

WHY I NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

JOHN 20:19-23

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."

The wind is one of the most mysterious, yet powerful forces in nature. Gale force winds can howl and twist... or the wind can blow as a soft and gentle breeze.

And we use the wind... We need the wind...

When you jump out of the shower, and you're in a hurry, and you don't have time to let your hair dry on its own - you use the wind to blow it dry... When you dust off the driveway you crank up the leaf blower. It draws a robust gust of wind that blasts away the debris...

At times the Holy Spirit is a boisterous wind. He sweeps in to *clean us up* and *blow us off*. God's Spirit moves in gusts, and flurries, and serious squalls...

At other times the Holy Spirit is like a calm and gentle breeze. He moves among us in refreshing ways.

Either way, just as we need the wind, we need the Holy Spirit. Like a kite on a balmy day... or a parasail on a glassy lake... the Christian who doesn't catch a gust of the Spirit is grounded. We'll never set sail!

The event that occurs in John 20:22 takes place just after Jesus' resurrection. The living Lord breathed on His disciples, and told them, **"Receive the Holy Spirit."**

One of the idioms the Bible uses for the Holy Spirit is **"breath"** or **"wind."** The word **"Spirit"** in both the Greek language, (*"pneuma"*), and in the Hebrew, (*"ruach"*), gets translated with the same word... **"wind."**

I like how one paraphrase renders verse 22, *"(Jesus) took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," He said."* Notice, **"He took a deep breath"** Jesus drew from deep within, and gave to His disciples something of Himself. *What an incredible gift!*

Before Jesus was crucified He spoke to His disciples about the work and ministry of the coming Holy Spirit.

In John 14:17 Jesus told His followers that the Holy Spirit was **with them**. The Spirit of God had convicted them of their sin and had drawn them to the Savior...

Now here in John 20 they believe in the risen Christ - thus, meeting the requirements of salvation. And as a result, Jesus breathes on them, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell **in them**. Though Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, and leave them physically, He would forever be linked to His disciples spiritually.

But Jesus wasn't done... A few weeks later at the Feast of Pentecost He got out the leaf blower, and breathed on His disciples again... with a mighty gust!

In Acts 2 we're told flickers of fire appeared over the heads of His disciples - and the people in the room heard the audible sound of a rushing, mighty wind...

The Amplified V calls it, **"a violent tempest blast..."**

This is not a mild breeze that leaves these believers and their world unaltered. This is a bold wind - a hurricane that blows **upon them** - picks up the pieces of their lives - then totally rearranges their way of living.

Realize, this is what readied the Apostles to embark on the mission Jesus gave them, to **"Go... and make disciples of all nations."** The influence of the Holy Spirit was the indispensable ingredient to carry out that task.

It wasn't **education** - *although they'd spent three years learning at the feet of the Master-Teacher Jesus.*

It wasn't **experience**... *although they'd witnessed Jesus' miracles - they even worked a few themselves.*

It wasn't **commitment**... *although they were deeply dedicated to God's will. They'd left all to follow Jesus.*

Realize, the Disciples were *educated, experienced, and committed* - but that didn't make them ready.

They still needed the Holy Spirit! Before men would *believe* their witness, they had to first *receive* the Spirit.

And it's as true for the 21st century Church as it was for the first - no amount of *education, or experience, or commitment* will ever take the place of the Holy Spirit.

The Church today desperately needs the Holy Spirit.

Notice again, in John 20 Jesus breathes gently on His men, the Spirit. In contrast, Acts 2 is a windstorm.

He breathes the *same Spirit* on the *same people* but in a *different way* - this time with gale force intensity...

Sometimes the Spirit comes gently. At other times He blows through the house like a hurricane. *But God's word to us is always the same "receive the Holy Spirit."*

I believe Jesus continually breathes fresh breath on and into His Church. *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* isn't a one time command. It's an attitude. It's the permanent posture we should maintain toward the Holy Spirit. Our approach to Him should always be one of *receiving*...

2 Samuel 5 provides a wonderful analogy that depicts the Holy Spirit as the wind. When the Philistine army heard that David had replaced Saul as king of Israel they tried to take advantage of the change in administrations. Perhaps they could catch Israel with their guard down... use the element of surprise...

So they deployed troops to the Valley of Rephaim.

When David heard about it, he prayed and inquired of the Lord, *"Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?"* God said, *"Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into Your hand."*

And true to God's word - that's exactly what happened - David thoroughly routed the Philistines.

But the Philistines were slow learners.

Once they had recovered they tried the same tactic. Again, they deployed troops to the Valley of Rephaim.

Understand, this is the **same enemy - same theater of conflict - same strategy - same circumstances - same time frame...** *What would you have done?*

To me, this looks like a no-brainer. I've already prayed about these exact circumstances - why would God's answer be any different this time than last? I would've assumed God would give me the very same marching orders... *but I would have assumed wrong.*

Thankfully, David didn't assume. Again he inquired of the Lord, and God replied with different instructions, **"You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees.**

And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines."

David obeyed, and again drove back the Philistines.

But the story illustrates our tendency...

Humans look for patterns to mimic - formulas to follow. We want a copy of the blueprints. We look for a template to lay over a given situation, so we'll know exactly the steps we can take to solve the problem.

Just trace the lines and the outcome is guaranteed.

We do this as Christians... We follow the *six steps* to victory - or *three keys* to being an effective witness.

Even pastors do this... They read somebody's manual on *the musts* of church growth - or they travel to a church that's growing, and study its behavior, assuming they can learn the secret formula. *There's only one problem... there is no secret formula!*

David was given two different strategies for the same circumstances. Rather than lead through a formula, God told David *to wait on the wind - on the Holy Spirit!*

The Lord instructed David to circle behind the enemy and wait for the sound of marching in the treetops - or literally, *the wind rustling the tops of the mulberries...*

The answer my friend, was blowing in the wind....

And if you want to *walk in spiritual victory* - and *be a winsome witness* - and *win battles for Jesus* - don't look for a program, or plan, or pattern, *follow a person.*

Here's the secret formula... *we need the Holy Spirit.*

God doesn't come in an elixir.

God isn't doled out in a pill.

God won't be condensed to a can - or consumed in a tablet.

He definitely doesn't fit in a box! God is Spirit, and following the Spirit is like listening to the wind.

In John 3:8 Jesus said to Rabbi Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Jesus is saying that the movements, and ways, and workings of the Holy Spirit are as unpredictable - and as unexpected - as changes in the wind currents.

Watch the flags over Wrigley Field on a windy day - the wind blows out one moment, then in - it blows right, then left - you're never sure which way it'll blow. The same is true of the Spirit. He has a mind of His own.

God's Spirit has His own agenda.

The Holy Spirit calls the shots, *not you!*

The Spirit of God does *what He wants - when He wants - and how He wants...* Our job is to follow.

If God did author formulas and programs it would still put *us* in control. *It would be up to us to plug in the prompts, and God would then be forced to follow suit.*

But that's not the relationship God wants...

You can't control the wind. It charts its own course.

And if we're depending on God's Spirit it's up to us to bend, and adapt, and adjust to Him - never vice versa.

A veteran Army paratrooper was addressing a group of new recruits. This particular soldier had just completed his 2000th military jump. After his talk, one of the new recruits asked the old pro how he'd gotten involved in parachuting. The veteran soldier replied...

"I was an infantryman 15,000 feet in the air. We were scheduled to land, but the plane's engine blew out... I started jumping because I had no other choice."

And this is why I need the Holy Spirit. *I have no other choice!* If I want to connect to heaven while on earth, and walk *with* God, and receive power *from* God, and live in the will *of* God, and be pleasing *to* God... it only occurs through the involvement of the Holy Spirit!

When Zerubbabel returned to Jerusalem with his skeleton crew of Jews to rebuild the Temple, God told the governor how the job would get done... “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD.”

A completed Temple would not be the result of man’s muscle, or of human ingenuity. Zerubbabel’s greatest effort and highest wisdom would not be enough.

What was needed was a work of the Holy Spirit!

Today, God is building two temples... He’s building **you** up individually as a Temple - as a fit habitation for Himself. But God is also building **us** up corporately. He wants a temple in our town that brings Him glory.

Church work also requires the Holy Spirit.

Whether we’re talking about what God wants to do *in us* personally, or *with us* corporately, the key is the Holy Spirit... *Yes, we desperately need the Holy Spirit.*

Nothing of eternal value is done apart from His Spirit.

Author Jack Taylor has an analogy that dramatizes the helplessness of churches today that depend on their own ingenuity and efforts, rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “To a large extent, we go around beating on trees with bare ax handles.

At intervals, under the suspicion that this is not getting the job done, we call for strategy conferences on how to make our ax handles more effective, or improve our swing. We take a census of the trees, motivate the wood choppers, declare that this is the day for felling forests, and with polished ax handles and persuasive personnel we embark towards the woods. But, alas, though the noise of these workmen is great, the sound of falling trees is missing..."

Taylor concludes... "This is movement without might, energy without effectiveness, much doing but little dynamic! There is little to show after all is done but bruised hands, and tired bodies, and wounded trees.

What is missing? The ax head of course - the cutting edge of it all. *And what is the ax head of the Church?* It's the life of God in Christ released through the work of the Holy Spirit! The church with all our abilities and programs are but handles on which swings the ax head of God's life. It's the ax head that has to be recovered!"

Acts 19:1-2 tells the tragic story of a church trying to serve God, but without God. When Paul first came to Ephesus he discovered that the believers there were ignorant of the Holy Spirit. He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Talk about a desperate situation.

Imagine believers in Jesus, who had never even heard of the Holy Spirit! Here was a church paralyzed by their spiritual ignorance. They just didn't know!

The disciples at Ephesus loved Jesus. They wanted to obey Him and spread the Gospel. **They had a great commission, yet were plagued by a great omission.**

Here were a handful of believers attempting to convert and disciple a pagan city with no knowledge of the *person or power* of the Holy Spirit. What a strange situation... *Yet this is the plight of churches today!*

There's a lot of effort, but little power...

If you're like me, you don't want to be a *powerless Christian*, and you don't want to be part of a *powerless Church*. This is why we desperately need God's Spirit.

Let me elaborate for a minute about a danger in the Christian life I believe applies to CCs - to even sincere believers... *we can study the Bible - be accurate in our doctrine - memorize verses and sniff out heresies - we can glory in the cross, share our faith, tithe our money - we can keep our noses clean, and our hands pure.*

We can live good, moral, spiritually innocuous lives.

We can do all the right stuff, yet miss out on the crux of Christianity. The Christian faith isn't just a creed to believe, or rules to keep. It's a person to experience!

Christianity is **experiential**. To know God and the fullness of His power is the Christian's birthright. This is the privilege of God's grace! It's the joy of our soul...

Psalm 34:8 baits us - even dares us - "**O taste and see that the Lord is good.**" *You can savor the Savior!*

Christianity is *rational*, but it's also *relational*.

It's *Scriptural*, but it's also *spiritual*.

It's *historical*, but it's also *mystical*.

We all need to be reminded, the Trinity is not, "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Bible." *We need His Spirit* to permeate and propel us in all we do.

The truth is, we need both *the power of God's Spirit* and *the truth of God's Word - knowledge and might*.

You've heard it said, "A church that has the Word without the Spirit will dry up. A church that has the Spirit without the Word will blow up. But a church that has the Spirit working through the Word will grow up."

God's Word is like a fireplace. It provides a frame and grate that keeps the fire from burning the house. But a fireplace by itself is worthless without the fire.

Let me add one more line to that saying we've all heard, "And a church that has the Word, but only pretends to have the Spirit, causes God to throw up."

Don't be lukewarm. As Jesus said He'll spew you out of His mouth. You and I need the fire of God's Spirit!

Once a busy downtown attorney was sitting at the red light in his fancy, new sports car. A young boy rode up next to him on his motorized scooter. The boy wanted to talk to the man, so the lawyer lowered his window. "Hey, Mister, nice car. What kind is it?"

The uppity lawyer snapped back, "A *Porsche*."

"How much does it cost?" "Plenty." "Is it fast?"

Just then the light turned green. The attorney dropped the car into gear and left the boy in the dust.

But as the Porsche accelerated the lawyer noticed the boy on the scooter gaining on him - *zoom, the scooter roared past him*. The lawyer couldn't believe his eyes. He hit the accelerator, and passed the boy.

Yet again, the scooter sailed by him going twice as fast. The lawyer was stunned... Finally, he gunned it.

There's no way he was going to get outrun by a scooter. But as he looked in his rear-view mirror he saw the boy accelerating faster and faster and faster...

He wondered, *what could be powering that scooter?*

As the boy on the scooter shot around him, the lawyer was so shocked he lost control of his car and steered into the boy, running the scooter off the road.

The attorney jumped out to apologize, *"I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. I just didn't think a scooter was able to go that fast. Is there anything I can do to help?"*

The kid on the scooter looks up at the lawyer, and says, *"Well yes, can you unhook my backpack from your rear view mirror?"* And here's the moral of the story - *we're all just scooters! We have little power.*

But we can hook our backpack to the Holy Spirit and we can tap into a tremendous and awesome strength.

In the upper room, on the night before He was crucified, Jesus told the disciples that He was going away. And the news must've devastated the boys.

Imagine, the bottom of the ninth, the score tied, the bases loaded, and your number one hitter is scheduled to bat. But

instead of striding to the plate you look down the bench and Freddie Freeman is checking his watch. *He's got to go... "Wait a minute, Freddie? You can't be serious. This is when we need you most."*

And what if he turned to his teammates and said, "Guys, don't worry. Though the game ain't over, and you're facing a critical situation, it's to your advantage that I go away." You'd think Ole Freddie had flipped his lid, that he had done one too many tomahawk chops...

Yet that is exactly what Jesus did to His disciples. The 3½ years He'd spent with them had climaxed in Jerusalem at the feast of Passover. It was crunch time.

Jesus has the attention of the Jewish establishment. The crowds had hailed Him as their Messiah. Everyone was looking to see what Jesus would do next.

And it's at this point that He tells His disciples He's returning to the Father. He even has nerve enough to tell them that they'll be better off without Him.

In John 16:7 Jesus says, "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

Here is an truly incredible thought... **the Holy Spirit is an advantage over the physical presence of Jesus!** That almost sounds blasphemous, but it's true.

Jesus could only be in one place at one time. The Holy Spirit can be in all places at all times...

Jesus taught and modeled a better way to live. The Holy Spirit is able to enter our spirit, and imbed that better way

inside our hearts... Jesus showed us how. The Holy Spirit empowers us to be and do and live...

It was an advantage for Jesus to leave and send the Spirit in His place. As we said last week God's Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and just as the disciples depended on Jesus, we need to depend on the Holy Spirit.

You and I will always be like the little boy who brought just five loaves and two fish to Jesus. *That's all we'll ever bring...* You and I are incapable of miracles.

Our utmost is utterly insufficient.

Yet here's the good news... the Holy Spirit *takes up* where Jesus *leaves off*. The Lord can take our little and transform it into much! *Our meagerness sets up God's miracles...* This is why we need the Holy Spirit!

If you desire to live in *the light of God...*

And know *the truth of God...*

And possess *the life of God...*

And feel *the love of God...*

And sense *the presence of God...*

And reflect *the image of God...*

And live in *the will of God...*

And behold *the glory of God...*

And be fueled by *the power of God...*

And receive *spiritual gifts from God...*

And be *fruitful and effective for God*, then you need to depend on your relationship with *the Spirit of God*.

The Bible tells us that **we** do have certain obligations in our relationship with the Holy Spirit... *be born of the Spirit - walk in the Spirit - be led by the Spirit - be filled with the Spirit - never grieve, or quench the Spirit...*

And we could spend a lot of time defining in detail these various commands. *Yet lest I make our responsibilities to the Spirit more complicated than they need be, **just remember the Spirit is like the wind!**...*

We don't see the wind - or *understand* the wind - and we certainly don't *control the wind*... but when God sends the wind, we can enjoy it! The wind is a mystery, but that doesn't stop me from utilizing it when it blows.

To me, the key to benefiting from the wind is not in my understanding of it, or my unraveling its mystery, it's in *my willingness* to lift my sails in its direction.

When Jesus imparted the Holy Spirit He breathed on His disciples, and said, ***“Receive the Holy Spirit.”***

He didn't say, ***“Figure Me out, or decipher this, or understand that...”*** It was simply, ***“Receive the Spirit.”***

The key to our relationship with the Holy Spirit is not *our ability to decipher His ways*, but *our willingness to receive Him in*. Are you receptive to the Holy Spirit?

In the original movie, *Ben Hur*, the most famous scene was the chariot race. Even in light of today's special effects, that chariot race was a masterpiece.

But in filming the race there was a problem. Charlton Heston had to learn to drive a chariot, and it wasn't something he did well. At one point, he confided in his director, William Wyler,

that he could barely stay on the platform, let alone win the race. Wylar told his star, “Charlton, your job is to stay on the chariot. My job is to make sure you win.” And both men did their job.

But the director’s words sums up our relationship with the Spirit... *to be born of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit*, all requires that you stay in the chariot. Our job is to hang on - believe - be receptive - bend, adapt, adjust, repent - and whatever else the director asks us to do.

You stay in the chariot of faith - and the Holy Spirit will see to it that you'll win over sin, and end up productive for God’s Kingdom. *He'll work the miracles.*

Once, after a Sunday morning service, a lady came up to me, and she said simply, “I am here today because I want to receive the Holy Spirit.” *We prayed together. The Lord breathed on her, and she received!*

And I want to give you that opportunity this AM...