

## **SLIDE ONE**

### **THE PURSUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PART I**

Today we begin a series on the Holy Spirit, and I've entitled the study: 'The pursuit of the Holy Spirit'. I'm sure that most of you have heard many teachings on the Holy Spirit. Others maybe not so much.

For some then, the study might be a review, for others it might be new ground.

Now I know that there are lots of different opinions about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, just like there are many opinions about many other Christian doctrines.

Within our congregation there is a wide representation of church traditions and so as we study this, there may be some scriptures come to the surface that challenge our current thinking or statements made that challenge my thinking or your thinking.

My intent here is not to bend everyone into exactly the same perspective on this subject, my hope and prayer is that we will objectively examine the scriptures from the word, and then solicit the help of the one we are studying, that is the Holy Spirit, to help us with our understanding of those texts.

So, as we study, let's look at scriptures with an open mind and ask the Holy Spirit to amplify the truth they contain and make it real to our minds.

The first question for us today is: Why study the Holy Spirit? And the second question that we will get to in minute is: why entitle the series the “pursuit of the Holy Spirit”?

Perhaps the best way to understand why we should pursue the Holy Spirit is to study and understand the role of the Holy Spirit found in the book of Acts.

The full name of the book is called the acts of the apostles. Some have suggested that it might have been more appropriately named the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

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Most would agree that the church was born at Pentecost. And I think that most would agree that it was the power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated so powerfully in Acts chapter two that empowered those early believers.

Any serious and objective reading of the book of Acts will come to the conclusion that the amazing propagation of the gospel following Pentecost was as a result of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working supernatural miracles and other supernatural manifestations through some ordinary people.

And so, the first key reason that we would consider pursuing the presence, power and anointing of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is really revealed through the Acts story.

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The Holy Spirit was the empowerment of the early church. There is no other equivalent, or even remotely equivalent, force identified in the New Testament as sufficient to replace the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we can safely conclude that the Holy Spirit is the one we should pursue if we long to see the church of today empowered and grow.

Now a word of caution here. If the Holy Spirit is the one supernatural powerful force given for the empowerment of the church, then we must assume that our enemy will do everything in his power to neutralize the Holy Spirit power in the church.

He will do everything in his power to detract and discourage you from seeking Holy Spirit power.

But the Holy Spirit remains the God ordained power supernaturally provided to the believer and the church that longs to serve God effectively.

### **SLIDE THREE**

In Acts 1:8 (NLT) Jesus predicts the new release of power that would happen at Pentecost:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

The Greek word ‘dunamis’ translated as power is another interesting word with multiple shades of meaning.

In the scriptures its translated as ‘power’ seventy seven times, as ‘strength’ seven times, as ‘miracle’ seven times and as ‘might’ four times.

And again, as you read the book of Acts you will see numerous examples where all these synonyms can be applied.

Our English word ‘dynamite’ comes from the same root and there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit ministry was dynamite to the apostles and the early church.

Today we are well into our covid season. Covid has presented the church with all sorts of new challenges. Even before covid, many churches were struggling just to survive let alone grow and thrive.

So, if there was ever a time when the church needed a fresh charge of Holy Spirit anointing and power it is now.

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So now our second question for our study. Why the wording ‘pursuit of the Holy Spirit? Why call this study the pursuit of the Holy Spirit?

Here’s why I believe that the church, our church should be in pursuit of the Holy Spirit.

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The reason that I believe that the pursuit of the Holy Spirit is important and necessary is because without the Holy Spirit the believer and collectively the church will be relatively passive and underpowered.

And the second part of that is that I believe that unless there is an active seeking and welcoming of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and in the life of the church, the individual and the church will remain passive and ineffective.

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The Holy Spirit does not aggressively intrude, He comes, anoints, empowers and abides where he is pursued, appreciated, and welcomed.

The second reason for the pursuit of the Holy Spirit is because even churches that were once filled with zeal and enthusiasm for the things of God can allow themselves to become stale, ineffective, and powerless.

Jesus addresses several churches in the early chapters of revelation, churches who were drifting away. Each of those messages ends with the caution whoever has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying.

Believers and churches genuinely interested in doing their best for God will always be pursuing the Spirit. They will be pursuing the Spirit's leading.

They will be pursuing more of the Spirit; they will be pursuing more of the gifts of the Spirit.

They will be anxious to hear what the Spirit is saying to them, they will be listening with their ears wide open willing to hear words of admonishment and correction as the need arises.

## **SLIDE SEVEN**

The third reason to be in pursuit of the Holy Spirit is because the believer's power and effectiveness is directly proportional to the degree to which the Holy Spirit is empowering them.

And then collectively the church's power is directly proportional to the collective power of its members.

And genuine power in believers and churches can only come from genuine power supplied by the Holy Spirit.

Think about where we are as a church and the challenges we face when we think about outreach. We can't do events. Even if we did people are afraid to come.

The church's personal contact and fellowship with people of the community is really difficult.

So the potential for contact with the lost of the world is in the hands of church members and it is only as members are anointed, empowered and led by the spirit that the good news of the gospel will penetrate our communities.

So here we are heading into 2021. The church needs the Spirit more than ever and we as individual believers need the Spirit more than ever.

## **SLIDE EIGHT**

The fourth reason for the pursuit of the Spirit is that he is the giver of Spiritual gifts. And once again if there ever was a time when we need to see the operation of the Spirit's gifts in our lives and in our church it is now.

And the fifth reason for the pursuit of the Spirit is because the scripture encourages us to be filled with the Spirit.

## **SLIDE NINE**

Eph 5 18 (NLT) says:

*Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts.*

So there are five good reasons that I've offered for the serious pursuit of the Spirit in our lives.

So, the first question we asked and hopefully answered was: why study the Holy Spirit?

The Second question we asked and hopefully answered was: Why call it the pursuit of the Spirit?

The third question is: Why would you personally join in the pursuit?

Now, I happen to think that it is very important as you contemplate pursuing the Holy Spirit in our lives in 2021 that you carefully consider why you are personally doing so.

You certainly should not consider it because I have somehow intimidated you to do so. You should not consider it because you want to put a checkmark in some spiritual checklist that says I've done this or that.

But rather that your personal pursuit of the Spirit should be because you genuinely wish to be used by the Lord. A wish to be used even in new ways in these strange new days.

So there's the three why questions for the study.

## **SLIDE TEN**

Now to move ahead and actually get into our study, let's spend a little time understanding on who the scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit to be.

Let's start by considering Ephesians 4:30 (ESV) we read:

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

We see here that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, a trait associated with personhood.

## **SLIDE ELEVEN**

Next let's consider Acts 5:3&4 (NLT)

*Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!”*

There are a couple of important points to be noted in these verses. First the Holy Spirit is again revealed to be a person because he demonstrates characteristics associated with personhood.

In this text we see that he is lied to. That's again a trait associated with being a person.

And so, we in evangelical Christianity believe that the Holy Spirit has personhood. But we also believe that he is also God, one of the three persons of the trinity.

Note in that text Peter first says 'you lied to the Holy Spirit' but then he also says 'you lied to God. So, we see here that Peter is affirming both the personhood of the Spirit and the Deity of the Spirit.

## **SLIDE TWELVE**

Now let's consider a couple of other strong affirmations.

In Matthew 28:19 (NLT) a verse which has become known as the great commission Jesus tells his disciples:

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

So, we see here in this text the Holy Spirit is placed on equal status with the Father and Son.

So from these texts we have seen that the Holy Spirit possesses person attributes, but he also possesses traits that can only be associated with being God.

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For example, he knows everything. This is called being omniscient a trait only associated with God.

John 14:17 (NLT) says: *“He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth.”*

So, John here is affirming the omniscience of the Holy Spirit. He knows all truth.

Another example of the Spirit’s omniscience is found in Romans 8:27 where we see that the spirit knows the will of God for every believer.

*“And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”*

Next we see that the Holy Spirit has creative and restoration powers that only God possesses.

#### **SLIDE FOURTEEN**

For example, consider Matthew 1:20 (NLT)

*As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

And then from Romans 8:11&12(KJV)

*But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

In Hebrews 9:14 (NLT) The Spirit is defined as being 'eternal'. That's another characteristic of God only God by definition is eternal.

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*For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.*

This eternal nature of the Spirit is seen from the beginning of scripture to the end. In the very verse chapter of Genesis verse two (NLT) we read:

*The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

And then if we go to the opposite end of the scriptures, to the book of Revelation, right to the very last chapter we read in verse seventeen (NLT):

*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.*

So, the Holy Spirit as per the scriptures is a person, is the third person of the trinity, is eternal, and is God.

So what is the role of the Spirit? What are the aspects of his ministry? They are many and varied and next week in Part II we will explore the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

But in the mean time, here is a summary of his many roles:

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The Holy Spirit serves as that of teacher, counselor, comforter, and strengthener. The Holy Spirit inspires, reveals truth from the Scriptures, convinces people of sin, calls people to their ministry, bestows spiritual gifts and intercedes for us in prayer.

For today we want to wrap up by touching on that phrase reveals truth from the scriptures.

Think about this for a moment, there would be no purpose in studying the scriptures about the Holy Spirit unless they were true.

## **SLIDE SEVENTEEN**

There would be no point in studying the scriptures about Jesus, about understanding the significance of his death on the cross if the scriptures were not reliable.

II Timothy 3:16 (NLT) says:

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

So, we see here that God was in control of the development of our scriptures.

And then Peter in II Peter 1:21 (NLT)

We are given a little more detail as to exactly how that happened.

We see that the writers of scripture were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

*For know prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

So next week Lord willing we return to the scriptures, the documents inspired by the Holy Spirit, to learn more about the work of the Holy Spirit.

In part II we will be looking at the work of the Spirit in the OLD Testament.