

47-12-01.wpd --Our Trust in the Holy Spirit's Work
 Apostle's Creed, Holy Spirit, communion, Body,
 1 Cor 12:7-13
 The Holy Spirit's work is the growth and health of the Church.

INTRODUCTION:

--[E. Stanley Jones in *Abundant Living*, "Christianity began as a group movement. Jesus gathered around Him a dozen men and implanted His outlook and spirit into that group. Christianity began not as an individualism, but as a collectivism. But it was a collectivism in which the individual found his perfect freedom. For you cannot find your freedom in isolation and detachment. You find it only through a group. You are social by your very nature. Two cells came together to produce you, so you are social in your origin and constitution."] I think an even more powerful reason that we are social in nature is our creation in the image of the Triune God, Who is an eternal Society of Three Persons.

--God says that individualism is not good-- Gen 2:18, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone." It's not a the best way to live-- Eccl 4:9,10,12 (NASB), Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.... And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart. And it's not God's plan for our spiritual lives-- Jesus said, "I will build my church..." And **HOM.idea...**

I. A Trust in the Holy Spirit

- A. We see the Spirit in the beginning "*hovering over*" [lit., "*continued brooding over it*," as a fowl does, when hatching eggs] the primordial chaos of creation: "*without form and empty*" (Shows that the intent of the Spirit was to bring something of order out of the disorder, which is still His desire for our lives today.)
- B. In our **text**, we see the Spirit bestowing gifts on individuals, but He doesn't mean for us to be like statue pieces for display, as in a museum. (His gifts to us are *functional*, which means serviceable--they are given for the express purpose of serving others.)
- C. Our relationship to the Holy Spirit is very practical: if He's given us gifts, we also need Him to give us guidance as to how, when, and where we are to use them in serving God and others.

TRANS: Giftedness by the Spirit can change over the years, but His

work in us is to help us live for Christ and to equip us to serve as a part of the Body of Christ, the Church. The church is not a museum, but a skills lab or an ongoing workshop to prepare us for service.

II. A Trust in the Reality of the "Holy Catholic Church"

- A. "Holy" = "set apart" or "separated"
 1. Many spirits in the world; *God's Spirit* is "Holy" ("set apart" from worldly spirits and spiritualities that are not from God).
 2. The Holy Spirit, by indwelling us, makes us "set apart" or "holy" (which is why we are called "saints" ["holy ones"]; not a title of pride but of relationship.... our relationship with God.)
- B. "Catholic" = "universal," "all-inclusive," or "all-embracing"
 1. The ideas expressed by the word "catholic," point to the unity among all believers, and to the fact that, as God sees it, there is only one Church-- v.12-13, The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
 2. By stating our belief in the "catholic church" we actually deny the claim that the Roman Church, or any other denomination, is the ONE and ONLY true Church. (The word *denomination* actually means a division made by a name. No names we give to our churches, or special doctrines we wave as a banner, can ever separate what God has joined together.)

TRANS: [As a pastor at EVCC, it has been a privilege for me to lead a congregation made up of many denominations. We may appreciate the various distinctions our churches represent, but those differences have not been a barrier to the catholic unity we have manifested. This is a bit like heaven will be, as far as a mixture of church traditions, and in that sense we practice what we say in confessing "*I believe in the holy catholic church.*"] But there is one more point....

III. A Trust in "the communion of saints"

- A. This belief is the enemy of a "lone-ranger Christian," one who avoids church or flees to the desert to be a spiritual hermit.
- B. The word "*communion*" is *koinonia*, [lit., *participation* or *partnership*], and it has both *theological* and *practical* implications:
 1. It describes the unity of the Church in *space* and *time*:
 - a. not only is there only One Church over all the earth, in every

- country, language (and denomination),
- b. but there is only One Church in time, past, present, and future. (We need to stay in touch with the past, serve in the present and pass our wisdom along to the future.)
2. *Koinonia* also has 3 major practical implications for believers:
 - a. ***Fellowship***-- Heb 10:25, Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (not just getting together, but meeting for the purpose of mutual encouragement).
 - b. ***Sharing*** (in the sense of *distribution*)-- Rom 15:25-26, Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. {26} For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a **contribution** [*koinonia*] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. (Sadly, we are experts in arguing around this meaning of the word *koinonia* and its implications for the worldwide unity of the Church. [Whenever you hear the argument, "*We should take care of our own poor first, right here in America,*" remember 2 things: 1) what we call *poverty* in this country is often the *average standard of living* in 3rd World countries, and 2) 95% of all charitable giving in the USA already stays right here in the USA, and it's been that way for most of our lives.]).
 - c. ***Communication***-- Phile 1:6 (NKJV) that the **sharing** [*koinonia*] of **your** [sing.] faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in **you** [pl.] in Christ Jesus. [Paul wanted Philemon to share his faith so that other Christians who would also be reading that letter would grow in their understanding of what we have in Christ.] (Congregational sharing of faith is as important as pulpit ministry, if not more important, because the Holy Spirit is in all believers, not just pastors, and the Spirit has given all believers gifts for ministry to the others, especially other Christians.)

CONCLUSION:

--**The Holy Spirit's work is the growth and health of the Church.**
Our work is to maintain a faithful and willing response to the Spirit's moving in our lives. The Lord help us to do so.

1 Cor 12:7-13 (NIV) Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. {8} To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, {9} to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, {10} to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. {11} All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. {12} The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. {13} For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.