

BEHOLDING THE WONDER OF THE TRINITY

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Session Five:

BEHOLDING THE WONDER OF THE EXALTED SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. Jesus' Authority and Primacy over the Spirit – in his role as the Eternal and Exalted Son of the Father

While Jesus submitted to the Spirit in his incarnational mission, Scripture is clear that the Spirit's most fundamental role is to elevate, extol, and honor the higher position and authority of the Son.

John 14:25-26 – ²⁵ These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 15:26 – When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me

Acts 2:33 – Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

John 16:12-15 – ¹² I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

1 Corinthians 12:3 – Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:1-3 – ¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you now the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

II. The Spirit's Uniform Purpose to Put Forward Jesus

A. Inspiration of Scripture, by the Spirit, but focused on Christ

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:20-21 – ²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Luke 24:24-27,44 – ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for

the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. . . .⁴⁴ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

One might expect what Paul talks about is mostly about the Spirit. But, in the very context where he asserts that the words he speaks are taught by the Spirit, listen to what he talks about:

1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; 2:2 –¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . .²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness^{2:2} For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Galatians 6:14 – But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

B. Evangelism, by the Spirit, proclaiming the gospel of Christ

Consider Acts 1:8, and marvel at the Spirit’s empowerment to proclaim not the message of the Spirit but the message of Christ. “You shall be My witnesses,” says Jesus. And what does Peter proclaim on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit descends? Christ crucified, risen, and exalted! This is part of what makes the inclusivist view so wrong and distressing. There is no independent work of the Spirit that does not point to the Son. Everything about the Spirit’s work involves Christ and his work.

C. Salvation, wrought in our lives by the Spirit, to conform us to the likeness of Christ

In initial conversion (2 Cor 4:4-6), and in our transformation (2 Cor 3:18), the Spirit constantly urges upon us the beauty and glory of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:3 – Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit, then, chooses in all he does to shine the spotlight on Jesus

III. Applications from the Role of the Spirit in Re: to the Father and the Exalted Son

1. Marvel at the Spirit who does not begrudge being sent from the Father and the Son. The Father gives the Spirit to the Son, and the Son then gives him to the church (John 15:26; Acts 2:33).
2. Marvel at the harmonious unity of relationships within the Trinity, when Father, Son, and Spirit each participate in their unique ways but do so with one common mission, one common purpose, cooperating fully, supporting each other in their various roles, to see those common goals met. We see here, then, a *unity that is not unison, a distinction that is not discord*. This Trinitarian harmony of unity and distinction should be a model for how Christian families and how the whole body of Christ should function – recognizing God has made all of us different, yet we should use our different gifts, aptitudes, interests, and abilities for one common purpose, i.e., to build up one another to be more and more like Christ.