

3. When the Spirit Comes

The Holy Spirit at Work in the Believer

Warm-up: Would you describe yourself as being spiritually hungry, spiritually content, or both? Explain.

What have we said so far?

In the last two studies, we have learned that the Holy Spirit is a person. He has character and personality in the same way that the Father and Son have. We looked at the Tri-unity of God and saw that the Holy Spirit was at work in the creation and that He came upon different people at different times and for specific purposes in the Old Testament. We also looked at biblical prophecies that the Spirit will come differently in these last days after the resurrection of Christ. He will come on all people, young and old, male and female (Acts 1:17-18). We then looked at the passage in Paul's letter to the Romans:

And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).

Do you believe you have the Spirit of Christ living in you? If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit. This passage in Romans 8 makes this clear. Sometimes the enemy of our souls may lie to us and tell us that we do not have the Spirit. Even if you are at your lowest spiritual ebb, you must remember that as a Christian, you have been given the Spirit of Christ and have been baptized by the Spirit into His body. It is often due to a lack of understanding and faith in God's word about our identity in Christ that keeps us from walking in the power of the Spirit. We need to understand and accept all we are given in the new birth that Jesus has won for us on the cross (John 3:3). When we do understand the authority that God has invested in us, we will be true representatives of Christ on earth.

No wonder the enemy of our souls wants to keep us in ignorance and unbelief concerning our standing with Christ and the authority in the Spirit that is given as children of God. Of course, other things can also hold us back from being Christ's representatives on earth and walking in the power of the Spirit, as the Father intends for His children. Disobedience, unbelief and an unwillingness to forgive others can also hold us back. We have already looked at this in a previous study. If the enemy can, he will try to keep us in sin, bitterness, and an unforgiving attitude to others, because he knows it will hinder our effectiveness as disciples and keep us stagnant in our spiritual lives. Sin becomes a dam that holds back the Spirit's flowing in us and through us. We also looked at scriptures in the Book of Acts that God had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). Let's look now at another example of the Spirit coming in revival in the past.

The Spirit at Work in Argentina.

A young man, Alexander, and his band of rebels sat in the front row of a revival meeting in Buenos Aires aiming to disrupt it. God convicted him, and he repented. His gang began to leave but fell under the power of the Spirit on the way out. All were converted. Two of them later went to Bible School. Ed Miller taught at the Bible Training School that the two attended, in the little

town of City Bell, just outside Buenos Aires. In June he was led to canceling lectures so the whole Bible School could pray every day. He announced this on the first Sunday in June 1951.

Alexander, the former rebel, a teenager of Polish descent, was still in prayer long after midnight when he sensed a strange feeling of something pressing down upon him, a great intense light surrounding him and a heavenly being enfolding him. The boy was terrified and fled back to the Institute. 'The heavenly visitor' entered the Institute with him, and in a few moments, all the students were awake with the fear of God upon them. They began to cry out in repentance as God by his Spirit dealt with them. The next day the Spirit of God came again upon Alexander giving him a message challenging them to pray for God to come in a fresh way to Argentina.

The Bible school became a center of prayer till the vacation time when teams went out to preach across their city. It was the beginning of new stirrings of the Spirit across the land. They continued in prayer for four months, 8-10 hours a day, with constant weeping. Bricks became saturated with tears. One student prayed against a plaster wall daily, weeping. After six hours his tearstains reached the floor. After eight hours his tears began to form a puddle on the floor. While in prayer the Lord gave prophecies to the Bible School that God would fill the largest auditoriums and stadiums, these words spoken at a time when the average congregation in Argentina was 30 people:¹

Those praying for revival tried to get a well-known healing evangelist to come to Argentina, but he was fully booked up, and it seems that he wasn't God's choice. A little-known healing evangelist called Tommy Hicks received a word from God that he was to go to Argentina. A friend of his later confirmed this. All he had was enough money for the plane ride to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. While he was sitting on the plane and praying to himself, the Spirit of God spoke to him the word "Peron." Not knowing what that word meant, he asked the stewardess, who told him it was the name of the president of Argentina, Juan Peron. He concluded that he had to see the president.

The year was 1954. Upon his arrival in Buenos Aires Tommy Hicks met a committee that was organizing the evangelistic crusade. He told them that God had spoken to him about finding a stadium that would seat at least 25,000 people. The committee thought he was crazy, feeling that 2500 would be far too large for his meetings. When Tommy told the committee that President Peron would give them the stadium, they laughed. Peron was known to be intolerant and uncooperative with Christian leaders. Argentina was mostly Catholic with less than 2% of the population being Protestant. Peron was a dictator who carefully monitored every public meeting and his wife, Evita, was deeply involved in occultism. But the Spirit of God urged Tommy Hicks to go boldly to the presidential palace to see Peron, even though he was completely alone. Dr. Edward Miller, a witness of much that happened in the early days of the Argentine revival, writes about it in his book, *The Secrets of the Argentine Revival*. Miller writes:

Obtaining the use of press and radio was ridiculous even to consider. Under Peron's decrees, all religious activities were closely monitored and censored. All meeting schedules had to be reported to the police authorities sixty days in advance. Special

¹ <http://www.pastornet.net.au/renewal/fire/ff-1947.htm> Evan Wiggs.

permission had to be granted for any special meeting, and it was extremely difficult to gain permission for large gatherings. Records of all activities were kept in government files. Tommy's request was unfeasible; furthermore, it had never been done before. The prevailing mood of the committee did not indicate the possibility that any miraculous governmental change of decrees was even remotely possible. However, God had sent Tommy Hicks to Argentina, and God had told him to speak to Peron and speak to Peron he must.

The committee warned him that high American government officials had been insulted and refused an interview, so how could an unknown, unheralded and unimportant preacher from the United States ever get an audience with Peron. But Tommy Hicks believed in his God, and he went to his hotel room to pray. He knew that God had sent him and that God was bigger than any dictator. The next day Tommy, with an interpreter, walked up to the *Casa Rosada* or Pink House, where the government offices were located. As they neared the door, an armed guard, who also served as a porter, stopped them with a machine gun aimed at Tommy's chest and asked brusquely, "Who are you? What do you want?" Pastor Hicks carefully explained to him what he wanted; to hold salvation—healing crusade. The more Tommy explained, the more interested the guard became. Finally, the guard asked, "Do you mean to say that God can heal?" "Yes, He can and He will," replied Tommy. "Well, can He heal me?" queried the guard. "Yes, He can. What is your problem?" asked Tommy. "I have hepatitis, and my liver is killing me right now," the guard answered. "Give me your hand," responded the evangelist, and right there he prayed the prayer of faith. The power of God surged through that guard's body and in a moment his pain and sickness were gone.

Feeling the power of God, the guard was utterly astonished. He instantly felt a release from his pain. In total amazement, he said, "Why, it's all gone; all the pain is gone!" "Of course it's gone," replied Tommy, "God has healed you." The guard responded, "You come back tomorrow, and I will get you in to see the president. The next day the guard greeted Tommy and his interpreter cordially and escorted them to President Peron's door. The President greeted Tommy and his interpreter and after asking them to be seated, asked the reason for their coming. Pastor Hicks carefully explained to Peron the plans for the citywide salvation and healing crusade planned, also asking for full rights for the evangelicals to meet in stadiums and sporting arenas of the nation. He then explained the way of salvation and healing to the President.

President Peron, at that time, was suffering from a particularly advanced case of a skin disease called psoriasis. No physician had been able to cure him, and it had become steadily worse, even causing Peron to have to deny all photographs of himself. Peron, listening in amazement to Pastor Hicks, asked him, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ heals today the same as He did while He was here on Earth?" Tommy answered, "Of course I do. Here, give me your hand." Again Pastor Hicks prayed the prayer of faith for President Peron, and as the power of God flowed into him, he staggered back under the impact. Before the eyes of the onlookers, Peron's skin became smooth and soft as a baby's, and he was instantly made whole and complete. Amazed he stepped back and exclaimed, "Caramba, Dios mio, estoy curado!" (Good heavens, my God, I am cured!).

At this, President Peron sat down and signed the total freedom for the evangelical church in Argentina. In a moment God had done what it was impossible for man to do.

Now God was ready to explode in Argentina. The Atlantic stadium, with a seating capacity of twenty-five thousand people, was rented. From the very first the crowds were small, but God began demonstrating His marvelous power to heal and save. The good news began to spread as God manifested His mighty power. Larger and larger crowds began to appear to see the *miracle worker* as Tommy was called. Ushers were soon working twelve-hour shifts, and the bleachers were occupied hours before an event. So many people had to remain outside that speakers were strung up all around the stadium to allow them to listen and so many came that the streets and sidewalks were filled for blocks around.

Thousands were healed and saved under the simple preaching and prayers of Tommy Hicks. He merely prayed from the platform and asked the people to raise their hands toward God. Thousands raised their hands and were weeping as God's power surged through the crowd, both inside and outside the stadium. Wheelchairs, crutches, canes, braces, were all abandoned and blind eyes saw as God moved in mighty revival power.

Soon, the enormous Huracan stadium that would hold 180,000 people was rented. The crowds surged into that stadium and filled it to capacity too. God was moving, and His plan for Argentina was unfolding. The gospel was making an enormous and lasting impact on this nation of 20 million people. In the Huracan stadium, night after night, the power and glory of God surged and flowed. Outstanding healings and salvation took place, too numerous to record. Crowds again were too large and the blocks all around the stadium filled with people searching for the God who lives and acts today. A little child of over three had been unable to walk without heavy steel braces. When the mass prayer of faith was offered the mother took off the braces, and the child ran up and down the aisle. The crowds began to weep and shout as faith arose with spontaneous miracles starting to take place. Some people brought a twenty-year-old man into the stadium on a stretcher who had never walked before. When the power of God flowed that night, he left the stretcher behind and ran home with the news. The next night he appeared at the stadium having walked under his own power on legs healed by the power of Jesus. As the healings continued and the crippled and lame walked, the blind saw and the deaf heard the papers and magazines of the land reported on the massive miracles occurring in the crusade.

Accompanied by their doctor, the sister of the Vice President of Bolivia brought her children in hopes that the Lord would touch them. One of her boys was considered incurable and had suffered much. Both boys were healed at once, and when the doctor who attended them saw them both running as any healthy child, he ran up to Tommy and fell on his knees and embraced Pastor Hick's legs. He looked up with tears falling down his cheeks and cried out, "Tell me about your God; I want this God! I want this Jesus! I can serve a God that will do this for little children!" Argentina rocked under the seismic impact of the Hicks healing crusade. The topic on every tongue was the crusade. When a critic would speak against the healing ten people would stand up and speak of their healing or a relative's healing.

Oh children of the Living God, can we impact our country like this!? We need to pray, pray, pray until the power of God comes upon our land again."²

Isn't it amazing how a revival can grow from such a small seed as a prayer meeting? "**Who despises the day of small things?**" (Zechariah 4:10). We tend to minimize what we can do to such an extent that we don't do anything. The enemy will whisper to us that our little effort for God will make no difference at all, but in the hands of a mighty God, great things can come from small efforts and small things. It is only as we get going with our small energies that God can guide us. I learned a long time ago as a commercial fisherman on the east coast of England that you cannot steer a stationary vessel, a small rudder can only guide it as it is moving through the water. When we start using our time, energy, talents and money God can add and multiply what we put in His hands, even if it is only five loaves and two fish. Small things done with great love can change the world!

What do you think made the difference in Argentina and what are some of the obstacles that we have in the USA and Europe to experiencing a similar move of the Spirit?

Again and again, when I have read about revival and the moving of the Spirit in power, the chief characteristics have been much prayer and unity among Christians and churches. This spirit of unity is the very thing we see before the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Let's look at Acts, chapter 1, verses 12-14.

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴They all **joined together constantly in prayer**, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. ¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (Acts 1:12-14 Emphasis mine).

We can easily pass by the words "joined together," but there is spiritual power when we are like-minded with others on anything that we ask of God. Author Lloyd Ogilvie writes:

I have always felt that Pentecost happened not according to a date on a calendar but in response to reconciliation among the disciples. There were deep tensions among them during and after Jesus' ministry. Until they were together on their knees, fully open to God and each other, the Holy Spirit could not be given.³

It's also similar to what we have seen with the revival in the Hebrides, the Great Awakening with Charles Finney and certainly with the Argentine Revival. They sought God in persevering prayer, and there was a unity of heart. We underestimate the power of prayer.

Let's look now at how the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. Turn with me to Acts 2:

² Dr. Edward Miller. *The Secrets of the Argentine Revival*, <http://www.evanwiggs.com/revival/portrait/tommyhicks.html>

³ Lloyd John Ogilvie, *Drumbeat of Love* (Waco, Texas. Word Books, 1976) Page 20.

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine (Acts 2:1-13)."

Based on the evidence of these few verses what was going on? What do you think could have caused someone to comment, "they have had too much wine?"

We assume that those filled were the same 120 people (Acts 1:15) that were gathered together praying that God would give them the power to do what Christ had asked of them. We don't know if all 120 were assembled in the upper room, which was more than likely the same place in which the 12 had eaten the Last Supper together (Luke 22:12). It was 50 days after Passover when Jesus was crucified, the Day of Pentecost, when a very loud sound came suddenly from heaven and filled the house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2). The sound itself was so noisy that it drew at least 3000 people (Acts 2:41) to the spot where the believers were enjoying what looks to be an ecstatic experience of the Spirit. Whatever the 3000 saw that morning made them believe that the 120 were drunk (2:13). The disciples were seen to have flames of fire, described as tongues, resting on them at the moment the Spirit descended, perhaps in fulfillment of John the Baptist's words about Christ, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). It is possible that the tongues of fire had disappeared by the time the 3000 people witnessed the 120 coming out of the upper room, for there is no further mention of it by those looking on at what was happening. The manifestation of the Spirit filling them was that they began to speak in other tongues, or languages, which is what the Greek word means. This outpouring of the Spirit was a manifestation of power given to the 120 as the Spirit flowed in them and through them (v. 4). Let me ask you a question about this for us to ponder:

Was the miracle of hearing the gospel in different languages in the speaking or the hearing?

It seems that the miracle could have occurred in both the listeners and the speakers. The disciples were speaking ecstatically with words they had never learned, but it is possible that they were exercising the gift of tongues and God was doing the translation:

For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2).

In verse 8 and verse 11 the emphasis is on the hearing rather than the speaking. It could be that different people heard different languages out of the same speaker, knowing that the majority of the disciples there were from Galilee, which was known as a backward country bumpkin place (John 1:46). The Spirit had come suddenly (v. 2), perhaps just as the crowds were coming out of the temple after the morning prayer meeting. This outpouring is what is known as the Baptism of the Spirit. The word translated 'baptism' is the Greek word *baptizō*, which means to dip, dye, immerse, plunge, submerge. To overwhelm, imbue, or engulf. It was used in Greek to describe the act of dying cloth in a bath. The fabric was dipped under the liquid until it was saturated and soaked to the point that the cloth changed to the color into which it was dipped. When the Spirit came He baptized the believers into the body of Christ and the Church, the called out believers, was born.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Twice in the passage above Paul uses the word 'all.' This passage does not refer to some believers but all believers. When we give our lives to Christ, we are all part of the Body of Christ and have the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not given to those who are deserving and holy and have earned the gift of the Spirit, what kind of father would behave like that to his children! He gives His Spirit to all who are born again into His family:

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

When Paul writes that the Spirit has baptized all believers into the Body of Christ, he is not corresponding to the faithful Thessalonians, nor to the spiritual Ephesians, but to the worldly Corinthians. He tells them that every believer, including each of us that are Christians today, was all given the one Spirit to drink. The original Greek of 1 Corinthians 12:13 above is a completed past action. Each of us is baptized with the Spirit when we believe in Christ. To everyone who believes, God gives His Spirit. The three thousand people who were listening and watching what was happening to the 120 were told to repent, and be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). From Pentecost onwards, the only words to describe the coming of the Spirit is the words "they were filled."

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4).

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! (Acts 4:8).

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31).

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said... (Acts 13:9).

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52).

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

What do the scriptures mean by being filled with the Spirit? In the last mentioned passage, Paul is writing to the Ephesians commanding them to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The Greek word *pleroo* denotes being made full, to fill to the full, "to be filled, made full." It is a word that is also used of things such as a net filled with fish (Matthew 13:48), a building *filled* with fragrance (John 12:3), a city *filled* with teaching about Jesus (Acts 5:28). This Greek word is the same word used in Ephesians 5:18 where we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. Another word used is the Greek word *pimplemi*, it is also translated with the English word 'filled.' Eight times it is used of being filled with the Spirit, but it is also used with emotions: wrath, Luke 4:28; filled with awe, 5:26; madness, 6:11; wonder, amazement, Acts 3:10; jealousy, Acts 5:17.⁴

My thought in sharing these Greek words is that there seems to be a slant toward being controlled along with the word filled. With the word being used to describe emotions that were so strong they motivated the person in a certain way. There is an act of our volition that is involved to the degree that we desire to be controlled, led or guided by the Spirit. It is as if we can present our bodies in submission to Him and say, "not my will but yours be done." It goes along with what we have said about relinquishing control of every area of our lives to Him. Our lives, our children, our homes, our cars, even everything we have! To be a disciple is to have Jesus to be Lord of your whole life. If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all!

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

To the degree, we can give up ownership of our stuff, and ourselves is the same degree of being filled and controlled by the Spirit. That's the kind of life that Jesus modeled and lived.

What are typical ways that people sense that the Spirit is touching them?

For some, it may be uncontrollable laughter and joy filling them. Others have a sense of God's peace and tranquility. For others, their emotions are touched, and they often will weep uncontrollably. Some people report that they feel muscle spasms and eyes twitching. Usually, there are observable signs such as an increase of heart rate as the person is aware of the presence

⁴ Vines Concise Dictionary of the Bible, Page 137, Published by Nelson.

of the Spirit on them. Some people experience the gift of tongues, a gift of the Spirit that will help them pray, even when they might not know all the circumstances for which they are praying. It is burdensome, though, to tell people that they must speak in tongues as evidence of the Spirit's presence, for Paul tells us, “**Do all speak in tongues?**” (1 Corinthians 12:30). The inference is in the negative. I believe that all can speak in tongues; otherwise Paul wouldn't have said: “**I would like every one of you to speak in tongues**” (1 Corinthians 14:5), but the reality is that many do not. When one looks at the history of the church, many great and gifted men and women of God have made significant contributions to the growth of God's kingdom who have never spoken in tongues, as far as we know. Men, such as Billy Graham, Charles Finney, John Wesley, and George Whitfield. I would encourage you to be open to any of the gifts of the Spirit that may come as the Spirit touches us, and not to quench or put out the Spirit's fire (1 Thessalonians 5:18-20).

Another manifestation of the Spirit is an increase of love toward God and others. Paul writes to the church at Rome saying that, “**hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**” (Romans 5:5). Many experience a depth of God's love and acceptance flowing in them and through them. This kind of love transforms lives, churches, cities, and nations. Let us be those kinds of people— changed by the presence of the Spirit.

In summary, as we look at the Holy Spirit coming to an individual, a group or even a nation, what key ingredients do we find?

- 1) **Unity or Togetherness:** God chooses to come with His presence when people have a common goal and an undivided heart of unity (Psalm 133:1-3).
- 2) **Prayer:** God responds to unceasing, persistent prayer. Faith is expressed through prayer and is honoring and pleasing to Him (Hebrews 11:6).
- 3) **God is Sovereign** over the affairs of men. It is His choice to visit us in any way He sees fit. One person's experience is not more important or more valuable than another's.

We can prepare ourselves by forgiving others who may have wronged us, by being spiritually hungry for the Word of God and by being open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit; fill our hearts anew with your love and fire. Increase our love and devotion to Jesus and towards others.

Keith Thomas.

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com