

WORSHIP

The Christian's Highest Occupation

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

VI. THE POWER FOR WORSHIP (John 4:23-24)

We have noted the meaning, importance, authority, object and ground of worship. We now come to a consideration of the power for it. How is the believer to be made spiritually capable of true worship? The answer is simple: The power for worship is the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Godhead.

It may be helpful to take a brief survey of His Person and work, so as to better appreciate how essential He is, not only to the believer's worship, but also in every department of his life. We shall think first of:

1. His Person

There is a great deal of misconception regarding the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes He is referred to as though He was merely an "influence," or an "atmosphere," and is often mentioned as "it." Others seem to create the impression that the Spirit is but an emanation from God, and not a distinct and Divine Personality, equal and eternal with the Father and the Son.

The personality of the Holy Spirit is everywhere evident in the word of God. Christ's own words should be sufficient to establish this fact.

Mark the personal pronouns used by Christ in referring to Him: **"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: . . . When he the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you unto all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he shall receive of mine, and shall sow it unto you"** (John 16:7-8; 13-14).

In this short passage alone, Christ used eleven personal pronouns to describe the Holy Spirit and the work He should do.

Personality necessitates the possession of three qualities:

- Knowledge, or intelligence;
- Feelings, or emotions;
- Will, or volition.

Scripture bears record that the Holy Spirit possesses each of these qualities, as also does the Father and the Son.

He has intellect, for we are told He

- “Knows” (Romans 8:27),
- “Teaches” (John 14:26),
- “Testifies” (John 14:26),
- “Guides” (John 16:13),
- “Hears” (John 16:13),
- “Speaks” (John 16:13).

He has emotions, for it is said He can be

- “Grieved” (Ephesians 4:30),
- “Quenched” (I Thessalonians 5:19),
- “Resisted” (Acts 7:51), and
- “Despised” (Hebrews 10:29).

He has a will, for He

- “Strives” (Genesis 6:3),
- “Lusts” (or desires) against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17),
- “Reproves” (John 16:8),
- “Makes intercession” (Romans 8:26),
- “Shows” (John 16:13).

He has many titles in the Word of God. Each title is full of spiritual significance and indicates the various aspects of His character and work.

- He is the “**Holy Spirit**,” which emphasizes His absolute holiness.
- He is “**the Spirit of truth**,” because of His perfect trustworthiness.
- He is the “**Comforter**,” or “*Paraclete*,” which means: “*one called alongside to help*.”
- He is “**the Spirit of grace**,” pointed to the unmerited favor He shows.
- He is “**the Spirit of Christ**,” indicating His mission to glorify the Son of God.
- He is “**the Spirit of glory**,” in that His excellencies are displayed in the Word.
- He is “**the Spirit of promise**,” which points to His sealing of the believer as the guarantee of His eternal blessedness.

These, and many other titles, all combine to show forth the Deity of His Person, the dignity of His character and the glory of His displayed attributes.

This brief glance into the Scriptures should be sufficient to clearly indicate that the Holy Spirit is a Person, possessing full, equal and eternal Deity with both Father and Son. How we should praise God for this holy, heavenly Guest, apart from whose presence and power we could never have been saved, or brought into God's presence, or enabled to worship! Now let us consider:

2. His Work

In relation to Creation: “**And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters**” (Genesis 1:2).

Here is the first mention of the Spirit. He is seen as moving, brooding, over the face of a chaotic earth, until darkness gave place to light, and chaos was succeeded by order and beauty. Here is a striking picture of His work today in the awakening, conviction and regeneration of a ruined, guilty and helpless sinner!

In relation to the Scriptures. We owe the written revelation of God's word to Him, for we are told: “**Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy man of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**” (II Peter 1:21). David testified: “**The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue**” (II Samuel 23:2). Paul declared: “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**” (II Timothy 3:16).

The Spirit of God so came upon and possessed these Old Testament prophets that what they wrote, under His Divine control, were the very words of God. The Spirit's inspiration of the New Testament record is indicated by Christ Himself.

- The four Gospels are accounted for by the words: “**He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you**” (John 14:26).
- The Epistles are provided for by the words: “**He shall teach you all things**” (John 14:26).
- The book of Revelation is taken care of by the words: “**He shall show you things to come**” (John 16:13).

Thus the entire range of holy Scripture has come to us through the Spirit of God.

(3) *In relation to Christ.* The Holy Spirit is prominent in the life of our Lord.

(a) In Christ's incarnation. Gabriel was instructed to tell Mary: “**The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God**” (Luke 1:25).

(b) In His life on earth. He descended as a dove upon Christ at His baptism (Matthew 3:16). He led the Saviour into His temptation, and empowered Him during His testing, from which He emerged more than conqueror (Matthew 4:1-14). The same was true of our Lord's ministry, for we are told it was in the power of the Spirit that Christ spake (Luke 4:18-22; John 3:34).

(c) In His death. Scripture informs us it was “**through the eternal Spirit**” that Christ offered Himself to God (Hebrews 9:14).

(d) In His resurrection. Furthermore, it is revealed that Christ was “**declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead**” (Romans 1:4).

(e) In His post-resurrection ministry. Christ, during the forty days after His resurrection, accompanied with His disciples. Nor did He ascent back to Heaven until “**He, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen**” (Acts 1:2).

In His relation to the world of men: “**And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged**” (John 16:8-11).

- He was sent to convict it of sin, because of its unbelief of Christ as evidenced by its rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God.
- He convicts of righteousness, because God has indicated, by the resurrection of Christ, that all - His righteousness claims have been met by His substitutionary sacrifice for sin.
- He convicts of judgment, because Satan, the prince of this world, has been defeated and judged.

The Devil now awaits the execution of his sentence, banishment to the lake of fire.

Thus the Spirit’s work in relation to the unsaved is to produce within them, through the preaching of the Word:

- (a) A sense of their need, as unbelieving sinners.
- (b) A realization that God’s righteousness has been revealed in the redemptive work of Christ, in proof of which He has been raised to sit at God’s right hand.
- (c) That inasmuch as Satan has been judged, all who die rejecting Christ, must share his eternal doom.

In other words,

- He convicts the sinner of his need,
- He unfolds God’s remedy in Christ,
- He warns of the certainty of judgment.

In this day of shallow preaching and professional evangelism, with its “guaranteed results,” there is a great need to so preach the Word that, through it, the Spirit may do His work of conviction and conversion.

(5) *In relation to the believer.*

He awakens the soul and leads to faith in Christ. “**Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? . . . When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth**” (Acts 2:37; 7:54).

- He opens the ears of the sinner to hear with the hearing of faith.
- He then opens the spiritual eyes of the sinner's mind to see his guilty and undone state, and the remedy Christ has provided.
- He next opens the heart of the believer to trust Christ's finished work, and to receive Him as his own Saviour.
- Lastly, He opens the mouth of the child of God to confess Christ as the Lord of his life.

This is the Divine "quickenings," which only the Spirit of God can produce: **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"** (Ephesians 2:1-2).

(b) When the truth of the Gospel is believed and Christ is received, He indwells the believer, and thereby seals him unto the day of redemption: **"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ . . . And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption"** (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) and **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"** (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

(c) He enlightens the Christian. This He does by creating a capacity for spiritual things, and imparting spiritual discernment, thus enabling him to understand what previously he could not comprehend: **"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ"** (I Corinthians 2:10-16) and **"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"** (I Peter 1:4).

(d) He guides the believer into all truth: **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John 16:13; 14:26). As the believer reads, meditates and studies the pages of Scripture, and then seeks to walk in obedience to what he sees written therein; the Holy Spirit will lead him further into the truth of God, so that he will **"grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."**

(e) He empowers the Christian for service. Christ's promise to His disciples before Pentecost was: **"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me"** (Acts 1:8).

As the Spirit is allowed to dwell ungrieved within the believer, He will impart power to testify, either privately or publicly, and use him both to bring others souls to Christ, or to lead his fellow believers into a better knowledge of the Word of God.

(f) He produces fruit in the Christian's life. As the Spirit is allowed to have His way in the believer, others will see **"the fruit of the Spirit"** manifested in his life. This fruit has a nine-fold quality (Galatians 5:22-23):

- Godward, there will be "love, joy and peace."

- Manward, there will be seen "longsuffering, gentleness and goodness."

- Selfward, there will be "faith, meekness and temperance" (or self control)

(g) He glorifies Christ: **"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you"** (John 16:14).

That is to say, He displays to the believer the many excellencies of the Son of God. He takes of the "things of Christ," and so impresses the mind and heart of the Christian with all the virtues and value of the Saviour, that he is carried away and exclaims: **"He is the chiefest amongst ten thousand!"** Thus it is the Holy Spirit's delight to make Christ more precious to the soul, and thus glorify Him in and through the believer.

(6) *In relation to the Church*

We are told that: **"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"** (I Corinthians 12:13).

This is the event which took place on the day of Pentecost. He came, in accordance with the promise of Christ, and united all believers in Christ into one body, the Church.

Paul also likens the Church to a building, and says: **"In Christ, all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"** (Ephesians 2:21-22).

Again, Paul exhorts the saints in Ephesus and says: **"I . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Thus the Spirit of God seeks to lead the people of God to maintain the unity that He Himself has formed.

In chapters 12-14 of I Corinthians, the Spirit of God is seen in His relation to the operations of a local assembly.

Here He is described as imparting to, encouraging the development of, and empowering the manifestation of the various spiritual gifts which Christ has bestowed on believers: **“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”** (Ephesians 4:8-16).

When these are exercised according to His leading, they will result in the edifying, or building up of the assembly, so that it will present a united testimony for Christ. As each believer responds to His guidance in the exercise of his gift, a spiritual atmosphere is created which will cause an unbeliever, who comes into such an assembly, to fall upon his face and **“worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth”** (I Corinthians 14:24-25).

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that spiritual gifts must be exercised in the power of the Spirit of God. Apart from this, all the ecclesiastical machinery in the world is worse than useless. Scriptural principles require spiritual power for their operation, and this spiritual power comes only through the Holy Spirit of God.

(7) In relation to worship

The work of the Spirit of God, in connection with worship, is to lead each individual believer, through the word of God, to an ever increasing apprehension and appreciation of the Father and the Son, therefore the need for each Christian to be both a reader and a student of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to believe, or to do anything contrary to the word of God. As the believer is taught by the Spirit, through the Word, and is obedient to what he learns, the Spirit will lead him on to a deeper knowledge of Divine things and particularly in the matter of worship.

We have already learned that worship is, first of all, an individual matter. It is not primarily something that is to be stored up to be presented at a meeting; but that which should rise continually from the believer's soul, day by day, as he appreciates all God is and has done, as revealed in His Son. When a company of believers, in this spiritual condition, meet together as an assembly, what a volume of Spirit-led worship there will be!

The leading of the Spirit is particularly evidenced as a number of believers gather, in a scriptural manner, to remember the Lord Jesus. One can mark the definite guidance of this “holy, heavenly Guest,” as He impresses one and another, either to give out a hymn, or to lead the assembly in worship, or to read a portion from the Word.

Each hymn or spoken word is seen to be in perfect harmony with the particular theme of the meeting. This makes for a gradual, but steady progression of worship, which rises higher and higher, until the bread is broken and the cup passed. One has only to attend such a meeting to be convinced of the absolute necessity for, and the reality of the power and presence of the Spirit of God, as He occupies the hearts of the believers with the Father and the Son, and leads them out, as a company of royal priests, in adoring worship.

Each believer must therefore see to it that he does not grieve the Holy Spirit by any misconduct on his part, or else his worship will be hindered. Should he do so, prompt confession of, and the forsaking of that sin will restore the communion. Each assembly, in turn, must be careful not to quench the Spirit. This may be done in many ways.

- (a) By denying or despising the ministry He would seek to give through one and another whom He has gifted.
- (b) By being disobedient to His leading.
- (c) By refusing to welcome to the Lord’s Supper each exercised believer who desires to thus remember the Lord Jesus, and who is known to be sound in his life and doctrine.
- (d) By permitting sin to remain unjudged in its midst.
- (e) By allowing a sectarian, or party-spirit, to be fostered within.

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:28-30). “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:19-21)

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:1-8).

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” (I Corinthians 3:1-5). **“Let all things be done decently and in order”** (I Corinthians 14:40). For the gift of the Holy Spirit we do well to praise God. Arthur Cutting’s beautiful and scriptural hymn is appropriate in this connection:

“O God our hearts are lifted
To Thee, in grateful praise,
Responsive to Thy Spirit,
A joyful song we raise;
For He, Thy gracious purpose
In Christ to us has shown,
That now, as sons before Thee,
His favor is our own.

In nature’s darkness shrouded,
And dead in sins we lay,
Until Thy Holy Spirit
Transformed our night to day;
Awakened needs within us,
Begetting us anew,
And by love’s strong compelling,
Our souls to Jesus drew.

We trusted Him as Saviour,
When rest and peace we sought,
And now Thy Spirit seals us,
As those His blood has bought.
Made Thine, He ne’er will leave us,
For He is pledged to stay,
As earnest of our portion,
Until redemption’s day.

O may Thy Holy Spirit,
Blest unction from on high,
With all His rich infilling,
Lead us to glorify
The risen Christ our Saviour,
By loyal witness true,
Constraining us to serve Him
In all we say and do.”

(8) *In relation to Service*

True, Spirit-led worship, will lead the believer to render loyal Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered service for the Lord.

The Acts of the Apostles might better have been entitled: “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” It is He who is seen throughout the entire book, empowering believers for the preaching of the Gospel, and granting them an abundant harvest of precious souls. Believers are described therein as being **“full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”**

These Christians knew what it meant, by experience,

- To **“walk in the Spirit,”**
- To **“pray in the Spirit,”**
- To **“live in the Spirit,”**
- To be **“led by the Spirit.”**

Truly, those who worship most will serve God best, and only the Spirit can supply the power for both.

In view of these things, may each of us see to it that, by the grace of God, we also shall be included in the number of those who “worship in Spirit, and in truth.”

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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