which we have to do to live. But there is also the hint of the spirit. God placed a spirit within us that we might live, and that spirit is eternal. This is the spirit that dies, or suffers separation from God, when we sin. This is the spirit that is regenerated, or born again, when a person accepts Jesus as Saviour. As Jesus said, “born of the Spirit”; that is, born of the Holy Spirit. From this, we can see that the Holy Spirit gives life.

This becomes very important when we consider the birth of Christ. One morning when I was up at the elementary school talking with the kids, one of them asked me a question. He was having a hard time wording the question, but I was able to figure out where he was going and save him the embarrassment. He was trying to ask if God had had relations with Mary in order to produce Jesus. I think most of us would avoid asking this question out of reverence, but it is actually a fair question and one we need to know the answer to. The answer is no. As we were just discussing, the Holy Spirit is able to create life. He created life from Mary and within her womb; and this was Jesus.

There is a teaching going around that Jesus only had one set of chromosomes, a set from Mary. This is completely false. Jesus was entirely human, this is Scriptural. He had one set of chromosomes from His mother Mary, and one set created by the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to make Jesus less than human or less than God is heresy.

The Holy Spirit empowers people. In the Old Testament we have already mentioned how He gave the word of God to the prophets. When we read the book of Judges, we see several people whom the Holy Spirit empowers to lead the Israelite army to defeat their enemies. In particular was Samson; it was the Holy Spirit that provided him with his great strength. Later there were special anointings of the Spirit on the kings of Israel. First on Saul, who had the Holy Spirit withdrawn from him because of disobedience. Then on Kings David and Solomon.

This enabling by the Holy Spirit is even more obvious in the New Testament. He gives prophecy to John the Baptist’s parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth; even to John the Baptist while he was still in his mother’s womb. He enabled Mary to burst forth in a song of praise. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus when He was baptized; and He was filled with the Holy Spirit. This is something important for us.

Philippians 4:6-7

although (Jesus) existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

Although Jesus remained God, He never used His God-hood during His ministry on earth. In this way, He emptied Himself. But in His humanity, He depended entirely on the Holy Spirit. All the works He did, all the teachings He gave, all His understanding of Scripture, came from the Holy Spirit. So, He remained God, but as a human-being, He used only the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus defeated satan, not as God, but as a man entirely dependent on God.

We all remember the dramatic appearance of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He came upon the disciples with great power. Notice that the only miracle that took place was the disciples speaking in other languages. Impressive, but not raising the dead. The power that day was obvious in Peter’s words as he proclaimed the Gospel. The Holy Spirit was bringing the words home.

Acts 2:37

Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

Peter spoke simple words; but the Spirit put the force behind them to break the hard-hearted Israelites and open their eyes to their need to do something. And 3000 souls were brought to Christ.

The Holy Spirit still does this today. He is the One who prepares people’s hearts to receive the Gospel, and He is the One who gives them belief and the necessary faith. He is also the One who works in the hearts of believers to bring them to share the Gospel.

We, as Christians, are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to deal with the enemies of the Gospel and the enemies of God. Jesus was able to remove demons with a command and this was passed along to the disciples by using Jesus’ name. In Matthew 10, Jesus promises that His followers will be brought before human courts because of Him, but we are not to be concerned with this.

Matthew 10:19-20

But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but *it is* the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

How amazing that is; if the time comes that we are brought into court on account of Jesus, what needs to be said will come to us at just that time. Notice that this doesn’t mean that what we say will get us out of trouble, because the preceding verses tells us we are brought before these courts to be a testimony for Jesus’ sake. What we say might get us jailed or killed, but it will be our service to God, and we owe Him everything.

Romans 8:26-27

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of* God.

For us to be able to pray is a magnificent gift. We can speak directly to the creator of the universe, to all-powerful God. As is mentioned in this verse, we are weak, and that is because of sin. We have this gift but we can’t even use it right. Once again, God provides for us. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray and even intercedes for us. We know that we can ask anything that is according to God’s will and He will give it to us. Because the Holy Spirit knows the will of God perfectly, He can pray perfectly on our behalf. He helps us with our prayers.

It is good for us to ask Him to help us when we pray and to thank Him for that help. For one thing, this is putting our dependence on God. This is pleasing to God because He wants us to be dependent on Him. We are certainly always better off this way than depending on ourselves. Once again, we realize that we have no reason to boast. Every good thing is God’s doing; it comes from Him. We can’t save ourselves; we have to be given the faith to believe in Christ, we have to be helped and guided in prayer. This is against the carnal nature of man and our instinct is to rebel against it; but our salvation depends on submission to Christ. And to be of use as a servant of God depends on submission to Christ.

Later on, in Ephesians chapter 6, we will encounter the tools of spiritual warfare. There are a number of defensive items but there is one offensive weapon:

Ephesians 6:17

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

It is very much in our best interest to read and study the word of God; the Bible. The more we read, the more the word becomes a part of our hearts and minds. This is when Scripture becomes the sword of the Spirit for us: When we need the word to fight evil, the Holy Spirit calls it to mind. We need to keep our sword ready and prepared.

Next week we will continue our look at the Holy Spirit and His role as God. But in the meantime, consider these Scriptures and how much God loves us. He has infinite power and He chooses to help us. Living in Christ and Christ living in us; this is our strength and this is our hope. No matter what happens, cling to Jesus: He is the way and the truth and the life.

Prayer

LORD God, once again we come before You in awe and reverence. How can we begin to comprehend who You are, what You are capable of? All accounts of You reveal power and great glory. Those who have been near You report brilliant lights of many colors, fire and smoke, great rumblings of thunder and lightning. Those nearest Your throne cry “Holy” and “Amen” and worship You.

We cannot stand before You, our sinful nature makes us unfit for Your presence. In spite of You being God, we rebel against You. We deserve nothing good from You and ought to be banned from You forever.

But in Your great mercy, in Your unspeakable love, You have made a way for us by the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. You even give to us Your Holy Spirit, to lead us to life and faith; to guide us and care for us; to provide what we need to be pleasing to You and enjoy Your fellowship.

It is in Jesus’ name we pray

Amen