

## Life With The Spirit Part 9

### What Now?

We come to the end of our Life With The Spirit series this morning. I hope this has been helpful to you. This morning I want to try to wrap this all up and look to the future by taking a brief look at the past.

As followers of Christ who have identified ourselves with the Assemblies of God, we are what scholars call Pentecostal, i.e. we believe in the active and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, including the experience we call the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues. We believe in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is continuing to work in and through the church just as he did in the book of Acts.

Luke wrote in Acts 1, **“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.” Acts 1:1.** Notice he referred to all that Jesus began to do and teach. We believe that Jesus is still doing something in this world and he is doing it through His church and by the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe the outpouring of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2 is still happening today. We believe that experience is meant for every believer. It is available to all. So we can trace our roots as Pentecostal believers back to that first New Testament Pentecost in Jerusalem. But the modern Pentecostal movement traces its roots back to humble beginnings in Topeka, Kansas at Charles Parham’s Bethel Bible School. The students there were convinced that the experience of spiritual empowerment that occurred in Acts 2 was still available for the church. They believed that it would be accompanied by speaking in tongues and began to pray for this Pentecostal blessing. Shortly after midnight on January 1, 1901, a young woman named Agnes Ozman was baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. Other students received that same experience and that Pentecostal message began to spread. I don’t think it was coincidental that this outpouring occurred on the first day of the twentieth century.

A humble, one-eyed black man named William J. Seymour heard the message. Seymour moved to Los Angeles to pastor a church and ended up holding prayer meetings in a private home on Bonnie Brae Street. People began to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. The crowds grew and they finally found an abandoned

AME church on Azusa Street. They began having services there in April 1906 and the services and the ensuing revival would continue for several years. At the height of the Azusa revival they were having three services a day, seven days a week for more than three years. From these humble beginnings came the birth of the greatest revival the world has ever known. Almost every Pentecostal denomination can trace its roots to the Azusa Street Revival and to this humble, black preacher. There are approximately a half billion Pentecostal/charismatic believers in the world making Pentecostals the largest group of Christians second only to the Roman Catholic church worldwide.

Given the culture of America at the turn of the last century, the prevalence of racism, how extraordinary that God began this world-changing movement through this humble man. That's what God did, what he began at the turn of the last century, but what is he doing now? Where are we now? We talk about needing a fresh Pentecost, a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but when we do, we are often thinking of a return to something from the past. We want to return to the "good old days" of the modern Pentecostal movement and that is not likely to happen. History – church history and our own spiritual history - seems to indicate that God is always anchoring us to an ancient faith and truth while at the same time moving us forward, upward in experience.

I believe we are in a hinge period of time with regard to the church and our faith. We are in a dangerous place in Western culture and it remains to be seen what will emerge as the church and the Christian faith in the next 50 to 100 years if Jesus delays his coming.

What does that mean for us? It means we must remain anchored to that ancient faith and reliant upon the present work of the Holy Spirit! We have to remain faithful; we have to carry out our mission taking the gospel to the whole world; we have to guard the truth of God's word and pass on this faith to the coming generations. How are we going to do that? I think it requires at least these three things.

**1. A lifetime process of transformation.** It's just another way to say "spiritual growth." The Holy Spirit begins his work in us even before our salvation, convicting us and drawing us to Christ. As we repent and place our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit brings about that spiritual conversion that was made possible through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We are made new creations in Christ. The Holy Spirit engages in what we called last week "a settled, permanent,

penetrative influence” in our life, working in our heart, sanctifying us, separating us from sin and conformity to the world and instead, making us conformable to the image of Christ. The bible says, “**And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**” **2 Corinthians 3:18** I believe this is a lifetime process. We remain surrendered to Christ as the Holy Spirit engages us – body, mind, soul, spirit, emotions, personality, attitude, every part of our being.

The Holy Spirit is at work, translating the nature of Christ into expressions of holy living, godly character and Christ like behavior. People should be able to see the nature and character of Christ in us, the fruit of the Spirit’s work. This transforming grace of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit will redeem you from that old life. That stuff you’ve been using, that life style you’ve been embracing, that hasn’t made you more alive, it’s been dulling your senses so you couldn’t even realize how dead and bound up and enslaved you really are. Don’t settle for the way life has always been. Give yourself to the One who gave himself for you, the One who loves you so much. He wants to transform you and complete you. Open your heart to Jesus and then give the Holy Spirit room to work in your life. Understand, this isn’t an event, this is a lifetime. This is more than a lifestyle, this is transformation. This is salvation and conversion and being made alive. Let the Holy Spirit make you a new creation and give him room to keep on working and shaping and transforming you with “ever increasing glory.” This is life with the Spirit.

**2. A vital revelation of Christ.** One of the things we mentioned early in this series was that the Holy Spirit always testifies of Jesus. He always point to Jesus and glorifies Jesus. He brings honor to Jesus and not to himself. I believe it is one of the things the Holy Spirit desires to do in the church today: to give us a fresh and vital revelation of the risen, living Christ, the one who died for us, who rose from the grave conquering death, the one who is coming back to judge the living and the dead!

I read an article this week dealing with what the authors were calling “moralistic therapeutic deism.” It’s kind of the spiritual idea that many in our culture have embraced. It could be summed up like this: There is a Creator God who watches over us. He wants us to be good and nice. The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself. God doesn’t need to be particularly involved in your life unless you need him to solve some problem. Good

people go to heaven when they die.

Jesus gets left out of the picture. There is no need for Calvary or a cross. Salvation isn't necessary because we are going to heaven anyway (if we are good and we must all be good because we are our own judge as to whether we are good or not.)

This is why I say we need a new and vital revelation of Christ in the church and in our culture. The word vital means "necessary or essential to life." We aren't looking for ways to memorialize a wonderful but nevertheless dead teacher and prophet and miracle worker named Jesus. We're talking about an everyday awareness of the real, vital, life giving, life transforming, empowering presence of Christ in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He isn't incidental to our life, he is vital to our life. He is our life! The faith that we have, this ancient faith to which we are anchored, it is a vital, life giving faith in a risen, living, Christ. Open your eyes to see Jesus! Open your heart to him and he will make you alive!

So I believe the Holy Spirit wants to bring about a lifetime process of transformation in our life. He wants to bring about a vital revelation of Christ and I believe he desires to provide **3. An awesome equipping power.** It's what Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. It is power to overcome sin. Power to live in and walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit. It is power to know - it is wisdom, clarity, vision, awareness, revelation. It is power to be - to be godly, pure, holy, radical, to be a world changer, to be a witness of Christ to our world. He has power available because we need power. We need this overcoming, equipping power, don't we?

I believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the entry point to much of what we've been talking about in this life with the Spirit and God wants you to have this experience. Let me show you something as I bring this to a conclusion. Turn to Acts 1:1-8.

Verse 2 speaks of Jesus giving instruction through the Holy Spirit to those he had chosen. I believe that includes us. We have been chosen. It is no accident or coincidence that we are here at this moment in history. If indeed this is a hinge moment in the history of the church, God is relying upon us, he has chosen us, to stay anchored to the faith and reliant upon the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3 says he showed himself to these men and gave convincing proofs that he was alive. He is still revealing himself to us, showing us his power, his plans, his purpose.

Verse 8 speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants to empower us, to equip us and then he wants to send us out as a witness, a light in the darkness, a testimony to his grace and mercy. Are you willing? Are you interested? Would you like to experience this deeper life with the Spirit of Christ? I believe you are here for this very reason. I believe he wants to engage you in this life of transformation so you can be all he created you to be, he wants to reveal himself to you in a vital, life-giving, life-sustaining fashion and he wants to empower you and equip you so you can do all he created you to do. Give the Holy Spirit access to your heart and your mind and spirit. Give him room to work.

As I said, I believe the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the entry point to this deeper life with Christ. If you would like to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, or if you would just simply like to surrender yourself to Christ and to the work of the Spirit, I want you to join me here at the front. We are going to pray together.

Consider his promise. If you ask the Father, he will give the Holy Spirit. Ask. "Father, I believe this experience is real and is meant for me as part of my life with the Spirit. Jesus, I have trusted you for salvation and now I trust you to baptize me in the Holy Spirit. I open my life to you and to receive the fullness of your Spirit in my life."

Now begin to praise Him and thank Him for His work in your life. Express your love to him. Now be aware of His presence. You may actually feel his presence. Don't be afraid. In your mind and spirit you may hear a sound, a syllable, a word that might seem unfamiliar. Don't be afraid. Simply speak it out. Your lips may seem to stammer or tremble; that's okay. Continue to praise the Lord, but understand the Holy Spirit may begin to give you new words of praise. You still have to do the verbalizing. It is still your mouth, tongue, lips, vocal chords, but it is his language.

Disregard the doubts – 'Is this real? Is this me?' 1 Corinthians 14:14 says "If I pray in tongues my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful." No, you won't know what you are saying unless there is an interpretation, but it does not invalidate the experience. It is the Holy Spirit of God adoring Christ and praising and praying through you in a rich new heavenly language.

You will likely hear other people praying in the Spirit around you. Don't worry if your language sounds different than others. This is the Holy Spirit's creative and distinct work. Don't be disappointed if you don't speak in tongues this morning. Just open your heart and life to the

exciting work of the Holy Spirit.