

“RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Romans 8:5-17, Luke 11:1-13

July 27 & 28, 2019

A couple of weeks ago, I began our study of the Holy Spirit. As followers of Jesus Christ, it is important for us to fully understand Who the Holy Spirit is, and how He can guide, direct, and empower us to do the work that God has given us to do here on the earth. So the first message was understanding who the Holy Spirit is. Today I want to continue this focus on the Holy Spirit by helping us to understand what we must do in order to receive the Holy Spirit into our own lives so that He can work in and through us. So the first question that we ask after coming to know about the Holy Spirit is “How do I RECEIVE the Holy Spirit? What must I do?” Valid questions, and to find the answers we look at Scripture to guide us.

In our New Testament lesson of Romans 8 we see that We Must First HUNGER AND THIRST for Something More than what we have available to us now. Let me just ask a question of everyone, and you can raise your hand if you want. How many of you are completely happy with the way your life is going? No worries, no problems, no hardships, no struggles – everything is just great? The world is supplying you all that you need and want and there’s nothing lacking in your life? Ok, when we think about it, there’s a lot of rotten stuff here in this world that challenges and confronts and stands up in our face, right? If we allow the world to supply us with everything we need - all the strength, wisdom, amenities and answers – then there’s no need for us to go outside of ourselves to seek anything else. The world has much to offer, but the world does not bring real life to us. It comes down to this, life here really stinks compared to the options that God offers.

And we see that in Romans 8:5-8. Paul tells us that we have a choice to make in our life – to either choose the things of this world or the things provided to us by the Holy Spirit. The stuff of the world leads to death, but the things of the Spirit lead us to eternal life. Yet until we hunger and thirst for more than what the world has to offer, there is no need for the Holy Spirit to intercede in our lives.

Most of us don’t realize what we lack by living without the Holy Spirit in us. In her book, *The*

Helper, Catherine Marshall tells us "...without the Holy Spirit we do NOT have a personal awareness of God's love, we don't have a conviction of who Christ is; we miss a message of real help to others; we forgo the right words to speak in times of stress; we lose any of the fruits of the Spirit, those lovable characteristics of the Spirit-filled life; we lose real joy; we abandon renewal; we miss out on the guidance from God; we don't have the comprehension of the thoughts and mind of God; we abandon any help in our weakness; we lose the freedom from slavery to sin and harmful habits; we miss out on the gifts of the Spirit; we abandon healing (except what "nature" or doctors can give us); we lose the ability to like or to set our minds on things of the Spirit; we forget we have an Intercessor with the Father; and we miss the pledge of eternal life."¹ That's a lot of things we lose when we give up on the Holy Spirit and depend solely upon the things of this world! Romans 8:9 tells us, "...*Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.*"

Paul invite us to long for more than what this world has to offer. He invites us to live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than by the direction of the things of this world (Rom. 8:12-13). The stuff of this world leads only to death, but the things of the Spirit lead us to life. We must hunger and thirst for more than what this world has to offer.

And then we hear that we must become part of the family of God in order to find complete satisfaction and fulfilling. Romans 8:14-15 tells us, "*Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's (children). For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead the Spirit makes you God's children and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, 'Father! my Father!'*" Hungering and thirsting for the Holy Spirit draws us near to God and allows us to find ourselves in God's family through Jesus Christ.

And Jesus tells us in Luke 11:9-10, "...*Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and he who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to anyone who knocks.*" Unless we find the need to seek more from God in our

¹ (Catherine Marshall, *The Helper*, [Waco TX: Word Books, 1978] pg. 43-44)

lives, we will always be wanting more and more that the world cannot supply us with. In fact, the opposite will happen – we will find that which we do not want, and receive nothing of what we desperately seek. Having the Holy Spirit in our lives is the only way we find true life here in this world.

So once we begin to hunger and thirst for more than what the world has to offer, what must we do to receive it? We must **ACCEPT JESUS AS THE CHRIST**. Our world has an abundance of self-proclaimed prophets, gurus, and messiahs, all with great numbers of followers and much material resources. Is Jesus just another one of those who claim to have the answers to all our problems? That is something that each of us needs to decide for ourselves.

Our Scriptures tell us the words of Jesus, who told us who He is and instructed us that, “*No one comes to the Father but by Me*” (John 14:6). Now that sounds pretty exclusive, doesn’t it? And we hear Peter telling the Jewish religious authorities “*there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). Peter is instructing the leaders of the Temple about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah for the WORLD, given to the people of Israel so that they might become the heralds of Salvation for the rest of the world. He says that there is NO ONE ELSE that we can find salvation from the sin and death that rages here on the earth. Jesus is the ONLY way to Salvation from sin and death. No other prophet, no other religious leader, no other religion, no other person of this world can achieve the forgiveness of sins. So that means that only Jesus Christ is the One we are to follow in order to find eternal life. Yeah, it’s pretty exclusive in terms of WHO we are to put our faith and trust in, BUT it is open to everyone to come to Him. All are invited to find new life through Jesus.

Since Jesus is the King, the Messiah for the world, God has given us the Holy Spirit as Jesus coronation gift. The Holy Spirit comes to us only after we receive Jesus as our Savior and let Him become Lord of our life as we strive to follow Him throughout our life. We must accept Jesus as the Christ into our lives before we can receive the Holy Spirit.

The third thing we must do to receive the Holy Spirit is We Must **DECIDE TO OBEY** Jesus as

the Good Shepherd. The Holy Spirit will not come into the life of anyone who does not obey Jesus.

How foolish would that be to empower a non-believer with the power and authority of God? So the Holy Spirit only comes into the lives of those who willingly, diligently, decidedly follow ALL of what Jesus teaches us. The disciples told the leaders of the Synagogue that very thing in Acts 5:32. They said, *“We are witnesses to these things – we and the Holy Spirit, who is God’s gift to those who OBEY Him”* (capitalization is mine).

“The Lord gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. “This in no way contradicts the fact that God’s gifts can be received only by grace (the unmerited favor of God) through faith, because faith (trusting God) and obedience are but two sides of the same thing. Nor can trust ever end in just intellectual faith or lip service to faith. When it is the real thing, it will spill over into action – and that will mean obedience”² to the teachings and commands found throughout the Bible. You see, faith without trust is nothing. Nor is faith without obedience. Trust and obedience make up our faith in Jesus as the Savior. We cannot say we have faith in Jesus and not do what He teaches. Jesus says it Himself, *“If you love Me, you will obey My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God... Whoever loves Me will obey My teachings. My Father will love him, and My Father and I will come to him and live with Him”* (John 14:15-17, 23). The Holy Spirit then is a gift to the obedient of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep, how can He lead them to the green pastures and still waters (Psalm 23:2) if they will not obey Him and follow Him? Obedience to Jesus is absolutely essential before we can ever hope to receive the Holy Spirit. Then, as we obey the Lord Jesus, that obedience brings completion to His plans and His will. We see that in the life of Ananias in Acts 9:10-19, when he hears the Lord call him to go and anoint Saul of Tarsus so that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit and become the Apostle Paul. As we obey the direction of the Holy Spirit, wonderful things happen. But when we suppress the Holy Spirit and decline to follow His call, terrible things can result.

² (Catherine Marshall, *The Helper*, pg. 51)

So the question for us is, “what would it look like for me to obey the calling of the Holy Spirit in my life?” What would we be able to accomplish by following His lead? What could we prevent if we decided to obey Him and do as He calls us to do?

The fourth thing we must do to receive the Holy Spirit is We Must INVITE JESUS as the Baptizer, the One who gives us the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the Only One who can baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The day of Jesus’ resurrection, when He surprised those gathered together, “...*He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’*” (John 20:22). Jesus gave the disciples the possibility to receive the Holy Spirit in order that they might become empowered to go out into their world, outside of the locked doors and shuttered windows where they were hiding. This was the only way that they could go on.

Then, shortly before He ascended back into heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples again “*Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift My Father promised...the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 1:4-5). Only after Jesus had promised them the coming of the Spirit after He ascended into heaven did they receive Him on the day of Pentecost. Jesus was no longer there, but the Holy Spirit came to empower the disciples to do the work of the church

Likewise, we 21st century Christians can receive the Spirit in no other way. It is Jesus who gives us the Holy Spirit as we trust Him and obey Him. We must invite Jesus to baptize us with His Holy Spirit so that we, too, might have the power and strength to do His work here in our world today.

But that means the fifth thing we must do is We Must Be Willing to Be PUT TO WORK by Him. We are not just to believe in Jesus, accept Him into our lives, and then sit around thinking we’ve got it all when the Holy Spirit comes to us. No, Jesus’ top priority for all of His followers is to witness to the world in loving service. That means we get to work! Jesus tells us that in Mark 10:43-45, “...*If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; He came to serve and to give His life to redeem many people.*” Being a Christian is not living a couch potato life, but one that is

servicing and helping others. We are meant to get out and touch the lives of others, sharing the Good News of Jesus.

But the Holy Spirit can only work in us as we are willing to go for Him. Last Thursday night I was walking down by Lake Michigan and I came upon a young man who had had an accident on his bicycle. He was walking slowly in the opposite direction that I was and when I asked him how he was, he said, "Not good." (Red flag #1) I asked if he had gone over on his bike, and he said yes. (Red flag #2) He then asked me to look at his back just below his left shoulder blade because it hurt there and he was having a tough time breathing. Though there was no bruise or scrape on his back, I missed the third red flag that told me I should do something for him. My first thought was to offer him a ride to his home, but since I was almost 25 minutes away from home that didn't make sense. I asked him how far he had to go to get home and he said about ½ a mile. And you know what I said. "Oh, wow. Well take it easy and you should be ok." REALLY? About two blocks away, the Holy Spirit called out to me, "What are you doing? That young man needs assistance to get home and here you are walking away from him! Wow! What a great witness you are!"

You see, I wasn't in tune with the Holy Spirit's intention for me to help that young man get home or to the hospital, so I missed a chance to minister to him. I whipped right around to follow him and for the next ½ hour I tried to find him so that I could help him. But it was too late. My moment of opportunity was gone, and I missed a chance to share the love of Jesus with him. I'm still learning to obey the Holy Spirit, too. I am still haunted by what I didn't do when I could have helped.

Folks, get sensitive to the Holy Spirit so that He can use you to touch others. The fullness and overflowing of the Spirit will come to us only as we say "Yes!" to Him. We have to be willing to follow His direction before He can work in and through us.

The sixth thing we need to do to receive the Holy Spirit is We must **REPENT** and be Baptized. In Acts 2:37-38 we find the end of Peter's Pentecost sermon to the people gathered in Jerusalem. He has called them to come to faith in Jesus, but they ask, "...*What must we do, brothers?*" Peter said to them,

'Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit.' We Rise to new life as we give up on the things of this world and turn to Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; the old things have passed away, behold new things have come."* We have to make the change in our life before God will allow His Holy Spirit into us. Holiness and cleanliness cannot live in a sin-ridden slum. So we have to repent of all the stuff of the world and become clean by the power of Jesus Christ before the Holy Spirit will come make His home in us.

And when the Holy Spirit comes into us, He points out ALL of our sin. There will not be one sin left hidden in our life. The Holy Spirit will move throughout every room in our life and will begin to tell us, "That needs to go. And that needs to go. And that needs to go." Repentance becomes real to us only as He makes it very specific about the sins in our life that needs to be confessed and forgiven. Does that make us perfect people? No, but as the Holy Spirit builds His home in us, we become more and more sensitive to the sins in our life that are offensive to the Lord our God. It's the process of sanctification – growing pure and holy before the Lord.

We are complete only in Jesus Christ as we let the Holy Spirit move among us and purify us of every defect and impurity caused by sin. Ephesians 2:4-10 guides us in knowing the extent of God's love for us, and the great work that Jesus has done so that we might be saved. Verses 4-5 reads, *"But God's mercy is so abundant, and His love for us is so great that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience (sin) He brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved."* God desires a close, up-close and personal relationship with us, and that is only possible as we allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in us and expose all the sin that separates us from God the Father. That's the only way we can become complete as human beings – by following Jesus.

The seventh and final thing we must do to receive the Holy Spirit is We must ACCEPT GOD'S GRACE. Grace is God's unmerited favor to us, not giving us what we deserve because of our sin, which would be His punishment, but in His grace, giving us love instead. We have salvation through

Jesus Christ ONLY because of God's grace given to us. We must accept God's grace through Jesus in order to find the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is given only by God's grace to those who seek Him and obey His commands. In Galatians 3:1-5, Paul challenges the people to consider how it was that they received the Holy Spirit. He asks the question, "*Does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you because you do what the Law requires or because you hear the gospel and believe it?*" (Galatians 3:5). It is only in receiving the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believing it that we have any hope of receiving the Holy Spirit.

But listen to this important quote from Watchman Nee, evangelist in china: "The Holy Spirit has not been poured out on you or me to prove how great we are, but to prove the greatness of the Son of God." Our having the Holy Spirit does benefit us, but He is not in us to make us great! Rather He is in us so that we might fulfill the things of Jesus and glorify HIM in all that we do and say.

And we need to understand this carefully, We do not control the Holy Spirit; He controls us. Jesus tells Nicodemus, a leader of the ruling Jewish Council, "*The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us talents and abilities to use for the purpose of glorifying God. We cannot tell the Holy Spirit to do anything, or command the use of any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit without His first enabling us to do so. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals all things to us, guides us, directs us, and empowers us for the work of ministry. Once more, Jesus tells us in John 14:21, "*Whoever accepts My commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. My Father will love whoever loves Me; I too will love him and reveal Myself to him.*"

So to receive the Holy Spirit into our lives, we must 1) Hunger and thirst for more than what this world has to offer, 2) we must accept Jesus as the Christ, 3) we must decide to obey Jesus' commands, 4) we must invite Jesus to baptize us with His Spirit, 5) we must be willing to be put to work, 6) we must repent of our sin, and 7) we must accept God's grace. So WHEN WILL WE BEGIN?

Let's pray: Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true, with thanksgiving I'll be a willing sanctuary for you...In Jesus' name. AMEN.