

Thirsting For God, The Holy Spirit at Work in the Believer

Week 2

Warm-up question: What are you expecting God to do in your life through your study in the topic of the Holy Spirit?

Can one person make a difference? Of course! I hear you answer. History tells us of many men and women of God that made a significant difference in their generation to the advancement of the kingdom of God. We can talk of Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, John Wycliffe, Susanna Wesley, Kathryn Kuhlman, Billy Graham, Fanny Crosby. The list could go on and on, but what if I mentioned the names Peggy and Christene Smith? Their names are little known to history at all. Permit me to share what they accomplished to further the kingdom of God.

Off the west coast of Scotland is a small group of islands called the Hebrides. Between 1949 and 1952 a revival swept through these islands in answer to the prayers of Peggy and Christene Smith. At that time they were 84 and 82 years of age, Peggy, the eldest, being completely blind. After hearing an update about the low spiritual state of the Hebridean Islands, there being not one young person attending church services, Peggy and Christene began to pray and ask God to change the situation in their church. Unable to attend public worship, their humble cottage became a sanctuary where they met with God. To them came the promise: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground" (Isaiah 44:3). They took this scripture and made it their prayer. They pleaded this scripture before God, day and night in prayer. One night Peggy had a revelation from God. She felt that God had answered her prayer and gave her assurance that revival was coming; a revival that would cause the church of her father's to be crowded again with young people! The evangelist, Duncan Cambell, was asked if he would come to the Islands and preach. When he declined because of previous commitments elsewhere, God rearranged his schedule and he was able to attend this small church in the Hebrides. Here in his own words is Duncan's testimony of what happened:

"They had arranged for me to address the church at a short meeting beginning at nine o'clock that night. It was a remarkable meeting. God sovereignly moved, and there was an awareness of God which was wonderful. The meeting lasted until four o'clock in the morning, and I had not witnessed anything to compare with it at any other time during my ministry. Around midnight, a group of young people left a dance and crowded into the church. There were people who couldn't go to sleep because they were so gripped by God.

Although there was an awareness of God and a spirit of conviction at this initial meeting, the real breakthrough came a few days later on Sunday night in the parish church. The church was full, and the Spirit of God was moving in such a way that I couldn't preach. I just stood still and gazed upon the wondrous moving of God. Men and women were crying out to God for mercy all over the church. There was no appeal made whatsoever. After meeting for over three hours, I pronounced the benediction and told the people to go out, but mentioned that any who wanted to continue the meeting could come back later.

A young deacon came to me and said, "Mr. Campbell, God is hovering over us." About that time the clerk of the session asked me to come to the back door. There was a crowd of at least 600 people gathered in the yard outside the church... Someone gave out Psalm 102 and the crowd streamed back in to the church which could no longer hold the number of people. A young school teacher came down front crying out, "O God, is there nothing left for me?" She is a missionary in Nigeria today. There was a bus load of people coming to the meeting from sixty miles away. The power of God came into the bus so that some could not even enter the church when the bus arrived. People were swooning all over the church, and I cannot remember one single person who was moved on by God that night who was not gloriously born again. When I went out of the church at four o'clock in the morning there were a great number of people praying alongside the road. In addition to the school teacher, several of those born again that night are in foreign mission work today.

From Barvas, the move of God spread to the neighboring districts. I received a message that a nearby church

was crowded at one o'clock in the morning and wanted me to come. When I arrived, the church was full and there were crowds outside. Coming out of the church two hours later, I found a group of 300 people, unable to get into the church, praying in a nearby field. One old woman complained about the noise of the meetings because she could not get to sleep. A deacon grabbed her and shook her, saying, "Woman, you have been asleep long enough!"

There was one area of the islands which wanted me to come but I didn't feel any leading to accept the invitation. The blind sister encouraged me to go and told me, "If you were living as near to God as you ought to be, He would reveal His secrets to you." I agreed to spend a morning in prayer with her in the cottage. As we prayed, the sister said, "Lord, you remember what you told me today that you were going to save seven men in this church. I just gave your message to Mr. Campbell and please give him wisdom because he badly needs it." She told me if I would go to the village, God would provide a congregation. I agreed to go, and when I arrived at seven o'clock, there were approximately 400 people at the church. The people could not tell what it was that had brought them; it had been directed by the Spirit of God. I spoke for a few minutes on the text: 30In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). One of the ministers stopped me and said, "Come see this." At one end of the meeting house, the most notorious characters in the community were on their faces crying out to God.

On a trip to a neighboring island I found the people were very cold and stiff. Calling for some men to come over and pray, I particularly requested that a young man named Donald accompany them. Donald, who was seventeen years old, had been recently saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit about two weeks later on a hillside. As we were in the church that night, Donald was sitting toward the front with tears falling off his face onto the floor. I knew Donald was in touch with God in a way that I was not. So I stopped preaching and asked him to pray. Donald rose to his feet and prayed, "I seem to be gazing into an open door and see the Lamb in the midst of the throne and the keys of death and hell on his waist." Then he stopped and began to sob. After he composed himself, he lifted his eyes toward heaven, raised his hands, and said, "God, there is power there. Let it loose!" And at that moment the power of God fell upon the congregation. On one side of the room, the people threw up their hands, put their heads back and kept them in that position for two hours. It is hard to do this for

ten minutes, much less two hours. On the other side, the people were slumped over, crying out for mercy. In a village five miles away, the power of God swept through the town and there was hardly a house in that village that didn't have someone saved in it that night."¹

How would you feel if the Spirit came in a similar way to your life, your town or city? Would you be resistant or receptive?

³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants (Isaiah 44:3).

We Can Expect for the Spirit to Come in Power in our Day

Occasionally I have people share with me that they are not gifted enough to lead a Small Group, or that they are too old. Some people do not feel that they have a real purpose in their lives. I don't believe that God is ever finished with us while we have breath on planet Earth. There are always new lessons to learn and new opportunities to serve. Every one of us has different talents and gifts to be used of God. Two old ladies that were so infirm as to not be able to get about at all were greatly used of God, and this visitation of God was not that long ago. I am convinced that if Peggy and Christene Smith had not interceded for the Hebrides, the revival there wouldn't have happened. Many people became believers in Christ in response to their prayers. God chose to use them in this way, and they were available to Him. What about you? Do you believe that God answers prayer and that He could use you to bring about a move of the Spirit of God? God does not always do things in the same way, but when the Spirit of God moves in a city or a group of people, the results will bring people to belief in Christ and will bring glory to God. Tonight/today, God may be asking you to make yourself available to Him in this way. Will you hear this invitation?

Last week we read from Peter quoting the Old Testament prophet Joel, that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all people (Acts 2:17-18). We've just read from Isaiah 44:3 where God again uses the word "pour" to describe how the Spirit will come in the last days. This is not a sprinkle nor a drip, but a pour-

¹ <http://www.revival-library.org/> When the Mountains Flowed Down by Duncan Campbell.

ing out of the Spirit. The word pour is a very generous word. God is generous to us with the gift of His Holy Spirit. If you are hungry to experience God in a deeper way, this is a prayer that God wants to answer. In the lyrics of a popular Christian song; "In the Secret", we sing the words: "I want to know You, I want to hear Your voice, I want to know You more."

What do you think it means to "know God more"?

God Responds to Faith

God will often move in a sovereign way when it comes to a visitation or a revival but even then He waits for His church, you and me, to pray into reality what He wants to do. When Daniel understood from the scriptures that Jeremiah the prophet had spoken of a seventy year period that the Jews would be in Babylon, and that the time was just about up, he turned to the Lord in prayer and began to pray into reality what God had spoken about (Daniel 9:2-3). Our tendency is to believe that God will begin to move and then the church should respond, but often God waits for us to take the initiative through prayer. The man that had leprosy did not have Jesus come to him, he took the initiative and approached the Lord and made his appeal to Him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy (Matthew 8:2-3). If you want God to do something in your life, ask Him. Take action steps of faith that will show Him you mean business with Him. God is pleased when we exercise faith in Him. The woman with the issue of blood didn't wait around for the healing line; she said within herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed," How did Jesus respond to this faith filled act? Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." (Matthew 9:20-22). If you want to be filled and controlled by the Spirit of God, take action steps of faith in that direction. Take steps that show God that you are serious about what you would like Him to do in your life or the life of your family. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6).

How can we make sure that we are open to the Spirit of God?

Are there things that we can do to make ourselves ready

and open for God to fill us and use us? What can we do to prepare ourselves?

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.**" ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-39 Emphasis mine).

There are four conditions that I see in this passage to drinking deeply of the Spirit of God. Before we delve into the passage to see what it is saying, let's try to get a picture first of what is happening in this passage of scripture. We are told that these words are given at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2), the third major feast of the year which falls around the middle of October in our calendar. The eighth day of the feast was the most noteworthy (John 7:37). On that day with thousands of people looking on, the High Priest went down to the Pool of Siloam and filled up a two pint golden pitcher and carried it back into the center of the crowd up on the Temple Mount before the Alter of God. A prophecy of Ezekiel told of a time when out from under the threshold of the Temple, a river of life would flow toward the east that would start ankle deep, become knee deep and would eventually become so deep it would lift people off their feet and carry them along in its path (Ezekiel 47:1-5). Wherever this river flowed it brought life, fruit and healing. For the High Priest and the thousands gathered there singing hymns to God, the most solemn moment was when the High Priest poured out the pitcher of water before the temple. It spoke of their expectation that perhaps in their day; the river of life would begin to flow as the pitcher was poured out. To the Jewish people, the center of the world was Israel. The center of Israel was Jerusalem, and the center of Jerusalem was the Temple. It seems that at that very moment of the pitcher being poured out, Jesus made himself higher than everyone else, probably by standing on something, and He shouted for all to hear the words we have just read. What He was saying was that out of the temple of His life would flow the refreshing, life giving, healing power of the Spirit. Out of the center of our lives too will flow the Spirit's ministry, out of our innermost being. When Christ is enthroned on the throne room of our hearts, His Spirit will flow out to others around us.

At the same time that Jesus was speaking these words, the Spirit had not yet been given to be seated on the throne room of people's lives, He had only come upon certain individuals for certain purposes. What was promised by God was that He would come into the lives of all people.

According to this scripture, John 7:37-39, what conditions are present which allow the Spirit of God to flow in and through you?

1) You have to have a thirst for more of God. Are you satisfied with life as it is? Our Lord loves to be pursued by hungry and thirsty people. Do not let Him go until your thirst has been quenched. Remember Charles Finney's words from last week that he would receive the gift of eternal life that day, or he would die in the attempt. Do whatever you have to do, but do not let anything put you off from receiving all God's gifts that He has for you.

2) You have to come to the person of Christ. He said "let him come to me." This is not about church or devotion to religious acts; this is about the Christ Himself. Do you have a love for the person of Christ? When Peter was restored by Jesus after saying three times that he didn't know Him, Jesus asked Peter three times if He loved him (John 21:15-17), a question that each of us should answer. Ask the Spirit to reveal to you afresh all that Christ has done for you so that you may fall head over heels in love with Christ Himself.

3) You will need to drink. This speaks of receiving the Spirit by an open transparent heart. Vulnerability and honesty is one of the hallmarks of a heart that is ready to be filled with the Spirit. There is a conscious decision to go God's way instead of our own.

4) Whoever believes in Christ (Verse 38) will receive. This is not an intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel. It is a deep settled inner belief that allows a different set of moral values to affect ones character.

This was by no means a comprehensive list by Jesus, but these four are the most important conditions to living out a life of faith, being guided and empowered by the Spirit.

The most attractive people in the world are those that are full of God's Spirit. To be filled with God's Spirit one needs to displace self from the seat of authority in your life. The greatest example to us of one filled with the Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at

the example of His life. He was so free of selfishness. He was devoted to others. William Booth, the founder and pioneer of the Salvation Army, was once ill and could not attend the Army leadership conference one year. He was asked if there was anything important that he would like to communicate to his leaders. He had just one word written on a piece of paper for them, the word was "others." His leaders were to be devoted to others. This is the heart of a man filled with the Spirit of Christ.

Other preparatory things that will open our hearts to more of the Spirit are to wait on God. This speaks of being receptive and expectant. Jesus did not just let them go out right away and win the world to him.

⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:46-49 Emphasis mine).

Hold on, there is a "but" to the going. They must not get ahead of Him. They were told to wait until they received the promise of the Father (Verse 49). The promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit. The Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came and filled them, was 50 days after Passover. The Resurrection of Christ came three days after Passover. I estimate that means that they had to wait another 47 days before they could go and preach the kingdom of God.

From the crucifixion (Passover) to Pentecost was 50 days. Why the wait? Why wasn't the Holy Spirit poured out on the believers sooner?

The period of waiting was crucial to their empowerment, their being clothed with the Spirit. Often we seek to go in our own strength and do not wait for God's power and leading. We are to be dependant upon the Spirit. It is not something emotional that we drum up; rather it is waiting and being available and expectant concerning what He will do.

A.B Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, has something to say about this passage from Luke concerning waiting until we are clothed

or filled with the Spirit. He said:

“These waiting days were necessary to enable the disciples to realize their need, their nothingness, their failure and their dependence upon the Master. They had to get emptied first before they would get filled.”

Luke tells us in the Book of Acts that Jesus continued appearing to them over a period of forty days after His suffering (Acts 1:3). What was He doing in those forty days? He was strengthening them in their faith and teaching them about the kingdom of God. I see the Day of Pentecost as a day when the Spirit came and filled or baptized (dipped until they were soaked and saturated) them because they were completely ready and abandoned to God’s work. The time of waiting had created a thirst that could only be quenched by God the Holy Spirit Himself. They were in a place of dependence on the Spirit because Jesus had left them 7 days before the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:3). The 11 disciples were not supermen, they were just like you and I, and they needed God’s Spirit to accomplish the task of taking the message to others. Dedication and dependence on God to work through them by His Spirit enabled them to complete their mission. It is no different for us.

³ After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about (Acts 1:3-4, Emphasis mine).

In Acts 1:4, Luke recalls Jesus saying, “wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” What do the words gift and promise communicate to you?

If the promised Holy Spirit is sent as a gift, why would we not want to receive Him and all that He wants to do in us and through us? Some doubt that God will give them the Holy Spirit. Why would God not give the One that he has promised? Does God ever hold back on His giving? “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32). One thing I am sure of; when God is giving a gift and He binds Himself with a promise to give it, the least I

should do is to receive what He wants to give! I received Christ by faith and when I received Him the Spirit took up residence in my life, as He does in every life that is given over to the Shepherd’s care. If you are a Christian you have the Spirit.

⁹ You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. **And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ** (Romans 8:9 Emphasis mine).

The enemy will try to convince you that you don’t deserve the Spirit’s working in your life. Who are you going to believe? God has promised the Spirit to you upon your trusting in Him. Every one of us that is a Christian has the spirit. The most important thing is does the Spirit have you? Have you abandoned your life to Christ? Does He have ownership and rulership of your life? If so, He might be a resident in the living room of your soul but there may be some rooms that you have not relinquished to His rule.

Sometimes people are not filled with the Spirit because of bitterness or unforgiveness to others, perhaps for them the time of waiting and introspection helped them to focus their mind and hearts on extending forgiveness to those who had hurt them. Ask the Spirit what barriers there are that hinder you from knowing the Spirit’s empowerment in your life.

The disciples used the time while they waited for the Spirit’s filling by meeting together in the Temple courts praising God (Luke 24: 53). Have you ever come to God in an act of humble surrender in Church and asked Him to fill you? There is nothing that opens up our hearts to God’s love and Spirit like worship. Don’t just sing songs—let there be an outflow of praise and devotion to Him through your worship. Are you thirsty for more of Christ? That is the major qualification to receive the Spirit’s filling.

Do you feel that there is anything holding you back from experiencing the fullness of God’s Spirit such as unforgiveness or fear? What are you going to do with it? Take a few minutes to ask yourself; “Am I open to the Spirit of God?”

Here are a couple of scriptures that show us how God wants to be with us by His Holy Spirit:

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (John 14:15-18)

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give

him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14)

There is no need to doubt Him. Take Him at His word.

Prayer: “Father, thank you for sending Your Spirit to us. We welcome You, Holy Spirit. Help us to know You more.”