

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is an old legend of a certain guide that lived in the desert and who never lost his way. He carried with him a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one of its legs. When in doubt as to which path to take, he threw the bird into the air. The pigeon quickly strained at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and thus led the guide accurately to his goal. Because of this unique practice he was known as "the dove man." So, too, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, is willing and able to direct us in the way that leads to the more abundant life if we submit to His unerring supervision. The Holy Spirit desires to guide us in the way that we should go. As we submit ourselves to Him we will grow more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance? 2 When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?"' 3 "Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. 4 They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them. 5 "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. 6 The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. 7 Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.

There are 3 things or signs that showed that Saul had been chosen and equipped for the role that God had chosen for him. These three things also represent the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today;

1. The Spirit FILLS - being anointed (vs. 1-2)

In 1 Samuel 8 we see that nation of Israel wanted a king. The prophet Samuel had been a great leader for the people but he was getting older and his children did not follow the Lord. In chapter 9 we see that Saul was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel. As Saul looked for a lost donkey he was led to Samuel. Now in chapter 10 Samuel anoints Saul as king over Israel.

There were several signs or steps which Samuel gives to show God's selection of Saul as king. The first thing Samuel does is to anoint Saul with oil. The oil signified the Holy Spirit. Saul had been chosen by God and His Spirit would rest on Saul to commission him into service. Maybe you are asking "Why put oil on his head"? We see in the Bible that oil is often used to represent the Holy Spirit. Often when we pray for people we anoint them with oil.

Mark 6:13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit would rest upon men. He would come for a particular time or for a particular task and then later be removed. When David sinned with Bathsheba he prayed in Psalm 51 that God would not take His Spirit from him, the anointing he received when he became king.

In the New Testament we see that the Holy Spirit does not simply rest upon us for a time but dwells within us. When we accept Jesus into our hearts we are anointed and commissioned into our specific role in the kingdom. Like Saul, the Holy Spirit is given to empower us for service – to the task God has given us to do. The Holy Spirit is essential to living the Christian life.

Nobody can be indwelt by the Spirit of God and keep that Spirit to himself. Where the Spirit is, he flows forth. And where there is no flowing forth, he is not there. -- Bishop William Temple

Have you experienced that anointing in your life? Is the Spirit flowing forth in you? Have you felt the Holy Spirit's empowering in you? Some people call this the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" or a secondary experience of the Spirit. Maybe you are saying "this sounds charismatic to me".

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was not known as a Pentecostal preacher. He was the great preacher of Reformed theology at Westminster Chapel in London. Near the end of his life at the very pinnacle of his ministry he asked his congregation a question. He said, "I want to talk to you today about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You may call it what you want, but I want to know, have you experienced the fullness of the Spirit? I know all of you listening to me come as I do from a Reformed background. But it's not good enough. I know that all of you would want to say to my question about the Holy Spirit, 'Well, we got it all at conversion; there's no need for any more experience.' Well," said Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "I have only one other question to ask you. If you got it all at conversion, where in God's name is it?"

An illiterate man who was converted through the work of the Salvation Army. He went regularly to the Salvation Army church. One day he came home rather depressed. His wife said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I've just noticed that all the people in the Salvation Army wear red sweaters, and I don't have a red sweater." She said, "I'll knit one." So she knitted him a red sweater. The next Sunday after he went to church, he still wasn't happy. His wife said, "What's wrong this time?" He said, "I just noticed all their red sweaters have yellow writing." They were both illiterate, but she said, "Don't worry about it. I'll embroider some writing on for you." She had no idea what the yellow writing on the red sweater of a Salvation Army man said--Any of you know what it is? They have a yellow circle, and in it, BLOOD AND FIRE. That's their motto. The man's wife had no idea what the letters said, and she couldn't read anyway. So copying a sign from a store window opposite their home, she embroidered the words of that store sign onto his red sweater. When he came back the next Sunday, she said, "Did they like your sweater?" "They loved my sweater. Some of them said they liked my sweater better than their sweater." What neither of them knew was that the sign on the store window she had copied read, UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.

The question is not really how much of God's spirit do you have. You receive all you will ever get when you become a Christian. The real question is how much of you does God's Spirit have? Have you given God permission to live and move in your life? Is the Holy Spirit controlling you?

Eph 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

I knew a young adult who was worship pastor in a church. A wealthy family from the church who had a big house on the lake were going away for a few years and asked if she would be interested in 'house sitting', living in their house and taking care of it while they were away. Of course she said yes. At first it was great. It was a huge and beautiful place. However, after a while it was not so great.

Imagine if you were invited to live in a big house but you could not change anything about the house while you lived in it because the house did not belong to you. You may find the color of the paint highly objectionable and not like the floor plan or the way the furniture was arranged but you could do nothing about it because the house would not be yours. The Holy Spirit is in the same position. He might not like a thousand different things we do, but there is nothing he will do about them until we give our lives completely to Jesus Christ. When you "sell out to Jesus" by turning your life completely over to Him and give Him total ownership, then He will make you like he wants you to be. Then both of you will like you better. You will truly be changed.

Does God have full control of your life? Have you told him that you will do anything, go anywhere, do anything that He asks you? God has anointed you for a purpose. Are you experiencing that anointing?

2. The Spirit EQUIPS – take what you are given - you will accept from them (vs. 3-4)

A second step or sign that Samuel told Saul was that as he went out he would meet 3 men who each were carrying something. Saul was told to take whatever he was given. In this passage the gifts were varied. One carried three goats (imagine carrying 3 goats), one had 3 loaves of bread, and the other had a skin of wine. I don't think we can put too much symbolism into these objects, other than to say they were all different. Saul did as he was told and accepted the 2 loaves of bread when they were offered to him. Saul could have responded to the offer in a number of different ways:

He could have rejected the offer - No thanks, I'm not hungry

He could have asked for more than what was offered - Why only 2 loaves, give me the third

He could have asked for something different - I don't like bread, how about some wine and a goat

Saul accepted the gift that was offered to him. Likewise we must accept the gift the Holy Spirit gives to us and use it for God's glory. We have to take and use what we have been given.

I don't know if anyone here saw the 2003 movie Paycheck. In the movie Ben Affleck creates a machine that sees into the future but then is made to forget everything he has done. All he has is an envelope filled with apparently unrelated items. Through the movie you understand that everything he has is for a purpose. Having foreseen what would happen he made sure he had everything he needed. In a way God has done the same for us. We have everything we need to fulfill the task God has for us.

Every believer has been given a gift. Some feel that the gift they have been given is not as important as another gift and wish they had something different. There are many gifts but one body and we must use whatever we are given to the glory of God. We need to accept God's gift and use it in the body of Christ. Each member of the body needs to function properly for the body to function well. Every person is essential.

3. The Spirit TRANSFORMS – changed into a different person (vs. 5-7)

Samuel told Saul to go on to Gibeah and that he would meet a company of prophets. He would join in with them and “be changed into a different person”. This is exactly what happened. As the prophets approached God’s Spirit fell on Saul and he began to prophecy with them.

1 Sam 10:11 When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Those who knew Saul saw him and could not believe the difference the Spirit made. They said to each other "What is this that has happened to the son of Kish?" I don't know about you but I want that to be said of me. I want people to see the difference that the Holy Spirit can make in a person's life – to hear people say "what has happened to you".

After Augustine's conversion, he was walking down the street in Milan, Italy. There he met a prostitute whom he had known intimately. She called to him but he would not answer. He kept right on walking. "Augustine," she called again. "It is I!" Without slowing down he called back, "Yes, but it is no longer I." His heart was now redirected and he was a changed man.

Lord, shine in me and so be in me that all with whom I come in contact may know thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. -- John Henry Newman

I pray for a church like that. A place where people come, encounter God and then leave changed. People should see the difference in us when the Holy Spirit is set free and transforms us from within so that even those who know us will say “What has happened to them”. When we hang around with the prophets we become prophets. We hear a lot about the negative influences of peer pressure but what about positive peer pressure. If you want to grow in your gifting find someone who has what you are looking for and follow them! When we move where the Holy Spirit is moving we are lead and transformed by God.

Are you experiencing that transformation in your own life? Are you different now than you were a few months ago? There is no greater joy as a pastor than to see lives changed by the goodness of God. This may not happen all at once, but it should be noticeable.

Maybe you are here today and you are thinking that all this talk about “anointing” and the Holy Spirit sounds a little too “charismatic”. As a closet charismatic, please extend me the grace to peek my head out the closet long enough to ask “are you experiencing the fullness of God in your life”?

To again quote Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “If you received all of the Holy Spirit at conversion, where in God's name is it?”

We often sing that song CHANGE MY HEART OH GOD which says “You are the potter, I am the clay”. What type of clay do you feel you are this morning? Some clay is hard and cannot be shaped. Other clay is soft and can be made into whatever the potter desires. We choose the extent to which we will be molded. We can resist what God wants to do in our lives.

Act 2:1-8 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"

The disciples were waiting. They were receptive. They were prepared to take what they were given. When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost they were transformed and they went on into the streets and the church was born. That band of disorganized believers changed the world in a single generation.

This does not mean that you have to speak in tongues. I remember the first missions conference I ever went to. It was called Student Missions Advance in 1984 in Hamilton. It was the last night and I remember we had a powerful time of worship during the closing session. The band had finished but no one was ready to leave so they kept playing. Finally we had to leave the conference center because it was closing but instead of going back to the hotel people spilled out of the conference center and began walking up and down the streets of Hamilton witnessing to people. The Holy Spirit had been so stirred in our hearts that we had to share it. We had been changed.

E.g. Miami airport.

The first step is giving God free reign in your heart. For some of us it's time to tell the Holy Spirit that He can stop house sitting and take ownership of your life. That means that you will do/change/receive whatever God wants to do in you. Perhaps this means for some you have to make the conscious decision to stop simply approaching God from an intellectual standpoint and engage your heart passionately in the area of worship.