

Worship Foundations Part 6: “In the Power of the Holy Spirit”

September 20, 2009

Phillip Hardy, Lead Worshipper

Today will be the 6th and final installment of a worship series that we’ve called “Worship Foundations.”

We’ve been searching the scriptures, trying to establish a Biblical foundation for our worship. In past weeks, we’ve looked at God’s WORTH, God’s HOLINESS, and God’s GLORY.

Last Sunday, we saw that the cross is foundational to worship and that all worship MUST go “through Jesus.”

Today, we’re going to “place the final stone” in our worship foundation. And it’s this: Christian worship is dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just like we cannot worship the Father apart from Jesus Christ, genuine worship is impossible apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Years ago, we were leading worship in the old worship center. It was a Sunday night. The whole choir and band was there. We were right in the middle of singing “The Wonderful Cross.” And the power went OUT. No electricity, no lights, nothing. After a few seconds, it came back on, the lights came back. But the amps for the sound system had to be reset. I saw the sound guy take off running towards the closet on the other side of the church to reset them. Then they would have to warm up, so I knew we were not going to have ANY sound for at least a couple of minutes. Remember, we’re talking electronic keyboards, electric amps, I think we were even using electronic drums at that time. And I thought in my mind – “Oh no! What do we do?? Stop? Keep going?” In those few seconds of indecision, I heard the choir behind me. When they realized the sound was out, they started singing louder! And I thought, “ok, let’s do this!” We also had an acoustic piano on stage, so I ran over and started playing it, just to help keep the song going. And we kept singing until the sound came back on, then finished the song, and continued with our worship. We never stopped.

I actually, at this point, recall this experience as encouraging. But it’s not an experience I’m anxious to repeat any time soon, ok? Trying to lead worship without electrical power was a humbling experience. **But**, trying to lead worship without spiritual power is an absolutely futile experience. If you want a different illustration - trying to worship God without the Holy Spirit is like trying to start a fire without oxygen! You can have all the wood and matches and lighter fluid in the world, but without oxygen, you cannot start a fire! And, apart from God’s Holy Spirit, we CANNOT worship Him!

When it comes to the Holy Spirit, it seems as though, in many evangelical Christian churches, you find one of two extremes:

- either an un-Biblical over-emphasis on a few spectacular manifestations of the Holy Spirit, OR...
- an equally un-Biblical under-emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit, almost to the point of ignoring the Spirit completely.

One extreme seems to feel that, unless certain unusual things happen when the church gathers, then the Spirit “hasn’t shown up.”

The other extreme maybe believes “theoretically” in the Spirit, but doesn’t really seem to feel that the Spirit is truly present and at work when we gather in worship.

But we want to stay away from un-Biblical extremes.

We want the foundation of our worship to be built on a Biblically balanced doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His role in worship.

So, let’s take a quick look at what the Bible says.

I think maybe the most informative verse in scripture about the Holy Spirit and worship is Philippians 3:3. Paul is writing to the church at Philippi, warning them to beware of false teachers. And he tells them:

Philippians 3:3

It is we who are the true circumcision,
we who **worship by the Spirit of God**, who glory in Christ Jesus,
and who put no confidence in the flesh.

Paul says that true believers are those who worship **by the Spirit of God**, who glory in Christ, and put no confidence in the flesh.

It appears to me that Paul is contrasting “worshipping by the Spirit” with “confidence in the flesh” – and it’s a huge contrast.

What’s “the flesh?” Don’t think of “the flesh” as a set of sins. The “flesh” simply refers to the natural man. Normal human stuff.

In the very next verses Paul goes on to talk about his own education and his religious pedigree as potential areas for “confidence in the flesh.”

These weren’t “bad” things... but they were not where Paul placed his confidence.

Philippians 3:4-5 If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee.

We are created to rely on God, to be confident in Him.

Whenever I place my confidence in my own strength or my own abilities or anything apart from God, I’m not going to accomplish what God created me to do.

Think of it like an electric appliance - say a toaster.

If you don’t plug it in – connect it to the power it requires - it won’t make toast.

It will not accomplish what it was created to do!

(you might be able to use it for a paperweight, but it won’t function as a toaster!)

It has to be “plugged in” to work, and so do we.

Fulfilling our purpose as God’s worshippers requires that we be continually connected to the power of His Spirit, relying on Him, depending on Him.

So-called “worship” that is empowered strictly by human energy, that relies on our talent or our technology or our religious rituals - apart from God - is NOT worship.

Musical talent is a great tool, and I’m thankful for our talented musicians.

This room and all the technology in here is a great resource.

(How many people are worshipping this morning in middle school gyms and high school auditoriums.

Nothing wrong with that, but I’m SO thankful...)

BUT... if we’re relying on these things to empower our worship, we’re doomed to failure as worshippers!

Biblical worship is worshipping **by the Spirit of God**.

It's empowered by GOD's energy; born out of complete dependence on Him.

As Christians, we are more dependent on the Holy Spirit than we often realize.

Jesus said:

John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life."

Apart from the Spirit of God, we are spiritually **dead**. It's that desperate!

We are that dependent on the Holy Spirit – we're dead without Him!

Jesus said:

Luke 12:12 "the Holy Spirit will teach you"

John 16:13 "He will guide you into all the truth"

Whenever we "see" spiritual truth, that's God's Spirit at work in us.

God says:

Ezekiel 36:27

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes."

Whenever we respond to what God reveals to us with obedience, that's the Holy Spirit at work within us.

The Bible teaches that:

Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

Romans 7:6 we **serve** in the new life of the Spirit

Romans 8:16 The Spirit **testifies** with our spirit that we are God's children

Romans 8:26 the Spirit **intercedes** for us with groanings too deep for words

John 16:8 (the Spirit) **convicts** the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment

Romans 15:13 ...you will **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:16 You are a **temple** of God & the Spirit of God **dwells in you**

So - whenever we grasp something of God's glory, the Spirit is at work.

Whenever we are convicted of sin, that's God's Spirit at work.

Whenever we receive hope in the midst of a trial, the Spirit is at work.

The Holy Spirit gives us life, teaches us, guides us, enables our service, intercedes for us, dwells in us, and leads us.

And He transforms us... The Bible says that:

2 Corinthians 3:18

We are being transformed into Christ's own image from glory to glory.

This comes from the Lord, who is **the Spirit**.

Spiritual transformation comes from God's Spirit.

As a human worship leader, I can change a song, I can change a Keynote slide.

But the Holy Spirit can change our hearts, change US with ever increasing glory into the image of Christ. It's the Holy Spirit who is the true worship Leader.

Jesus said of the Spirit:

John 16:14

“**He will glorify Me**, for He will draw upon what is Mine and reveal it to you.”

The Holy Spirit “will glorify” Jesus.

Remember that verse from Philippians where we started?

It says that true believers, who worship by the Spirit, “glory in Christ Jesus.”

Worshipping by the Spirit means becoming saturated with the Holy Spirit's desire to glorify Jesus; our hearts changed, our lives transformed and centered on Christ.

We cannot worship God apart from the presence and the power of His Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit - lead our worship. Let Your power fall on our worship.

We acknowledge that You are here in this place – alive & active, indwelling every believer, inhabiting our praises.

We confess our desperate dependence on You, on Your holy presence within us.

Help us to turn from other things, and place our confidence in God.

Guide us, teach us, mold us...

Change our hearts, from glory to glory, more & more like Christ.

© 2009 Gladeville Baptist Church www.gladevillechurch.org