

Catherine
Hutton

THE HOLY SPIRIT
Ephesians

STUDY NOTES

INTRODUCTION to the series...

The Holy Spirit: Ephesians

This study will focus on Paul's letter to the Ephesians in order to introduce the Holy Spirit as an integral part of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit is very much part of Paul's understanding of God's activity in demonstrating his love for the world. We find much that shapes the doctrine of the Holy Spirit soaked into the fabric of the Letter to the Ephesians. The Holy Spirit is the seal & guarantee of our salvation & blessings in Christ –and is also the means by which the resurrection of Jesus took place.

The work of the Holy Spirit has sometimes been dismissed or overlooked by the contemporary Church. He was promised by Jesus as '*another Counsellor*' in John 14:16 and was expected by the early church after Jesus instructed the believers in Acts 1:4-8 to wait in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. Many of the New Testament stories of faith have a strong focus on & indicate the power of God for his Church. The letter to the Ephesians is a good introduction and guide to understanding how the early Church behaved, grew and served effectively for God in their Churches & communities.

The Holy Spirit 'energises' the disciple - you and I today - to be holy & Christ-like in our attitudes, our inner being and our activities of service in Church and community.

The guiding texts for this study, which are supported in preaching during our Sunday services together are:

For all the Saints - That's You too!	Ephesians 1:1-14*
The Power of God	Ephesians 1:15-23
Built Together by God's Grace	Ephesians 2*
Immeasurably More	Ephesians 3:10-21
Gifted for Unity	Ephesians 4:1-16
Be Filled with the Spirit	Ephesians 5:15-21
Be Strong in the Lord	Ephesians 6:10-20

**mini studies, not part of Sunday programme*

I bring you this guide after much study, prayer & reflection, hoping and praying that you find it helpful. There are prayer-prompts and worship suggestions for each main study, chosen with you in mind.

Always with love, 

To All the Saints - That's You too!

A Mini Study

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Chapter One opens with this beautiful hymn of praise to God. It is in the tradition of the *berakah* - the Hebrew blessing which praises God and states the reasons why God should be blessed or praised (Bruce, 252). **Look up Psalm 41:13; 66:20; 72:18 & note how they pick up & praise an attribute of God's character. Paul uses the same style of blessing in Eph 1:3. Look at how he includes 'Father of our Lord Jesus' in the blessing and also the attribute of blessing us 'in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ'. Why might Paul have forged this link to the *berakah*?**

Note down some of your own prayers to bless God using the same style and your own examples of areas of God's faithfulness.

Now, thinking about the 'spiritual blessings in Christ' we look at verses 4-13 to see what they are. **Underline them, or note them down & ponder them.**

Why is there a distinction between the 'heavenly realm' and 'on earth'?

The spiritual blessings are all located 'in Christ', which is the home of the Christian. And being in Christ is our common home - none of us is alone as a Christian because of this, the location of our salvation. Bruce reminds us that "*this common life is nothing other than his resurrection life*" (P 254). **What does this mean to you? When has this unity really mattered - to you & for the whole church?**

Life outside Christ has none of the joy that comes from salvation & consequently, none of the power. For those who are in Christ is the hope & life that come from the Spirit, emphasised in verses 13 & 14. The Holy Spirit's presence is our assurance of salvation- Stott describes the action this way; "*He is God's first instalment to the believer & as such, he acts as a guarantee for all that is to come, a promise for the future.*" (P 212).

The Holy Spirit is present at the salvation of each believer. Paul describes this as a 'seal'. **What hope does that give you? Does Paul see the Holy Spirit as separable from the believer? Note down your reasoning.**

Study 1 **The Power of God**

Opening Thoughts

Who is the most powerful person you have ever met?

What is the most powerful earthly force? Name the most powerful vehicle. What super-power would you like to have?

Prayer & Worship

- * For God's power to be present in this time.
- * For one another - that God would meet all our needs.
- * For the leaders of our church, that they might be moved by the power of God to bless and equip the church for service & witness.
- * For our local community, our national government & world leaders.
- * For the eyes of our hearts to be open as we read the scriptures.

Sing a song of praise to God, such as Open the Eyes of my Heart; My Jesus, My Saviour; I Sing the Almighty Power of God; Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Now Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

This passage is a beautiful piece of intercessory prayer - as Paul finds himself moved inevitably to prayer in a natural progression from his thoughts of Christ in the first half of the chapter. Indeed, Foulkes suggests that;

... as the opening 'For this reason' signifies – he prays in the light of the wealth of spiritual blessing of which he has just been writing. The thought of the purpose of God in Christ, the blessings of election, sonship, redemption, revelation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, leads naturally and inevitably to praise and prayer for the members of his church (cf 3:14). P 66

Paul feels an 'in Christ' kinship with the believers he addresses. **Look carefully at verse 15.** The testimonies Paul has heard relate to the believers' 'faith in the Lord Jesus' which he mentions first –and which is soon followed by his noting their 'love for all the saints'. The latter is born out of the former.

Faith in Jesus breeds love for his people.

Talk about the love you have for people simply due to the common faith you share in Jesus...

Example: My friend, Auntie Jessica & I met in 2012 at her home church in Kampala. A bond of love was immediately there, before we spent any time with each other simply because we both love Jesus who bridged the unknowing with his love.

Paul's understanding is that we need to be given spiritual blessings to help us to know God better and so to know his will and purposes. In verse 17, this is the '*spirit of wisdom & revelation*'. In verse 18, he prays that the '*eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you*'. Paul goes further, linking our faith inextricably together as he speaks of, '*the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and the incomparably great power for us who believe*', in verse 19. Note that there are no believers excluded from these spiritual blessings. There are no lower-tier Christians.

Consider how this unity of faith and blessing has made an impact on you over the years and also what you hope to be able to offer in Christ's service as your eyes are further opened.

I love the phrase "*incomparably great power*" (v19) to describe the nature of the power that is both of God and available to those who believe in God (also v19). **Look up verses 19-21 and read them aloud. What do these verses tell us of God's intention for the church?**

This is all personal. Given by the person of the Holy Spirit to those people who have found life in the person of the Resurrected Jesus. The people have been claimed by God and in the continuing action of God, we are "energised" (Foulkes, Bruce). Bruce explains it like this;

The power, then, with which God works in the lives of believers is the power by which he raised Christ from death to share his

throne. The throne of God is set in “the heavenly realm” –in that realm which, as has been said above, the people of Christ are endowed with “every spiritual gift”. P 273

The power of God grants spiritual wisdom & understanding. The power of God also illumines the believers’ hearts to appreciate and participate in the glorious things of God. These inner ‘energising’ are works of the Holy Spirit whose work should not be underestimated.

The power of God not only raises Christ from the dead, but goes far above that in exercising an energy that also ‘seats him at his right hand in the heavenly realms’. Paul describes the power of God, available to the church and possible to equip each and every saint as ‘like this mighty strength’.

Discuss this mighty power with reference to the Church’s effectiveness in the world at large, in your own country, community and from your local church in mission, service & acts of kindness.

What factors can help or hinder the church’s effectiveness?

Do you have an expectation that God’s power at work in YOU will be mighty and incomparable? What could it look like in practical terms?

Looking Outwards

If your faith has become dried up and ineffectual, Ephesians offers a wonderful opportunity to observe what is possible. Even in this opening chapter, we find a system or checklist for believers. We are ‘in Christ’ & given assurance of our salvation by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us who gives confidence to our faith which we live out in love.

Pray for the ‘eyes of your heart to be opened to see the glory of God’ and for the opportunities to show & share God’s love in your community with powerful, resurrection energy.

Built Together by God's Grace

A Mini Study

Read Ephesians 2

The Christian's salvation is transformational. So much so that Paul describes the previous existence as being '*dead in your transgressions & sins*', which is wonderfully countered with the assertion of v5 in which God '*made us alive with Christ*'. The Christian way of life should then be notably different from that of our pre-salvation days. **Read a Christian biography and observe the changes they describe. What changes have been notable in your own life?**

There is nothing judgemental in Paul's description about this change. What is past is dealt with in Christ. He knows the truth of this as well as anyone, which probably accounts for the phrase v3, '*we were objects of wrath*'. The work of grace is all God's doing by which we also are brought not only out of the death that is '*transgression & sin*' which keeps us separated from God –but, v6 '*seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*' **Have a good think about the mystery and wonder of your physical location at this very moment.**

The good works we do are consequences of our salvation & location. As Christ did, being in him, so we do likewise. This takes us to verse 10: we are active in the world by the energising of God's salvation at work in us. **How are you showing your salvation?**

The second part of Chapter Two takes down all distinctions that we may have humanly ascribed to those who know God. In particular the divide between those, v12 '*excluded from citizenship in Israel*' and those who are '*citizens in Israel*'. Foulkes (P 90) describes it; "*The Lord's coming meant making peace between Jew & Gentile by taking away the cause of division. The law could no longer be the way by which the Jews, and Jews alone could try to come to God. The way of approach is now by grace, by a new creative work of God. The same for both Jews & Gentiles*". This unity is asserted in v16-18. In v18, Paul refers to the one Spirit as being the vehicle for this access for all to come to the Father. **Examine your heart for barriers between you & other Christians. Allow God to break them down in Christ.**

The building image which closes Chapter 2 is memorable. No longer a temple of stone, but of people unified and brought together in Jesus, with the same '*citizenship*' and belonging together in '*God's household*' v19. The work of being built together in this way is that the church universal may '*become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit*' v22. **What challenges does this bring? How does it challenge the local church? How can this look like hope for all the world?**

Study 2 “Immeasurably More”

Opening Thoughts

Talk about your Grand Plans... the things you wish you could do or the things you thought might never be possible - but have been. It could be anything from owning a zoo to visiting the Great Wall of China to meeting the Queen. What constitutes a Grand Plan?

Pray & Worship

- * That God would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ would dwell in your heart through faith.
- * That you might know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.
- * That you would be filled with the Spirit.
- * That the churches may be a blessing in ways they can neither dare to ask for or even imagine.
- * That we might be servants of the gospel, by the gift of God’s grace.

Sing a song of praise to God, such as Immortal, Invisible; See, What a Morning; Give me the faith that can remove & sink a mountain to a plain; There must be more than this (Consuming Fire by Tim Hughes).

Now Ephesians 3:10-21

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

Verse 10 begins with the church. The value of ‘the Church’ has been one which, to some extent, has lost favour in recent decades. Indeed, during the Covid Pandemic as church has had to find different ways of expressing worship, discipleship & service. This has led to some expressions of personal doubt in the value of ‘being together as Church’. However, throughout Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, there is a refrain of ‘being built together’ and an emphasis on ‘being members of God’s household’ and ‘us’. The Church is the means by which –through its members who are differently gifted but united in the One Spirit in Jesus Christ– good news is shared and good works done which point towards the glory of God. This is part of God’s Grand Plan. Together, as a body and in one Christ by his Spirit, God will be made known.

Consider your relationship with the Church. What do you value?

How could the relationship be improved?

What could your role in that improvement look like?

Verse 12 is significant. Within it is tremendous scope for taking responsibility for our own discipleship and relationship with God. It is because of our position (in Christ) and also our faith in Christ that we are each motivated to “*approach God with freedom & confidence*”. The 16th Century reformers would begin to term this the “priesthood of all believers” and is a key Methodist principle of belief. The confidence of access to God is for all. No longer needing a mediator as Christ has bridged the gap between all people and God. We may approach God with the confidence of well-loved children coming into the presence of their own father.

What are the things it is easiest to approach God with?

Look at the list below and make comments about how and why these are easiest...

<i>Worship</i>	<i>prayers for the world</i>	<i>prayers for family issues</i>	<i>praising God</i>
<i>prayers for healing</i>	<i>prayers for friends' situations</i>	<i>thanksgiving</i>	
<i>direction</i>	<i>personal need</i>	<i>more faith</i>	<i>adoration of God</i>
<i>confession</i>	<i>grief or sadness</i>	<i>struggle</i>	<i>rejoicing/excitement</i>

It is in verses 14-16 that it is clear that Paul is praying for the Christians of Ephesus - and for all who are reading the letter. Kneeling was not a regular posture of prayer, and yet that Paul claims that this is his posture shows the seriousness of the situation as he sees it. Holding onto Christ will not always be easy and in such times, the Holy Spirit's power will be necessary to the strength of the Christian.

Where in the Bible do we find people praying on their knees?

Why are these particular prayers notable?

Being a name-bearing member of God's family gives you legitimacy in the exercise of faith, ministry and access to God's presence. Whether our previous life has been with knowledge of God or wholly without it - in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit,

there is no distinction made. We bear the same name. We have the same value. As God's children, we bear our Father's name. This gives all of us rights of inheritance.

What are some of the things God gives his people as 'co-heirs with Christ'? (Romans 8:17)

Looking Outwards

Paul's prayer really takes off in verses 16b-21. God's power will give us power to be based in, surrounded by, and sharing out the love of God. These verses are beautiful and mystical, and above all, full of the love that Paul is reaching to describe. But why does he emphasise the 'more than' nature of God's love and an increase of Power? John Stott writes;

The new humanity is God's family, whose members are brothers and sisters, who love their Father and love each other. Or should do. They need the power of the Spirit's might and of Christ's indwelling to enable them to love each other, especially across the deep racial and cultural divide which had previously separated them. P 136

In today's church and also society, where do we see a need for the deep indwelling of Christ's love and the Spirit's power to enable love between groups of people?

Where there has been hurt, where there is mis-understanding or lack of knowledge leading to wrong assumptions, we pray that we do better, rooted in & equipped with God's love and power.

Understanding the power and magnitude of God's love & power is the work of the Spirit. There is an increase of both love and power available for God's people. The more we are rooted in the love of God and available to the Holy Spirit, the more we grasp this magnitude and step in to be part of it. Paul prays BIG prayers, as we see in verse 20.

What are your Grand Plans when you stand in the love of Christ and are given more of the Spirit's power?

As we grow in love, faith and power, what do the prayers that you hardly dare speak out start to look like as you are reminded that God is the one who is "able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine"?

Study 3 **Gifted for Unity**

Opening Thoughts

What is on your 'to do' list? Book a holiday? Phone your family? Household chores? Gardening? Shopping? Organise an event? What things never make it to a written list because they are as natural to do as breathing? Talk about your observations.

Pray & Worship

- * That God would forgive us for our selfishness and independence of spirit in the attitude of our heart & in how we live.
- * That, by his grace, we might grow to be more Christ-like.
- * That our faith may be strengthened by the spirit of God.
- * That we might know the true unity that comes from Christ in our fellowship and in our local church.
- * That the gifts we are given would be used well in God's service.

Sing a song of praise to God, such as:

All praise to our Redeeming Lord; O Breath of Life Come Sweeping through us; Salvation belongs to our God; Be Still & Know that I am God.

Now Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

The Epistle to the Ephesians indeed focuses on the commonality of faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, no matter their heritage. Paul is clear that unity is an imperative for the church and that this is not an easy win. I'm sure we can all recall times when disunity has been at the root of problems in the local church fellowship. Whatever our part was in these, we are accountable to God for it. His love through Jesus on the cross and the power of the holy spirit was for these moments too.

*It may be worth pausing to spend a little time with God on this, as you make your own, personal prayer to God and make peace through him in your heart & mind, by his spirit. *Not a group exercise.**

Keith Warrington observes in his commentary on the Holy Spirit that;

Unity is a treasure for believers to seek with each other. Unity is targeted by the devil, to break up relationships and fellowship in the church today. Words I learnt years ago still ring true today – ‘To love the world, for me is no chore. My only problem is my neighbour next door.’ The tragedy is that this can too easily define our relationships with other believers. P 223

However we feel about the phrase ‘targeted by the devil’, the observation is valid that where church fellowship functions at its best is where there is unity and harmony among the people. Where local peace breaks down, the outcomes are deep and often long-lasting, maybe even legitimately described as ‘festering wounds’ within a church. Paul had noted this and is able to remind the people that they are not without aid in this area. The Holy Spirit within then is shown through the variety of the gifts that the people of God develop and demonstrate as they grow in faith in Christ.

Look at verse 2. Talk about the 4 ways of being by which the believer should be in relationship with members of the fellowship.

- 1. Completely Humble**
- 2. Completely Gentle**
- 3. Patient**
- 4. Bearing with one another in love**

Paul refers to an expectation of ‘unity of the Spirit’. This is to do with the indivisibility of God. Where we bear the same spirit, there must be a family like-ness. The Spirit’s characteristics are unchangeable as God is unchangeable. The diversity comes in how the gifts of Christ we demonstrate lend themselves to the building up of the whole body.

Billy Graham, in his book “The Holy Spirit”, is keen to remind us that the gifts given to God’s people are ‘purposeful’. Over the years, there has been a thread of thinking that the ‘gifts’ are froth, for show and somehow lacking gravitas;

Paul say that the purpose of these spiritual gifts is, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). In other words, God has given each of us a task to do, & the supernatural gifts to equip us for it. P 135

As we remember that Jesus had his own ‘task to do’, we find ourselves in good company. The gifts are not for show but for action. Jesus’ work is continued on earth as his people get about doing his business, equipped by Jesus with spiritual gifts.

Unity in this sense can mean that we ensure that we fulfil our calling and step up to take our place within the body of Christ to do our assigned task. Without you, there is an incompleteness or in other words lack of unity. A piece of the whole is adrift.

Look at verses 11-13. Note the 5 gifts and their purpose. Note times in your own life of being equipped for God’s service.

Consider what it might mean for the ‘body of Christ to be built up’.

Looking Outwards

All these tasks of ministry are to be done with truth & in love. The body being built up with eventually correspond properly to the Head (Christ). At the time of writing, Paul sees the relationship of Christ & the Church as like a huge head to which a tiny body is attached— baby-like & immature in form. The Church needs the spiritual gifts of Christ in order to ‘grow effectively’ and so to properly serve as God’s household in the world. All the Church’s life comes from the Head. This is from Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 16. What should the Church look like?

How might your local church show the love that God has for all people?

How does your part in the Church’s witness matter in the whole of your life? (at home, work, community, worship, clubs etc.)

Pray that your local Church will be effective in the tasks to which it is called. Pray through the list of teaching & equipping tasks and for those called to minister in them. Pray for the people of God who are 'equipped for service', that all may be willing to undertake their role with love and joy.

Something to get your Teeth into!

*A 'really good scone' is at the heart of hospitality - whether as part of a cream tea, or if you are really lucky, an afternoon tea, the scone is a staple. I'm not talking the scones that are on offer in the USA, which seem to be altogether different (and don't get me started on the USA and biscuits!) Early in ministry, after I had produced some freshly baked scones for the working party at church, I was offered these words; "Catherine, you could cobble a road with those things! I'll teach Gavin a proper recipe." Clearly crushed (or lacking the spiritual gift of scone making) I ceded the oven to Gavin who has raised the standard for scones ever since.
Get your teeth into these!!*

Ingredients

8oz SR flour

2oz Margarine

1oz Sugar

1 egg

2oz. Sultanas (or cherries with almond essence; or lemon & orange peel)

Milk to mix

Rub marg into flour until there are no lumps

Combine sultanas and sugar. Separating any fruit stuck together. Add to flour mix

Beat egg lightly in a little milk.

Mix egg mixture into dry ingredients with a table knife, (keeping a little back for the top of scones)

Add a little milk at a time until mixture comes together.

Roll out on flour dusted surface and cut to desired size.

Place on a greased baking tray in a preheated oven at **Gas 8, 220°C**

Remove when they are just starting to colour and come away from the tray cleanly.

I always make twice the amount and don't expect them to last more than few hours before the boys have finished them off!

Study 4 **Be Filled with the Spirit**

Opening Thoughts

Complete the following thoughts in a variety of ways:

Today, I filled up...

I was full of...

Don't fill up on ...

Talk about the different ways you could use the phrases.

Pray & Worship

- * That God would fill your heart & mind with his love.
- * That you would find unity in Christ among the people with whom you are in fellowship.
- * That the grace of God would be sufficient for your needs & the needs of the world, enabling peace & fulfilment in all creation.
- * That just and wise decisions are made by those in places of power & privilege in order that care, respect & hope is given to all people.
- * That we may each be filled with the Spirit & so become more Christ-like in our thoughts, words and actions.

Sing a song of praise to God, such as: Jesus Paid it All; In Christ Alone; Lord, Thy Church on Earth is Seeking; May the Mind of Christ my Saviour.

Now Read Ephesians 5: 15-21

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

Being filled with the Spirit is a very trinitarian concept. The Holy Spirit has often been given a kind of Cinderella status within the Trinity & maybe even considered as 'niche' by some. For Paul the Holy Spirit is the energising way by which the people of God live and work 'for God's praise & glory'. The Holy Spirit is as much part of our everyday faith as the Father & Son. We will look further into the complexities of the Names attributable to God in a further series. In the ecumenical Apostles' Creed, we declare that the Holy Spirit is

“The Lord, the Giver of life who proceeds from the Father & the Son, who with the Father & Son is worshipped and glorified.”

The Holy Spirit energises the people of God to be Christ-like in attitude and action. Wisdom for right living is right at the top of the scripture selection for this study. We remember that in Chapter 1:17, ‘the Spirit of wisdom’ is sought for the people by Paul in his prayer. **How could the wisdom that comes from God make a difference to Our relationships with:**

1. The world / creation
2. Our local Church
3. ‘All people’
4. God
5. Ourselves

There is an influence at work within us that allows us to have a Godly perspective on all these situations and areas that really matter. This is the work the Spirit. Stott says of 15-17 that;

Paul’s next little paragraph is based on two assumptions, firstly that Christians are sophoi –wise people, not fools—and secondly that Christian wisdom is practical wisdom, for it teaches us how to behave. His word for to ‘behave’ throughout the letter has been a Hebrew concept, to ‘walk’. P 201

Being filled with the spirit is an ever-increasing filling up of our actions and attitudes with Christ-like ways, and ‘walking’ in a way that demonstrates God’s love to the world we inhabit.

What are the things you take extra care over?

What are the things that matter most in your life?

How can you ‘make the most of every opportunity’?

It could be easy to be dismissive of v17 and ‘understanding what God’s will is’. However, there can be agreement that ‘Christ-likeness’ is God’s will for all people. That sense of increasing holiness and commitment to love and serve God is one that the church universal has been working towards throughout the generations. We can see the general terms of God’s will for us in Scripture and worked out through the traditions of Christian history. The specifics of God’s will in our

own lives requires personal prayer and counsel from wise & trusted Christian friends & mentors.

Think of a particular time when you had a decision to make.

How did you discover which would be God's will for you?

What advice would you give a new Christian about 'understanding what the Lord's will is'?

The phrasing of v18 puts me in mind of how the early believers were mocked in Acts 2:13 at Pentecost as they receive the Holy Spirit's first outpouring. Drunkenness leads to ill-considered actions; careless and foolish behaviours. There is nothing ill-considered about the Holy Spirit who brings wisdom and Christlikeness.

Look up and remind yourself of the 'fruit of the Spirit' in Galatians 5:22-23. Not only are these wonderful attributes, but they also are very much full of care and the opposite of drunken behaviour.

The imperative, or instruction that Paul gives in v18 is; *"Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* Made in God's image and transformed by Christ's love, it makes sense that the Spirit will go on filling the people of God with power and love. Being filled is not limited, it is for all believers and that filling will continue as long as we live. There is no code or formula by which we set the Holy Spirit to 'fill'. In accordance with our openness to the things of God, we will be filled. There is 'more', which may well be what Paul was referring to when he reminded us in 3:20 that God *"is able to do more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us."*

Look at this explanation from Keith Warrington and talk about being filled with the Spirit & also the purpose of being filled.

Paul is not exhorting them to be manifesting more and more gifts of the Spirit, but rather to manifest the life and character of the Spirit. P 236

Looking Outwards

Being filled with the Spirit should mean that the church is effective in her mission. Warrington goes on to say that, “*when somebody is filled with the Spirit, someone else benefits*” P 241. Think of some of the concerns that have dominated the news in recent times. How do you respond? How can your group/church help someone else to benefit from your response?

Why does the world need Spirit-filled people?

Jesus transforms his people and the Holy Spirit makes people holy by his presence within us. When the Church embraces this, the trinitarian God whom we worship is honoured. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is for all. Being filled with the Spirit is an ‘everybody responsibility’. Think about & pray for the areas you serve in at Church & in the Community. How will being more Christ-like in action and attitude increase your effectiveness in these areas?

Something to get your Teeth into!

A nutritious and easy meal that may be served in bowls to guests in the garden or enjoyed in the warmth of your own kitchen.

Chicken Stew with Herby Dumplings. Oven 180c or Gas 4

A pack of chicken thighs or drumsticks - around 12. (Adjust recipe accordingly)

*3 Tablespoons flour
2 Tablespoons Sunflower oil
2 onions, sliced
2 carrots, chopped
200g bacon, snipped small
3 bay leaves, 3 sprigs thyme
250ml red wine
3 Tablespoons tomato paste
1 Chicken Stock cube*

*Dumplings: 140g cold butter
250g SR Flour
2 Tablespoons chopped mixed herbs*

- Heat the oil in a casserole with a lid. Brown the chicken pieces well on all sides – you’ll need to do this in batches. Remove all the pieces to a plate, and tip the onions, carrot, lardons, bay and thyme into the pan. Cook gently for 10 mins until the onion is softened.
- Return the chicken pieces, with any juices that have collected on the plate. Then pour in the red wine, 250ml water and tomato paste and crumble in the stock cube. Add a splash more of water if you need, until the chicken is almost covered. Bring to the boil, then cover with a lid and bake in the oven for 20 mins. Remove the lid and bake for another 10 mins while you make the dumplings.
- Rub the butter into the flour with your fingertips until it feels like fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the herbs with ½ tsp salt and some pepper. Drizzle over 150ml water, and stir in quickly with a cutlery knife to form a light dough. Use floured hands to shape into ping pong sized balls.

Toss the chicken pieces with the flour and some salt and pepper, to coat them – it’s easy to do this in a plastic food bag.

Place the dumplings on top of the stew and bake for 20 mins more until the dumplings are cooked through.

Study 5 **Be Strong in the Lord**

Opening Thoughts

When do you most enjoy ‘a nice sit down’? What had been going on and why is this sitting down memorable?

Pray & Worship

- * That God would fill you completely with his goodness & strength.
- * That you would be reliant on God in every circumstance of life.
- * That when trouble comes, God would strengthen you in every area.
- * That you would be confident to discover & do God’s will.
- * That you will stand for the things of God with regard to righteousness, justice and mercy in all creation & among all people.

Sing a song of praise to God, such as: Be Thou my Vision; Salvation belongs to our God; Fight the good fight; Cornerstone (my hope is built).

Now Read Ephesians 6:10-20

Please read it from your own Bible.

For Your Consideration

Although Paul has dealt with ‘the supernatural’ with regard to the Holy Spirit and the power that comes from God, Ephesians has been mostly concerned with new-humanity, society, reducing division, promoting unity and working together. These 10 verses, which are arguable the most well-known in Ephesians are unashamedly addressing the supernatural nature of the Christian’s task. Stott sets the scene for those among us who are uncomfortable with the notion of a ‘malign force being actively at work against God’s people’;

[Paul] supplies us with no biography of the devil, and no account of the origin of the forces of darkness. He assumes their existence as common ground between himself and his readers. In any case, his purpose is not to satisfy out curiosity, but to warn us of their hostility and teach us how to overcome it. P 261

When have you noticed your faith weakening or a sense of gloom regarding your faith due to no particular reason?

Remind yourself that the strength and the power you have is ‘the Lord’s’.

Paul is not wanting the Christians to fight each other, but to prepare themselves against spiritual hostility.

Look at verses 12 & 13.

Consider the supernatural implications here.

Paul is not known for being frivolous. His observations are keen warnings, designed to equip and support the believer in their faith.

Look up further passages in the New Testament where Jesus or the Apostles deal with 'evil spirits'.

The purpose of the evil spirit is destructive - usually a life is put at risk. Here, in Ephesians 6, Paul is talking about spiritual hostility that is separate from people - it is a bigger issue than one rooted in individuals, but the effects of the devil's influence are personal;

We must not imagine, therefore, that open persecution and open temptation to sin are his only or even his commonest weapons; he prefers to seduce us into compromise and deceive us into error.

Stott P 265

Consider & pray through Stott's comment above. Have you noticed yourself making foolish errors of judgement that are out of character - or found yourself losing your reputation at the hands of another - being unable to undo the mess?

Read through Paul's response to this opposition. Look at how he cautions the Christian to equip themselves. Verses 13-17.

The purpose of the armour is to keep the Christian 'standing' in the face or under the pressure of opposition to their faith & person. Foulkes suggests that Paul had in mind the '*armour of the heavenly warrior, as given in Isaiah 59:17*'. P 176. Paul would also have been well acquainted with the armour of the soldiers who guarded him daily in his house-arrest. The weight that gives to this description reveals the gravity of the situation against the Christian as Paul perceived it. Verse 13 suggests that there is work to do for the mission of God and that it should not consume us, but that remaining standing, we can continue to serve and bless others.

Think about ways we use 'stand' in contemporary culture. Song lyrics, sayings, films. What does it mean for people to 'stand?'

Our strength, as Paul has outlined it for us in this Epistle to the Ephesians is from God. It makes sense that the ‘armour of God’ is that which God provides. We are to know God thoroughly and to be prepared in every spiritual way. He blends together scriptural and military references. Bruce takes us to Isaiah 59:17 for the breastplate, this and 1 Thessalonians 5:8 for a reference to the helmet; to Isaiah 11:5 for a poetic ‘belt’; to Isaiah 52:7 for the sandals which he couples with Romans 10:15. Bruce then goes on to add;

Those who must at all costs stand their ground need to have a secure footing; in the spiritual conflict, this is supplied by the gospel, appropriated and proclaimed. Pp 407-8

The shield will ‘repel attacks of various kinds’ (Bruce P 408) and even v16 “extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one”.

Look up and consider the various references in the context of Ephesians 6:10-20.

All this equipment is for the defence, that the Christian might ‘stand’. V18 introduces the ‘*sword of the spirit which is the word of God.*’

Bruce takes us to Isaiah 11:4, Deuteronomy 8:3 and reminds us that;

“Perhaps the best example of the use of his word to repel spiritual foes is seen in Jesus’ deployment of the text just quoted to repel the tempter in the wilderness. The divine utterance, the product of the Spirit, lends itself readily to the believer who has laid it up in his [sic] heart.” P 409

Can you recall instances where remembering scripture has strengthened you?

Looking Outwards

Verse 18 is about prayer.

Commit to praying unscripted prayers for all things and everyone.

Prayers ‘in the Spirit’ are prayers of unity and are assisted by the Spirit. - This does not mean that they are incoherent mumblings. Indeed, the influence of the Spirit in Creation is that of ‘detail, order and variety’. The Christian life should be full of prayers that reach towards God, delighting in God’s character; revelling in God’s purposes; seeking God’s ways; challenging the waywardness of human nature; seeking forgiveness; craving blessing on undeserving places; seeking justice, hope, salvation, opportunity, healing and protection.

Something to get your Teeth into!

'Rolex' : Rolex is a type of Ugandan street food. Delicious and quick to make, easy to hold and to eat, it is simply 'rolled eggs', but lovingly called rolex by everyone. Rolex has recently gained in popularity - it can be cooked indoors or outside over the campfire with friends. We quite like to wrap them in greaseproof for eating on the go.

Over the years of visiting my friends at Kampala Community Church in Uganda I and those I have travelled with have enjoyed this delicious treat, cooked in front of us in record time. We adapted it to use tortillas when cooking at home. Find ones that fit both your pan and appetite!

Per Rolex

2 eggs

Chopped Onion or Spring Onion

Chopped Fresh Tomato

Cabbage (optional)

Red or Green Chilli (optional)

Salt & Pepper

Chapati (or tortilla)

Beat the eggs together, season with plenty of salt and some pepper to taste. Add tomatoes, onion and other ingredients as desired.

Oil a large frying pan, add egg mixture to the hot pan.

Cook for a couple of minutes. While the top of the egg is still slightly runny, add the chapati or tortilla wrap on top, continue cooking until all egg is cooked and egg mix is stuck to the chapati.

Carefully turn over to cook the chapati for a moment.

Roll chapati and egg up into a large cylinder (Swiss-roll style) while keeping it in the pan. Then serve.

For authentic experience enjoy with your hands, if you have company, plates & cutlery may be used!

Bibliography

Bruce, Frederick F.; *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*; ECBC; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1984

Foulkes, Francis; *Ephesians*; TNTC; IVP Academic; 2nd edition; 2008

Graham, Billy; *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*; Collins; 1979

Stott, John; *The Message of Ephesians*; BST; IVP; 1989

Warrington, Keith; *The Message of the Holy Spirit*; BST; IVP; 2009

