

Thus far in our study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, we've considered the Spirit's work upon creation, Christ, and individual believers, that leaves us this morning with the Spirit's work within the church collectively. Simply put, the Spirit's work is not only individual but corporate. The Spirit works in each Christian and the Spirit works in the church.

I want to suggest that the Spirit's collective work within the church can be somewhat summarized into three—He unites, He gives gifts, and He enables us to worship. Thus, our three headings will be – The Spirit's Work in Uniting, Gifting, and Worshipping.

First Corinthians 3:16, describes the church as a collective whole—"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you." The pronoun "you" is plural as it refers to the church at Corinth as a whole. Thus, while the Spirit indwells each Christian individually, He also indwells the church collectively. Put another way - while each individual Christian is a temple of God's Spirit, the church collective is the temple of God's Spirit.

- I. The Spirit's Work in Uniting
- II. The Spirit's Work in Gifting
- III. The Spirit's Work in Worship

I. The Spirit's Work in Uniting

1. The first thing the Holy Spirit does with regards to the church is, He unites each individual to the body of Christ.
2. Perhaps we can say—unity is unique and specific work of the Holy Spirit—He unites us to Christ and then His body.
3. Now, as we come to consider the topic of unity, I want to remind you of an important distinction between positional and practical unity.
4. (1) Positional unity—this refers to that positional unity that takes place when the Spirit puts you into the body.
5. 1Cor.12:13—"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink of one Spirit."
6. Regardless of our ethnic origin or social class, we have all been placed into one body—this happens at conversion.
7. In this sense, the church is perfectly unified regardless of its differences—we are all a part of the universal church.
8. Every Christian has the same Spirit within them, who applies the same salvation to them—"we all drink of one Spirit."
9. (2) Practical unity—this refers to an open and everyday unity, that takes place among the members of local churches.
10. Eph.4:2-3—"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bear with one another in love, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
11. Notice, this aspect of unity needs to be kept, as unlike positional unity, practical unity can increase or decrease.
12. The graces necessary to promote practical unity are lowliness, gentleness, patience, and love—without these there will be no unity.
13. It's called "the unity of the Spirit" because the same Holy Spirit lives within each of us, uniting us together as one.
14. This is the work of the Holy Spirit—not only to join us together positionally, but to join us together practically.
15. 1Cor.12:13—"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (positional unity), and have been made to drink of one Spirit (practical unity).

16. There is only ONE body and ONE Spirit—every person baptized into the ONE body drinks from ONE Spirit.
17. To "drink of one Spirit" means the same Spirit indwells us—this is what unites us—we all have the same Spirit.
18. Thus, at this point I want to briefly suggest three things about the Holy Spirit's work in promoting practical unity.
19. (a) The Spirit unites us in Christ—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit unites us in our love for and commitment to Christ.
20. What is it that unites us together—foremost, it's not our political, social, or economic views (as important as these are).
21. It's not homeschooling, breastfeeding, or our dating (courting) convictions, but it's the person and work of Jesus Christ.
22. The Holy Spirit has taught all of us our need for Christ, and thus we each trust Him, love Him, and serve Him.
23. This is the great work of the Holy Spirit—to reveal Christ among us—to make us see, believe, and cherish Christ.
24. This is how the Holy Spirit unites us—He unites us in Christ—He gives each one of us faith in and love for Christ.
25. (b) The Spirit unites us in truth—by this I mean, because we are unified in Christ, we are also unified in His word.
26. This is what unifies us—the Holy Scripture—the truth about God, about creation, about salvation, and about eternity.
27. As the Spirit of truth, He teaches each person the basics of the Christian faith and unifies us within that truth (faith).
28. Thus, in Eph.4:13 Paul speaks about "the unity of the faith"—by "faith" is meant the objective revelation give to the church to believe and protect.
29. Simply put—all true unity is unity in the truth—it's not unity at all cost, but unity in the faith—unity in the truth.
30. Thus, if a person denies the incarnation, atonement, justification by faith, the Trinity, the second coming, eternal punishment, or the centrality of the church, there can be no unity.
31. Perhaps I can put it this way—true Holy Spirit wrought unity is unity in Christ and in His word (the Holy Scriptures).
32. (c) The Spirit unites us in love—that is, love is the bond or glue that holds Christians together—love for one another.
33. Eph.4:2-3—"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bear with one another in love, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit."
34. Regardless how much theological and practical unity exists, if there is no love, there will never be any true unity.
35. You can take people who think identically about every issue and put them all in one church, and without love, they will tear each other apart.
36. And where does love come from? Well, as you know it's the fruit of the Spirit—it's the work of the Spirit among us.
37. Thus, the first great work the Spirit does within the church is, He unites us with Christ and His body (both positionally and practically).
38. Before I move on to the second work of the Spirit within the church, let me first underscore an important point.
39. While positional unity is a reality (and can never increase or decrease), we must all labor to increase practical unity.
40. Eph.4:3—"Let us endeavor to keep (or preserve) the unity of the Spirit"—the word rendered "endeavor" refers to strenuous and diligent work—"make every effort (NIV)," "being diligent to preserve (NASB)."
41. In other words, Christian unity takes hard work, and when a church slacks in this work, practical unity will vanish.

42. And brethren, I assure you, the enemies of the church desire nothing more than to promote disunity and discord.
43. Thus, let me very briefly suggest three simple helps to promote practical unity among God's holy and beloved people.
44. Help 1—Foster an atmosphere of humility—one of the greatest enemies to unity in the church is pride—pride and a self-serving spirit destroy unity and breed division.
45. Eph.4:2-3—"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bear with one another in love"—this is what promotes unity.
46. "Lowliness" refers to what we think of ourselves and "gentleness" (meekness) refers to the way we treat others.
47. "Longsuffering" refers to patience and "bearing with one another" refers to endurance (to prolonged patience).
48. Help 2—Focus on the main things—as I've said, true Christian unity is rooted in Christ and the Holy Scriptures.
49. Whenever these are lost sight of, I assure you unity is forsaken—the Spirit unites us in Christ, the truth, and love.
50. Thus, we must labor to make these things the main things—these are the things that bring God's people together.
51. Help 3—Pray for practical unity—dear brethren, let us not forget—true Christian unity is the fruit of the Spirit (Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit).
52. Brethren, I have to confess, this is likely one of the most common things I pray for with regards to our assembly.
53. And there are many reasons we must pray for unity: (1) it brings good and blessing to the church, and (2) it gives honor and glory to God.
54. Ps.133:1—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" v3—"for there the LORD commanded the blessing – Life forevermore."

II. The Spirit's Work in Gifting

1. The Holy Spirit is not only a gift of Christ to His beloved people, but the Spirit gives gifts to Christ's beloved people.
2. Now obviously brethren, I am not able in this section of the sermon, to address the subject of spiritual gifts in great detail.
3. But what I want to do is, simply suggest three things about spiritual gifts—the giver, nature, and purpose of gifts.
4. (1) The nature of gifts—here I want to spend a few minutes and clarify what a spiritual gift is—how many gifts are there?
5. Well, you likely know there are several passages in the NT, wherein various spiritual gifts are listed (1Cor.12; Rom.12; 1Pet.4).
6. Now, let me just clarify—I do not believe these lists are intended to be exhaustive. In other words, I don't think we have to limit ourselves to these lists.
7. Some of these passages actually summarize spiritual gifts into two kinds—there are speaking and serving gifts.
8. In other words, some gifts concern words and other gifts concern works—there are speaking gifts and serving gifts.
9. In fact, these two categories of gifts find their fullest expression in the two offices of the church—elder and deacon.
10. In the office of elder (pastor) we have an example of speaking gifts, and in the office of deacon we have an example of serving gifts.
11. Thus, there is a sense in which we can boil down all of the gifts into these two categories—speaking and serving.
12. Thus, a spiritual gift is an ability to speak or act in such a way as to edify the brethren—this ability comes from the Spirit.

13. For example, the ability to teach, encourage, comfort, show mercy, assist, help, and sympathize are all abilities given by the Spirit.
14. (2) The giver of gifts—the giver of Spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit, who gifts every Christian with certain abilities.
15. 1Cor.12:11—"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."
16. This verse ends a larger passage about spiritual gifts that begins in v4—"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."
17. That is, though there are many different kinds of gifts, it's the same Spirit who gives these to individual members.
18. And according to v11, the Spirit gives these "as He wills"—the Spirit determines which person receives each gift.
19. It's the work of the Spirit to gift each person in specific ways, that a church can function as a unified (single) body.
20. For a physical body to function properly there needs to be legs, feet, arms, fingers, eyes, ears, a nose, and a mouth.
21. Each member of the body has a specific role to play if the body is to function properly—everybody can't all be eyes or ears.
22. And so too, every Christian has a specific role or function to play within the body of Christ—some roles are more prominent and others less noticeable (but all are necessary).
23. (3) The purpose of gifts—as I've already said, the purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of the body (church).
24. 1Cor.14:12—"Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel."
25. Gifts are never given for our own good, but they are given for the good of others and the edification of the church.
26. And this fact, exposes a common misconception—many people think of the church in terms of themselves—how does the church help me?
27. But a better question would be—how has the Holy Spirit equipped me to help others? How can I edify the body?
28. Dear brethren, this is a difficult lesson to learn—we have to get the focus off of ourselves and put it on others!
29. This is the work of the Holy Spirit—He equips each member of the church to assist and help others in the church.
30. Every Christian possesses his or her own unique set of gifts, for the purpose of edifying and strengthening the body.
31. Now brethren, if what I've just said is true, then this begs a very important question—am I using my gifts to edify the body?
32. What am I doing, with reference to others, to encourage and build them up? How am I using my gifts in this church?
33. Put another way—the church is not spectator sport where you merely come to watch and be personally entertained.
34. Most professing Christians in this country think of church in those terms—in what way can this church benefit me?
35. For example, someone might say—I don't feel like my needs are being met—I feel neglected, slighted, or ignored.
36. And to such a person I would ask—How are you meeting the needs of those around you? How are you serving them?
37. And thus, if it's important to use our gifts for the good of others, we should be clear what our individual gifts are (thus, I want to assist you in this by asking three questions).
38. (a) What do I enjoy doing? Spiritual gifts are not opposed to personal delight—with the gift the Spirit often gives joy in exercising that gift.

39. Perhaps I could put the question like this—when it comes to helping others, what activity do I enjoy the most?
40. Brethren, the Spirit doesn't equip us with gifts we despise using—He usually gives us joy in exercising those gifts.
41. (b) What am I good at doing? That is, the Spirit often uses native abilities and skills when giving spiritual gifts.
42. While I think it's best to distinguish between natural abilities and spiritual gifts, they oftentimes overlap each other.
43. For example, you may have the ability to cook or bake, and while these aren't spiritual gifts, you can use these abilities to help others.
44. While, technically speaking your spiritual gift is helping, your ability to cook or bake is used to bless and help others.
45. (c) What am I successful at doing? By this I mean—how have I been an evident blessing to others in the past?
46. For example, if people regularly thank me for notes of encouragement I've written them, then I likely have the gift of encouragement.
47. Or else, if people are obviously blessed and encouraged by ways I've helped them, then I likely have the gift of helping.
48. One of the biggest problems with reference to spiritual gifts is many Christians are too focused on trying to discern their gifts.
49. Simply start serving the brethren, and it will become apparent what your supernatural strengths and abilities are (the best way to discern your gifts is in the way of service).
50. But remember brethren, these are gifts of the Holy Spirit, thus we must seek them from Him, for the edification of the church and glorification of His name.

III. The Spirit's Work in Worship

1. The role of the Holy Spirit in worship is a very broad and important topic, one that could be studied for several hours.
2. But let me simply say—every act of true worship is the result of the Holy Spirit working within the worshipper.
3. This is true of every form of worship—be it personal, family, or corporate—all worship is the fruit of the Spirit.
4. 1Cor.3:16 teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells the church as a whole, when they collectively gather to worship.
5. 1Cor.3:16—"Do you not know that you (the church at Corinth) are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you."
6. We find the same truth in Rev.1:10—"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day"—that is, the first day of the week.
7. To be "in the Spirit" means he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that while He worshiped God on the Lord's Day.
8. All true worship is "in the Spirit"—the Holy Spirit works within our hearts to enable us to worship God rightly.
9. Jn.4:24—"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth"—that is, by the Holy Spirit.
10. The Spirit empowers us in every element of worship—in preaching, hearing, singing, praying, and the sacraments.
11. Thus, the NT exhorts us to pray "in the Spirit"—Eph.6:18—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."
12. But we could apply this to every other activity of worship—we must preach in the Spirit, hear in the Spirit, sing in the Spirit, and partake of the sacraments in the Spirit.
13. (1) The Spirit enables us to worship in truth—"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth."

14. That is, to worship God rightly, we must worship by His Spirit in harmony to His revealed will in Holy Scripture.
15. Perhaps another way of putting this would be—the Holy Spirit only blesses worship sanctioned by God's word.
16. (2) The Spirit enables us to worship in faith, Heb.11:6—"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"—this is true in anything we do including worship.
17. And it's the work of the Holy Spirit to make us sensible of our need and confident of God's acceptance in Christ.
18. Phil.3:3—"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."
19. This verse is a very beautiful description of every true Christian—"we are the (true) circumcision"—that is, in contrast to those merely physically circumcised.
20. Every Christian has had their heart circumcised—the old unbelieving and self-righteous heart has been removed (and a humble believing heart has been put in its place)
21. "Who worship God in Spirit"—that is, we now approach God in every activity of worship, by the work of the Spirit.
22. "Who boast in Christ Jesus"—this word rendered "boast" literally refers to trust—to worship in the Spirit is to boast in Christ.
23. "And put no confidence in the flesh"—that is, in human merit and pedigree—we no longer trust anything about ourselves.
24. (3) The Spirit enables us to worship in love—that is, the Holy Spirit stokes the flames of love and adoration for God in Christ.
25. Exhortation 1—Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit—that is, let be sure to do nothing that would hinder the Spirit's work in the church.
26. Exhortation 2—Let us be filled with the Holy Spirit—that is, let us pray that the Spirit would fill our collective church.
27. Exhortation 3—Let us love and honor the Holy Spirit—this is really a proper place to not only finish this sermon but series of sermons.