

Practical Aspects of the Holy Spirit

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The text we found in the 24th chapter of Luke, and in Acts 1, familiar passages. Our Lord says, Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be imbued with power from on high. And Acts 1, it says, He showed himself alive after his passion, and being assembled together with the disciples, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

In my previous talk, I attempted to show who the Holy Spirit is, and with great reverence and imperfection, what He is. I tried to show that He's a real being and not an abstraction, that He is a person and not a thing, that He is very God, having all the powers and attributes of the Deity, and that He is of one essence with the Father and the Son. Now, granted this is true, what has this to do with you and me?

I don't like to teach in a vacuum. I have never liked to have someone hear a sermon and after hearing, go home and say, so what? If that was the case, I might as well have been somewhere else, as well as yourself unless there is some moral imperative, some obligation lying upon us as a result of what we know, some privilege which is ours as a result of what we can find out.

So, with that in mind, what is the practical effect of the person of the Holy Spirit? What are we to expect and what are we to do? How should it affect my outlook as a Christian? And how should it affect the outlook of your church?

The Father promised the Spirit as a gift to His children. And I don't know whether this is right or not, but I think God maybe had in mind the example of love people have for their children. He did say, if you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

And in making the Spirit, the Promise of the Father, I wonder if He didn't want to show that you don't have to be afraid of the Holy Spirit. This is one thing that it is very difficult to get a Christian over, the fear of the Holy Spirit. By that I don't mean reverence for Him. You cannot reverence the Holy Spirit too much, but you can be afraid of Him.

And I am sure that a lot of people are afraid of the Holy Spirit. But if you could remember that He is the Father's promise that He is given to us as the Father's promised gift; just as a man offers or promises his son a bicycle for Christmas, or whatever he wants, and the boy remembers. I know they remember. And they come back and remind you sometimes in an embarrassing time that you've promised. And nobody is ever afraid of a promise made by a father who loves him.

I believe the members of the Redeemed Church should be bound in a bundle of love with the Holy Spirit. The truth is that God never thought of His church apart from the

Holy Spirit. We were born of the Spirit. We are baptized into the body of Christ by the Spirit. We should be anointed with the Spirit. We are led of the Spirit or should be. We are taught of the Spirit. And the Spirit is the medium, the divine solution in which God holds His Church and has His Church. The Holy Spirit is the essence of the Godhead uncreated; I think the poet or the hymnist said.

God never dreamed of his people apart from the Holy Spirit. And he made a lot of promises to them. Let's note some of the promises that he made. He said, until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.

Then, further on in Isaiah, He says, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.

Then there's that famous passage in Joel 2:28-29, it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Those are the words of the Father, and Jesus interpreted these words and called them the promise of the Father. And whenever you have Jesus, our Lord, interpreting the Old Testament, you stay close by His interpretation.

Don't depend too much or lean too hard on the interpretations of men because we can be wrong, but our Lord, the man Christ Jesus, never was. And He called this the promise of the Father. That is, the Father, through the Old Testament, through the years, had promised, and now Jesus sums it up and calls it the promise of the Father.

In Luke 24 Jesus says, tarry ye until ye be endued with power, and I will send the promise of the Father upon you, and in John 14, 15, and 16, you'll find our Lord talking about the Holy Spirit and His coming to the Church.

And now I notice that in the Church, in the Gospels and Acts, and over into the Epistles, there are three periods that are discernible with respect to the Holy Spirit and His work in the Church. There is what we call the period of the Promise, that is, from John the Baptist to the resurrection of Christ.

Now, the marks of this period, this three-year period, shows the disciples were called, and they were commissioned, and they were taught. Do you know, believing friend, if we could get together a congregation that was as spiritual as the disciples were before Pentecost, we would consider it a very spiritual Church. We'd make bishops out of those boys. We would. We'd elect them to the boards, and we'd write about their lives and name churches after them if we could find somebody just as spiritual as they were before the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost.

They were getting ready, you see. The disciples were called, there's no question, they were called and they were commissioned and they were taught of the Lord. We talk about these ignorant disciples. Do you know that these disciples had three years in the best Bible school in the world? There isn't a seminary on earth that can equal the seminary with Jesus as the whole faculty. He was teaching them and instructing them and sitting with them.

They used to say a university consisted of Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a boy on the other. Put a young fellow on one end of a log and Mark Hopkins on the other. If the log wasn't too long, you had a university. And a Bible school, a seminary, consists of our Lord Jesus Christ and a willing student. The disciples went to the best Bible school in the world.

Now, they didn't get a degree which they could frame and put on their study wall, but they had a degree inside of them. And they loved Christ our Lord. These disciples did. They loved Him living, they loved Him dead, and they loved Him living again.

That was the period of the promise when they hadn't received anything yet, they had only been promised something. And all this time until His death and even after, Jesus was creating expectation in them. He was telling them there was a new kind of life coming to them. It wasn't to be a poetic life. It wasn't to be psychic or to be physical, but it was to be an aflux from above. It was to be something that was to come to them out of the world, beyond them and over the threshold of their beings. It would come into the sanctum sanctorum, into the penetralia, into the deep of their spirit and live there, and teach them and instruct them and lead them and make them holy and give them power.

Jesus taught that all the way through wherever He could find a time and the people were about him and the circumstances were good, He would tell them these things. And as He came nearer to the end of His earthly life, He intensified this teaching as is indicated in John 14, 15 and 16. He told them there was a new and superior kind of life coming. And He told them it was to be an effusion, an outpouring of spiritual energy. And then He left them.

Then there was a second period, the period of the preparation. In some measure, they were being prepared while He walked with them. But after He had gone, then they began to prepare. They stopped their activities.

And you know what's the matter with us in our day? We are the busiest bunch of eager beavers that probably have ever been in the religious world. The idea is that if you're not running in a circle, if you are not breathing down the back of your own neck, you're not pleasing God. When the fact is, the Lord said, don't go yet, you're not ready to go.

You know Peter leaped to his feet when the Lord said, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Peter leaped to his feet and I doubt grabbed or scooped up his hat on the way out. He was going to go right now and maybe found or start something. But the Lord said to Peter, tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

I think one of the biggest mistakes we make with our young people is to get them born again and then start them out right away. Most people are not prepared to do the work of the Lord when they're just born again.

The priests were born priests, but they had to be anointed priests before they could serve. They were born priests. They had to be born of the tribe of Levi, of the family of Aaron and Kohen. They had to be born into the priesthood, or they couldn't be priests. But they didn't serve even though they were born priests. They didn't serve as priests until they had been anointed.

Blood was put on their ears, on their thumbs, on their toes and then on the blood was put oil, fragrant sweet oil, a type of the Holy Ghost. Then after they had been anointed for the priesthood they went and served in the Old Testament priesthood.

But you and I, just as soon as we get a fellow born into the tribe of Levi, we give him a bunch of tracts and say, now Bud, get going. And the result is, Christianity has taken on amateurism.

I heard Dr. Busby, the former president of Wheaton College one time say that we are suffering from a rash of amateurism in Christian circles, and we surely are. Christianity has leveled down and down and down, and the high quality, the specific gravity and the weight of it has gone. We're light as butterflies and we flip, flip, flip around in the sunshine and imagine that we are eagles flapping our broad wings above the rocks of God but instead of that, we're butterflies. We're trying to work when we're not prepared to work. And so there needs to be some preparation, some getting ready. They stopped their activities.

I have said lots of radical things in my ministry, but I don't apologize because I wouldn't have enough time. But among the things I have said, and I would stand for it, that the church would be better off if we would call a moratorium on activity for about six weeks, and just wait on God to see what He would do for us. Just wait on God. They did that very thing. They cleaned up the loose ends and they got united.

We pray, O God, send thy Holy Spirit upon us so we'll be united. We might just as well repeat the three blind mice. God doesn't hear that kind of prayer because it doesn't have any sense in it. The Holy Spirit did not come upon the disciples to unite them. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples because they were already united, being of one accord and in one place.

Now the scholars who are supposed to know, tell me it's a musical term, that being in one accord is a musical term. It means being one in harmony. They were already one, in harmony with each other. And then they were all together in one place.

If we could only get God's people, all together today in one place. The trouble is with some of us is, we are here, but we are not all here. Our minds are skattered when in church, wandering around all over, but you are physically present in your body. But they were all together in one place.

Somebody once said that we have yet to see what God can do with a man if He can get him and others all together in one place. If He can just get them together and in one place; get them focused and get them together. And they were there.

And then came the third period, the period of the realization. The Holy Ghost came upon them suddenly. Recently I saw a word here in the Book of Acts, and I found that word occurs quite often through the Scriptures, and that is the word suddenly. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And I rather smiled to myself because that word, suddenly; God's people are so afraid of suddenly. They always want things to slip up on them a little bit at a time, slowly. Everybody is willing to be filled with the Holy Spirit, provided God does it very gingerly and very slowly, and doesn't take away their faith or embarrass them any, or doesn't frighten them.

But the Scripture says, suddenly, they were filled with the Holy Ghost. It even says, suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. I think you'll find that word, suddenly, occurs pretty near to whenever God did a wonderful thing. He did it suddenly.

But we're afraid of that. We want to grow in grace. We want to grow, because you can grow and not embarrassed if an altar call is given, and you go to the prayer room and get down on your knees and seek Almighty God. And God comes and fills you and you get up and get your handkerchief out and rub your eyes and say, thank God the Comforter has come.

It's embarrassing, you know. And it takes a little bit away from your reputation. You've got a feeling, like, look at me. I used to be the chairman of the board, and I taught an adult Sunday school class in my home church, and now for me to suddenly be filled with the Spirit, and maybe even break down and cry, or say, praise the Lord, it would be awful.

And the result, of course, is we go on year after year and learn to live with death. We learn to live with a spiritual corpse. We learn to live, but our breath is frosty, and our cheeks are pale, and our toes are frostbitten and we haven't much spirituality. Yet we learn to live with that and imagine that's normal and we write books to prove that that's normal. It's not normal at all, it's subnormal, it's abnormal, it's below normal. The Holy Ghost isn't on us and that's our trouble.

But the period of the realization came suddenly, and the Father fulfilled His promise, and the expectations were fully met and more. Always remember this, that God is always bigger than anything God can say, because words are inadequate to express God and what He can do.

Any promise that God ever made, God has to over-fulfill it. The reason being that God is so great and His heart is so kind and His desires so intense and tremendous, that language doesn't express it. Not the Greek, not the English, no language expresses God, it can't. If language could contain God, then language would be equal to God. So,

everything God says in the Bible must be understood to be a little greater than what He says, even as God is greater than language.

So when God promised them that they should receive power, that that power should be an aflux from heaven above which should come upon them. It should cross the threshold of their spirits and enter into the deeps of their soul and dwell there forever. And should work within them to lead them, purify them, instruct them and teach them. We have got to believe that the fulfillment will be greater than the promise because the fulfillment of God and the promise are words. God is always greater than words. Don't forget that.

Old Testament Scripture says every man shall know the plague of his own heart. But there was deliverance, a balm in Gilead, and there was a fountain opened in the house of David to deliver us from the plague of our own heart.

Now there's a great modern error abroad the states that the individual Christian is not affected by this promise of the Father, that this happened to the Church once, and it's not to be repeated, just as the birth of Christ happened once and is not to be repeated. The death of Christ happened once and is not to be repeated. The resurrection of Christ happened once and is not to be repeated.

So, Pentecost happened once, and that's it now; the church no longer is concerned. It has taken place, that is a historic fact, the same as the birth of Jesus, the same as the death of Jesus, and so it is brushed off.

I'm going to pose some questions now and let you do your own thinking, so you make your own decision without having it rammed down your throat, so to speak. You will have made your own decision about it. There are nine questions I want to ask you, and you decide.

The first question is, was the Father's promise for the first century Christians only? This promise of the Father that was to come, was that for the first century Christians only, or did that carry over to the second century and the third century and the fourth century?

My theological education came out of the Schofield Bible, and do you know what the Schofield Bible says? The Schofield Bible says that the period that Joel had in mind when he said that it shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. C.I. Schofield says that period, the last days, began at Pentecost and continues until Christ returns. We are living in the period of the last days when that text of Joel's is active and efficacious and applicable to you and me.

I quote Dr. Schofield because often he is quoted as not being on the side of the Spirit-filled life. But he was an honest man and he stated that; that we are now living in those latter days when God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. That's what he believed. Dr. Torrey said that when Peter said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the gift of the Spirit which is promised is unto you and your children and as many as are far off. It wasn't that first generation crowd only. You and your children and as many as are far off.

How far off is Palestine from where you are? I'm a better theologian than I am a geographer so you will have to guess at it. It says, as many as are far off. That's the first problem. Now you settle it, friend. If I try to make you believe something, you'll go away and if you meet a man that's a better arguer than I am, he'll make you believe the opposite.

That is always the reason I believe in the witness of the Spirit. If you can argue a man into believing he's filled, he'll meet another man that'll argue him out of believing he's filled. If you can argue a young fellow into thinking he's born again, he'll meet some fellow that'll argue him out of it.

This is why I don't ever argue with anybody. I point to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and after that God and the man is on his own. Then if I drop dead he'll have the promise of the Father and he won't have to go back to me to find out whether it's so or not. That's question number one, was the Father's promise for the first century Christians only?

Question number two is, does the new birth of the first century Christians make my new birth unnecessary? The Lord said that we have to be born again, and he said we were to be filled with the Spirit. And they come along and tell us that that meant they were to be filled with the Spirit. Granted, they were filled with the Spirit, but I happen to be born 1897. That's a few hundred years too late for that first century and here I am high and dry hanging on a wire and if I didn't live back there then I'm finished. I don't have any hope at all. I won't listen to that kind of teaching. I won't because you can't reason it this way.

Consider that Peter was born again. What does Peter being born again do for me? Peter was filled with the Spirit, then what does Peter having been filled with the Spirit do for me? I want to ask you this question, would a breakfast of ham, not ham and eggs, would a breakfast of eggs that Peter ate in 33 A.D. nourish me living today two thousand some years later? No, Peter ate his eggs and drank his milk and ate his brown bread.

But Peter's breakfast in 33 A.D. won't do me one bit of good now. I have to eat now if I'm going to be nourished now. Peter's being born again won't help me right now all these years later. I must be born again now as he was born again then. Peter's being filled in that day won't help me now, I must be filled now as he was filled then. Is there any difference between that and the outpouring of the Spirit?

Another question I want to ask, is it to the church today that the church in Jerusalem was filled with the Holy Ghost? This idea that the church being filled with the Spirit back there in the first century made it unnecessary for the church to be filled with the Spirit now is nonsensical. How silly can you get? No Christians living today were living in the first century. I wasn't and nobody I know was either. We weren't even in the minds of our great-grandfathers yet at that time.

But way back of that is the hour when the Holy Ghost came upon the church and the church went out in a blaze of fire to preach the gospel to the known world in the first hundred years, then the long lacuna, the long gap. Now, all these years later, and we have teachers that are so silly as to come and tell us that all we have to do is just go

quietly along until the Lord comes and makes us ruler over many cities. They had the Spirit back there and all we have is the echo and the memory and the hope.

Those who believe Pentecost was a one-time event, tell us at conversion we receive what they received back there at Pentecost. Now I want to ask you, have you ever seen anybody at his conversion receive what Peter received in the upper chambers? Have you ever met anybody like that? Do you know anybody like that?

And I want to ask you yet another question. When you were converted, did you have the power Peter had when he was with these brethren? You'll even level it down below Peter, to the common folk that were around him; just the plain people whose names were not even known, except a few of them. Didn't they have something that we apparently don't have in this day in which we live? I think they did.

Now I want to ask another thing. Is modern fundamentalism a satisfactory fulfillment of expectation raised by the Father and Christ? Our Heavenly Father promised the gift to the Holy Ghost to come upon his children. Jesus promised that we should have the Spirit, that He should come and take the things of Christ and make them known unto us. He should bring all things to our memory. We should have power when the Spirit came. He promised all this.

When I look around at the cold, dead, dried-up fundamentalism, textualism, hanging out to dry, and then am expected they want me to believe that what they have now is what they had back there then. I just can't do it. I just can't do it. We Christians now are a scrub lot compared with those Christians back there. We're scrub.

When I was a boy on the farm in Pennsylvania, we had scrub chickens. Occasionally my mother would go out and bring in some buff coachins and Plymouth rocks and some others and try to improve the strain a little bit. But if you just let the hens go a while, just let them go for five or six years, and they'll revert back to type and they'll go back to scrubbing. You can't figure out what they are, and they're just little old dried-up clucking biddies that lay little eggs, not too many of them, and don't provide much meat.

We Christians, we've just reverted back to the old Adamic type when were thoroughbreds in those early days, thoroughbreds. The early Christians had come from God, or something from God had come to them, and they blazed with light and power and life, and look at us, look at us. And then we try to say we have the same thing that they have. Do you think we have? Now you think it over and answer that question for yourself.

And then I want to ask you one more question. Does your heart personally witness that what you now enjoy is what our Lord promised to His people? Does your heart now bear witness that what you now have is all God meant when He painted that wonderful picture of the fulness of the Spirit, or is there something more for the church?

I am sure some readers want to ask, who is this man, Tozer. What is he? Is this Pentecostal tongue-ism that he's preaching? No, absolutely not. It's only what the Christian Missionary Alliance has always believed. It's only what Dr. Reuben Archer Torrey believed. It's what Billy Sunday believed, and Billy Graham believed, though Billy

was gifted of God to preach to sinners, and he doesn't enter this too much because his gift is a bit different. He preaches straight to sinners and wins them. But it's what Torrey, I insist, believed. It's what Dwight L. Moody believed down in the city of Chicago.

Down on the South Side of the city there was a little home where lived a little nice old lady full of the Holy Ghost named Mother Cook, and a young fellow got converted into the city. He would have made a good salesman. He was a very busy fellow. He loved to run in circles, and he did. He went everywhere running in circles, and his name was Dwight Lyman Moody.

And one day the little old lady, Mother Cook, saw Dwight, and she said, son, I'd like to have you come over to my house sometime, I want to talk to you. So, Moody went over to her house, and she sat him down on a chair, and she said something to this general effect, now Dwight, it's wonderful to see you saved so beautifully, it's wonderful to see you so zealous, but you know what you need? You need to be anointed with the Holy Ghost. Well, he said, Mother Cook, I want whatever God has for me. All right, she said, get down here. And she got him down on the linoleum. And they prayed a while, and she prayed, O God, fill this young fellow.

Well, he died out there, and opened his heart and brought his vessel, his empty vessel to the Lord, and took the promise by faith, but nothing happened. A few days afterward, he was out east in New York, and he said, as I was walking down the street, suddenly, now there's his word again, suddenly, God fulfilled the promise he had made to me in that kitchen. And down unto him came a horn of oil, and the Holy Ghost came on him.

He said he crawled up an alley and raised his hand and said, O God, stay your power or I'll die. Then he said, I went out from there, preaching the same sermons with the same text, but oh, the difference now, the Holy Ghost had come.

Now the Holy Ghost had been there; He had caused him to be born again. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of His. It's quite a different thing to have the Spirit as my regenerator and have the horn of oil poured out on my head. Quite a different thing. The reason I can talk about it with a good deal of authority is I went through it, and I know what I'm preaching about. I didn't learn this at Bible college. The Holy Ghost did this. God did this, so I'm giving it to you. You'll possibly learn this at Bible college, too, but that wasn't where I learned it.

I know ask you to ponder these things I have said. There isn't any use to try to push a person into anything. Too often, we try to push God's poor children around, pick them out of their shell, and all the result is we get a lot of weird monstrosities instead of saints. I don't want to do that. I want you to do this. I want you to set aside some time and I want you to search the Scriptures and see whether these things be so.

Some people say they're not so. Some people say that all I'm doing is confusing people. I once wrote a series of articles for a magazine on the Holy Spirit, and there's a fellow who publishes things about me, saying I'm confusing the Saints. I wrote him a letter and said to him, my dear brother, if the Lord's people were as eager to be filled with the Spirit as they are to prove you can't be, the church would be quite a different church. He published that, too. But it's true, isn't it?

It's true I am not preaching a thing our Baptist brethren don't believe when you press them. I am not preaching a thing that the Methodist brethren don't believe. I am not preaching a thing the Salvation Army doesn't teach. I am not preaching a thing that our Puritan fathers didn't believe.

So, I don't apologize. It's here. Set aside time and search the Scriptures. And if the Scriptures don't convince you that the Church and the individuals in the Church ought to be living a happy Spirit-filled life, then don't listen to me. If I was to preach for five hours straight and not preach according to the truth found in the Bible, I am wrong, no matter how eloquent I try to be.

Pray and yield and believe and obey and see what God will do for you in the coming days. Will you do that? See what God will do for you in the days ahead as you search the Scriptures and seek God for what He has provided for you in His great mercy and abundant grace.