

Unity In The Church

Spirit Or Truth?

(Jn 4:23-24)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on the “Unity In The Church.”
 - a. Last week we looked at “Nothing In A Name.”
 - i. **Ro 16:16** “Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”¹
 - b. This week we will be looking at “Spirit Or Truth.”
 - i. **Jn 4:23-24** “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”
3. Spiritual vs Religious
 - a. In an article titled “Americans’ Spiritual Searches Turn Inward” by George H. Gallup Jr. this staggering statistic, is found “33% said they are ‘spiritual but not religious.’ ” (<http://goo.gl/qUCDUc>)
 - i. That was in a January 2002 Gallup pole. Imagine what it is now...
 - b. In an attempt to make those that were given the title “SBNR” sound more “pleasing” a new title has come to light started by Rabbi Rami Shapiro “Spiritually Independent.” (<http://goo.gl/PLqSul>)
 - i. Can there be a clearer picture made?
 - c. We are living in a time that defines religion and spirituality as two different things.
 - i. Jefferson Bethke most notably made that argument in his famous YouTube video “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus.”
4. There is nothing new under the sun.
 - a. Before we begin to examine such a thought as “Spirit Or Truth” let us not forget that this is by no means a new debate.
 - i. It might have new names and new proponents but it is not new.
 - b. We have to look no further than the now titled Methodist denomination.
 - i. It’s founder John Wesley who in essence left the Anglican denomination because of a desire to show a more spiritual side to religion. (<http://goo.gl/7DGI22>)
 - c. Looking even further back this is the very thrust of the gnostic movement.
 - i. The physical is evil the spiritual is righteous as such religion is pointless.
5. As our series suggest the reason for this study is because it is causing divisions in the Lord’s church.
 - a. Young people are eating this ideology up.
 - b. More than enough in the church are failing to understand it.
 - c. The church is crumbling spiritually because of it.
 - i. This is causing a chasm between the righteous and the unrighteous.
6. With that in mind let us examine our lesson for today.

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

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I. The Spirit Or Truth Debate Is The Foundation For Change Agents

- A. When one defines spiritual worship and truthful worship as two different things separate from each other there becomes a problem
 - 1. The problem is that emotions become the interpreter of the Bible.
 - i. In other words the Bible can mean something different to everyone based on their emotions.
 - ii. Have you ever studied with someone and when you come to a part they disagree with they say “I don’t feel that is what it means.”
 - a. If you have you have studied with someone that either willingly or unwillingly has succumb to this ideology.
 - 2. The problem is that everything goes from outward to inward.
 - i. People that hold to this “Spiritually Independent” idea are saying it isn’t about others it’s singular and as such only personal and can’t be shared.
 - a. There no longer remains evangelism.
 - ii. God created the church to be an outward expression of the inward transformation from dead to alive.
 - a. **Mt 5:16** “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
- B. Some things that have cropped up over the years in the name of being more spiritual than religious
 - 1. The use of mechanical instruments.
 - i. They make the worship more “moving” or “spiritual.”
 - 2. The partaking of the Lord’s Supper on a day other than Sunday.
 - i. One prominent preacher’s wife, in the brotherhood, wrote concerning her partaking of the Lord’s Supper on Saturday, “It was the most spiritual thing I have ever done.”
 - 3. The expectation that preachers should preach sermonettes rather than sermons.
 - i. **II Ti 4:3** “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions”
- C. Thus...
 - 1. This the reason mechanical instruments, sermonettes, and the like creep in because it becomes all about “my emotions and my emotions only.”

II. Spirit & Truth

- A. Over the years I have heard a lot of sermons on Spirit & Truth
 - 1. I, like you, have heard this common teaching in the church “Jesus’ teaching on **Jn 4:24** clearly shows that spirit is the emotional side of worship while truth is the doctrinal side of worship.”
 - i. **Jn 4:24** “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

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2. This is the common thought today.
 - i. Spirit = emotion
 - ii. Truth = doctrine
 3. However a closer look at the Bible indicates this cannot be the case.
- B. Truth defined
1. This is the easy one for those faithful in the church to define.
 - i. Truth is God's Word.
 - a. **Jn 8:32** "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
 - b. **Jn 17:17** "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."
 2. Thus we must worship God in truth...
 - i. This means worship God according to His Word.
 - a. **Co 3:17** "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
- C. Spirit defined
1. This is the not so easy one as it cannot be simply the emotion.
 - i. The reason for this is simple, emotions lead people astray even if they have the Word of God.
 - a. **Pr 14:12** "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."
 - ii. Paul had the word of God but his emotions based on his Jewish heritage blinding him from truth.
 2. So what is spirit?
 - i. Though spirit isn't simply emotion it is an emotional resolve for obedience to truth.
 - a. Illustration: You can immerse yourself day after day in a swimming pool without it being spiritual but as soon as you immerse yourself in a swimming pool looking to it as the representation of the death, burial, and resurrection it becomes spiritual.
 3. Thus we must worship God in spirit...
 - i. This means worship God with the emotional resolve to be completely obedient.
 - a. **Jn 14:15** "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
- D. Thus...
1. We must worship God with an eagerness to serve Him according to His Word.

CONCLUSION

1. Properly understanding that spirit and truth are completely intertwined is that which we must use to help fight against change agents and the like that would divide our brotherhood.
 - a. Let us be a congregation that never accepts or adheres to this ideology of "Spirit Or Truth."
2. Question: Do you worship in spirit and truth or spirit or truth?
 - a. My hope and prayer is spirit and truth.

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3. Invitation

- a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**