

“INTRODUCING THE HOLY SPIRIT”
Ezekiel 36:23-38, John 16:7-15
July 13 & 14, 2019

A little over a month ago we celebrated Pentecost, the birth of the Christian Church enabled by the filling of the disciples with the Holy Spirit. What an exciting event that must have been! However, after we worshipped together, there were several of you who asked some very pointed questions about the Holy Spirit, so I decided to do a series to help us understand the Holy Spirit and find how He is working today in the midst of the church. Not many pastors today speak about the Holy Spirit, outside of special services that we include His name along with God, Father, son and Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. So I invite you to spend some time discovering the importance of having the Holy Spirit in us in the midst of our journey of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first question we always have before us is “WHO is the Holy Spirit?” As I was growing up, I came to believe that the Holy Spirit was just that, a spirit or ghost, something that I could not see, but was out there to somehow give us help to live our lives. I thought of the Holy Spirit as an “it,” an entity without a name or body, and even without much of a purpose.

Yet, upon reading Jesus’ words about the Holy Spirit, I was instructed to see that the Holy Spirit is a PERSON. As such, the Holy Spirit is referred to by Jesus as “He.” And upon further study, we can see that He has a mind, He has knowledge, and He has a will, but differently than what we might think. He is not independent of His mind, or knowledge, or will, but rather He is God with us in Spirit form.

When we think about God, we often refer to Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, God in Three Persons. The Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit working among us to encourage us to have a relationship with Him. So throughout the New Testament we see that He speaks (Acts 1:16), He prays (Romans 8:26-27), He teaches (John 14:26), He works miracles (Acts 2:4, 8:39), He can be resisted (Acts 7:15), He commands (Acts 8:29, 11:13, 13:2), and He forbids (Acts 16:6-7).

From this we come to know that the Holy Spirit administers the life of the Christian church, hence the names He has been given as Counselor, Helper, Holy Ghost, and Comforter. He sets ministers

over churches, distributes varying gifts and ministries to individual members of the Church, and is always ready to lead and guide us to do the work of Jesus Christ. He loves us and desires us to come close to Jesus so that we might accomplish His purpose and plan for the Salvation of the world.

The Holy Spirit becomes the spotlight for Jesus, focusing everyone on God, the Son, so that we might grow in Him. He works behind the scenes to make it happen, challenging us, encouraging us, uplifting us, and strengthening us. He never works to highlight Himself, but everything He does highlights Jesus, so as we heard today in John 16:13-14, *“When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, He will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on His own authority, but He will speak of what He hears and will tell you of things to come. He will give Me (Jesus) glory, because He will take what I (Jesus) say and tell it to you.”*

So the next question we ask is “Why do I **NEED** the Holy Spirit?” Well, I counter that question with another quick question, “Is anything really possible without Him?” You see, while it is true that we can exist without having the Holy Spirit in our lives, it is the Spirit who gives us the power and possibility for real life. In Acts 1:8 we hear Jesus telling the disciples, *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”* While the church can exist without the influence of the Holy Spirit, and certainly there are many churches merely existing without the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit fills the people of the church with His power and gifts, there is a whole new potential for the church with regard to mission, outreach and ministry. The church is no longer just existing, but now, when the Holy Spirit moves within us and through us, the potential for much greater things is possible, even beyond our wildest dreams.

Before Jesus ascended back to His Father, God, He instructed the disciples not to do any work until the Holy Spirit came upon them. When the first Christian Pentecost took place, the Holy Spirit gave the followers of Jesus “the ability to communicate truth to other people, supplied them with in-depth perception into the needs of others, gave them a message, in order to convict of sin, heal, and

administer the infant Church. In short, He equipped them for service.”

“We in our century are certainly no less needy than our Lord or those first disciples. For us to attempt any church work, any ministry or witnessing solely through man’s devices, talents, and organizational machinery alone is as effective as trying to drive our car with water in the gasoline (tank).”¹ It’s just not possible for us to do the work of Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit’s help. The Holy Spirit changes everything so that even the work we do right now will have greater impact, greater influence and greater outreach in our world today. Without Him, we are not effective in moving mountains or touching lives.

We are only working by our own power if the Holy Spirit is not in us. That means it will most likely fail, unless He gives us the power to make it happen.

So if the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to do the work of Jesus in our world today, we can then ask ourselves, “Have I already RECEIVED the Holy Spirit?” To answer that question we have to first consider the difference between John’s baptism and Jesus’ baptism.

When Paul got to the city of Ephesus in Acts 19, “*he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?’ ‘We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit,’ they answered. ‘Well, then, what kind of baptism did you receive?’ Paul asked. ‘The baptism of John,’ they answered. Paul said, ‘The baptism of John was for those who turned from their sins; and he told the people of Israel to believe in the One who was coming after him – that is, in Jesus.’*”

John’s baptism was for the repentance of sin in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Yet it was for the turning of a person from the ways of the world back to the ways of God. When Jesus arrived, He ushered in a new baptism, one with power and authority that would now go beyond mere adherence to the Law, but bring true relationship with God the Father by means of the Salvation of the Son, Jesus.

The first step to this new power and authority is through REPENTANCE in Jesus’ name. There

¹ (Catherine Marshall, *The Helper* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979] pg. 24-25)

is need for us to confess our sins before the Lord in order to find complete absolution of our sin through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary. Ezekiel 36:25-26 explains what happens to us, as God says, *“I will sprinkle clean water on you and make you clean from all your idols and everything else that has defiled you. I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart.”*

This takes place as we ACCEPT Jesus into our lives as our Lord and Savior – that’s step two. We claim the sacrifice of Jesus, and we claim His forgiveness of our sins, and we open our hearts for Him to come into us and reside in us. Once we belong to Jesus, by repentance and acceptance, then, and only then, can the Holy Spirit come INTO us to make His home within us. Then we have all of His power and authority available to us to do the great work that God has called us to do.

But this, then, invites us to have some serious self-examination of our lives. First, (a.) Have I ever asked God for the Holy Spirit? We have to seek the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, for He doesn’t barge into us and force His way into our lives. We have to invite the Holy Spirit into us.

Now that’s not to say that God can’t use a person in a mighty way through the Holy Spirit. God can empower anyone with His Holy Spirit to do the work that needs to be done. We see that throughout the Bible, where God uses both believers and pagans to do His work, often in miraculous ways. But for the Holy Spirit to live IN us, we first claim Jesus and then invite the Holy Spirit into us.

Second, (b.) Do I have evidence of the Holy Spirit in me? Has Jesus become real to me to the point that I can trust Him with every aspect of my life and follow His every command? When the Holy Spirit comes into us, He begins to make real changes within us that everyone is able to see. They may not understand it, but they can see the difference in our life.

Third, (c.) Can I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? When we allow the Holy Spirit into our lives, we open ourselves up to hear His instructions, His corrections, His guidance, and His teachings. If the Holy Spirit lives in us, we will begin to hear God’s direction inviting us to follow Him.

Fourth, (d.) Do I have a new love for people – even the enemy? When we open ourselves up to

the Holy Spirit, we begin to see others as brothers and sisters in as much need for love and grace as Jesus shows us. So we begin to treat others differently, even those who are radically against us.

Fifth, (e.) Do I have changes in the way that I talk? When the Holy Spirit moves into us and we open up ourselves to His examination, He begins to convict us of many things, even the way that we address others and the way we conduct ourselves. Our speech becomes different as we yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit's authority within us.

Sixth, (f.) Am I experiencing new power? The Holy Spirit does not want us to remain powerless, so He provides new power for us to do the work of the Lord when we let Him have access and control of our lives.

Seventh, (g.) Is my prayer life any different? The Holy Spirit begins to open up our eyes to see the needs of those around us, and prompts us to become prayer warriors for the work of the Gospel.

If none of these things is beginning to take place in your life, it could be that you have not yet fully opened up your heart and mind and soul to the Holy Spirit. When God puts a new heart into us, as we claim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives, expect changes to begin. You cannot do the same things and be the same person you were before you let Jesus into your life if God has replaced your heart with His new heart. If there are no changes taking place in your life, you need to consider seeking the Lord again and asking Him to give you His Holy Spirit. It will make all the difference in your life.

As a new believer in Jesus Christ, then, there is no need to be an **ORPHANED** Christian. Orphans are ones who are all alone without family. When we have Jesus within us, we have His promise, "*I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you...*" (John 14:18). That is why He sent us the Holy Spirit, to be with us, His family, forever. We have **NOT** been left on our own. God is with us in His Holy Spirit.

So that means that we are in the Third Age of history. The first age involved God the Father, giving His Law to the people for them to follow. God gave prophets, priests and kings to the people so that they would continue to guide the people back to Him. This age promised the coming of One who

would bring peace and salvation to all who would follow Him, in essence the Messiah of God for the redemption of the world.

The Second Age of history was the time when God became flesh and walked among us as Jesus, the Son of God. This began the age of grace as Jesus taught the people of the Kingdom of God, healed many of their diseases, took our place on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin, dying, and then rising again, glorified as our Risen Savior.

But with the rejection of Israel to be the heralds of God's message of Salvation, the Third Age began as Jesus sent forth the Holy Spirit of God into the lives of His followers so that all people could hear the message of the Salvation of God through Jesus. This is the age in which we live, as Jesus invites us to receive the Holy Spirit into us as His brothers and sisters. The Holy Spirit is here with us TODAY in order to complete the work Jesus began of bring Salvation to the whole world. The Holy Spirit sanctifies and works through the Church, Christ's body, and we are a part of that body as followers of Jesus. So we walk in faith in Jesus Christ, but we move by the work of the Holy Spirit as He dwells in us.

The next question we can ask ourselves is, "Could anything be better than the presence of the Holy Spirit?" As we look into our world today, we see many people trying to find meaning and purpose in their lives. They are diligently seeking real life as they pursue fame and fortune, delighting themselves with positions of power, amassing wealth, pursuing pleasures and going as fast as they can to seek out life. And when they don't find the filling of that void within them, they often turn to drugs, alcohol and other destructive behaviors to try to satisfy that gnawing emptiness within them. But without Jesus Christ in them to transform their lives the emptiness pervades and persists.

When Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit, He was offering us the very best of God. While nothing in this world satisfies the hungry heart, the Holy Spirit fills all the voids that are missing in us and grants us the peace that passes all understanding. But Jesus had to leave first, THEN the Holy Spirit would come. That was His promise in John 16:7, "*...it is better for you that I go away, because if*

I do not go, the Helper (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you. But if I do go away, then I will send Him to you.” Only then can the Holy Spirit come **IN** us.

But there is a huge difference between Jesus being *with us* and Jesus being *within us*. Catherine Marshall explains it like this: “The first group of Christians (being *with* Jesus) must still handle the knotty problems of their lives on their own strength, with Jesus’ help. They get much help, of course, for a loving Lord will always give us all we allow Him to give. So that’s good, yet not good enough.

“The second group knows that they are as helpless as Jesus said. They also know that the ‘vine life’ (being connected to Jesus) is the only one that is going to bring heaven’s power to earth and get results: their life has to be inside the vine, an integral part of its very cells and its life flow. This inside life is what the Holy Spirit makes possible to us.”² The Holy Spirit provides us with a power and authority beyond our own wisdom and strength to enable us to do much more than we could think or do on our own.

With the Holy Spirit comes the **EXPLOSION** of power available to all those who are “in Christ.” As our world is declining and turning towards evil of every kind, the only hope we have for our lives is the strength we can get from the Holy Spirit. We Need the Holy Spirit to cope with our day in the midst of this disintegration of our society. Jesus had instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon them.

And the result was the first Christian Pentecost that exploded with power and miraculous events. The church saw tremendous growth as the people were convicted of their sin, exposed to the truth of God’s Word, and corrected about the judgment of God for those who do not believe in Him. “This first Pentecostal outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit was then to be followed by other explosions of power across the centuries. Always these have come when evil was rampant, when men and women were depressed and in spirit-bondage, and when the fires of faith burned low.”³

Throughout the centuries, the Holy Spirit moved among the believers to bring about great

² (Catherine Marshall, *the Helper*, pg. 34) ³ (Ibid., pg. 36)

revivals and enlightenments that saw equal growth and encouragement within the Church as it did on that first Christian Pentecost. Throughout these movements by the Holy Spirit two steps were always present. First there was a Readying and Cleansing process that took place. People's hearts were exposed to the sinfulness in their lives and great conviction occurred, bring them to Repent of their sin, and begin to teach us the obedience to His commands. The Holy Spirit cannot move in the life of a person who acknowledges anything that contradicts and breaks the commandments of the Lord God. Repentance was absolutely vital before the Holy Spirit moved.

Then, there was the preparation of the hearts of the people. In order for the Holy Spirit to move within us, we must Ready our hearts to receive Him. This is what it means to let Jesus become Lord of our life. It is the giving up of all things to allow Jesus to rule within us. There must be no other master in our life than Jesus, no other one we give ourselves over to as the leader of our life. Jesus has to be first within us before the Holy Spirit can come. It is this regeneration of our hearts and minds that brings the newness that we so desperately crave.

Only then can the second step take place, where God fulfills His promise, saying, "*I will put My Spirit within you* (Ezekiel 36:26-27). As we receive the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives, we open ourselves up to have God replace the old heart with a new heart, the heart of Jesus Christ. We give in to all of His commands, we give up all our wants and wishes for our lives, and give ourselves completely over to the work of the Lord. And that means more than becoming a pastor, but rather allowing the Holy Spirit to use you right where you are to do His work through you.

Then it is to Reclaim God's image in us by allowing the Holy Spirit into our lives. We have to let God have His way with us to make us "new creatures in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17) letting all the old things pass away and allowing the newness of God to come in. Then the Holy Spirit moves in and begins to work in you.

So having heard all of this, **ARE YOU READY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT?** Let's pray...
Father, move in me, forgive me, and come into me that I may be your Servant, in Jesus' name. AMEN.