

Why Is the Church Powerless?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon addresses the reasons behind the church's powerlessness today, emphasizing the need for obedience and repentance to receive the Holy Spirit's gifts.

Duration: 57:13

Scripture: Luke 11:9-10, John 1:1, Acts 1:15-17, Acts 1:20-22

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of acknowledging God as the Lord. He refers to a story in which people fell on their faces and proclaimed the Lord as God. The preacher also discusses the significance of setting things in order and being persistent in seeking God's blessings. He mentions the example of a man who persistently asked for bread and received it because of his persistence. The preacher concludes by mentioning the practice of creating an environment conducive to receiving the Holy Spirit in tarry meetings.

Transcript

Please turn with me to the first book of Kings, please. The first book of Kings, chapter 18. And I know you wonder why we're going to the Old Testament, and especially the book of Kings, when we're going to speak about the Holy Spirit.

And my subject this evening is why is the church powerless today? Why is the church powerless today? And the problem is that we often don't understand and recognize, and I'm not speaking about this church, I'm speaking about the church in America and in the West in general. And we assume that the church is not powerless because things seem to happen. But in fact, they don't happen.

There's a saying, and I've not been able to trace where it comes from. Some people say it was a man from Africa. Other people say it was a Chinese man.

But somebody, and maybe it was a fictitious man, but somebody came to America, and having been here, was asked about the church in America. What did he see? And how does it look? Everything that he saw, the big churches and all the stuff that happens. And his comment was, it is amazing what you've been able to do, the church in America has been able to do, without God.

And that's the thing. We have the technology, we have the buildings, we have the advertising, we have the physical stuff, the fleshly stuff to make things happen and to make things look like they're really happening. But is something really happening? Are lives really being changed? And the answer is no.

In the vast majority of churches, lives are not being changed. And so that's where we are. And so why is the church in that state? It's not just America.

Europe is exactly the same. Every Western country is the same. The only places where there's a real move of God's Spirit is in the countries that are oppressed.

China, North Korea, and those kinds of places. So let's turn to the book of Kings, chapter 18 then, and I'm going to begin to read, let me see, in verse 24. Well, let me begin in 20.

I wanted to cut it a little shorter, but we need the context. So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to tell the people and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, follow him.

But the people answered him, Not a word. Then Elijah said to the people, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Therefore let them give us two bulls, and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it.

And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who answers by fire, he is God.

And so all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourselves, and prepare it first. For you are many, and call on the name of your God, and put no fire under it.

And so they took the bull which was given to them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, no one answered. And then they leaped upon the altar which they had made.

And so it was at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is meditating, or he is busy. In fact, literally he is on the toilet.

Or he is on a journey. Or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened. And so they cried aloud and cut themselves as was their custom, and with knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice, and no one answered, and no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to the people, Come near to me.

And so all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name.

Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. And he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seers of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.

And then he said, Do it a second time, and they did it a second time. And he said, Do it a third time, and they did it a third time. And so the water ran all around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.

And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God. And Elijah said to them, Seize the prophets of Baal, do not let one of them escape. And so they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook of Kishon and executed them there.

And so I'm going to come back to that near the end. So when I get to Kings, you know that we're almost through. And that will be in another two hours.

So let's just settle down and let's get down to business here. So the question then is, why is the church powerless? The answer is from the cessationists, and for those who have been with us through the conference, those who say that the spirit is no longer being poured out, that the gifts have ceased, their answer is that this is not a new thing, that this happened somewhere in the first century. Some of them say AD 50, some of them say the end of the first hundred years, some of them say at the death of Paul or of the other of the apostles, John would have been the last of those apostles, AD 100 roughly.

Others say, well, it was the formation of the canon of scripture, which was AD 300 roughly. So they have different dates, but basically the gifts stopped happening, they say. And then they will point to history, and they say, well, you can look at history, and the gifts were not operating beyond that date.

Now, we spoke about the fact that that is revisionist history, it's not the truth, the gifts have continued through the last 2,000 years, God has continued to pour out his spirit over true believers in the last 2,000 years, but there definitely was a decline. And that decline happened around about AD 50 probably, probably at the end, towards the end of Paul's ministry, there was a decline of the gifts of the spirit, there was a decline of true ministries being raised up. Now, here's the problem, we say, well, that happened because God has only gave the gifts, only gave the spirit for the establishing of the church and thereafter it was to cease, that's what they say.

But that's not the truth. Yes, there was a decline, there was no cessation, it never stopped, but there was a decline. And the decline was not because God chose to no longer give his spirit, because that was not part of his plan, but it was because he could no longer give his spirit because of the state of the church.

And I'm going to read a quote for you, I don't read many quotes, but I'm going to read this quote for you from Harry Ironside. Ironside, by the way, is one of those people they quote as being a cessationist. Now, and he came out of a cessationist denominational group, the Plymouth Brethren, who are vehemently opposed to the gifts of the spirit because of the things that they experienced with the Irvingites going back 300 years.

Now, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians chapter 12, written in 1938, by the way, Ironside says this, there are commentators who insist that some of these gifts have absolutely disappeared. But I do not know of

any scripture portion that tells us that, something we've been saying all weekend. I do not know of any passage that says the age of miracles has passed.

And I would not dare to say that the signed gifts all ended with Paul's imprisonment. I know from early church history that this is not true. Therefore, I do not think it is correct to take the position that these signed gifts have necessarily disappeared from the church.

I do, however, believe that many of the gifts are not often seen today. And I think there's a good reason for that. In 2 Corinthians 11, 2, the apostle wrote, I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Paul was writing to a separated company, the engaged bride of the Lamb, and it was the delight of the blessed risen Lord to lavish upon her gift after gift. The Corinthians came behind in no gift. However, it seems to me that when we can see in the book of Acts that as time went on and the church began to drift a little, and as dissension and other things that grieve the Lord arose, there was more reserve on his part in bestowing gifts.

That, I believe, explains the lack of many of these gifts today. The church has gotten so far away from what she should be, and there is so much strife, division, worldliness, carnality, and carnality that the Lord no longer delights in lavishing his gifts on us as freely as he did in the beginning. What a statement! And I believe that that is the truth.

That is the reason we don't see the gifts. Not because he does not want to give us the gifts, but because we don't deserve the gifts. Now here's, and if you've been with me this weekend, you know that I'm trying to dispel a number of Pentecostal myths.

And one of the myths, I believe, is that the Holy Spirit is a gift, which it is, and because it is a gift we say, well, it is like salvation, you can't earn it. That's what we say. That's the mindset.

So it's a gift, you can't earn it, God just gives it to us the same way as he gives us salvation. But that's not the truth. And I'm going to show you in a moment.

Salvation is a free gift, we cannot earn it. You cannot reach a certain level of holiness or whatever it is, and say, well Lord, I'm pretty good now, now you can give me salvation. We understand there's no basis, we cannot do that.

We come empty handed, and we receive by faith the gift of salvation. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is not an unconditional gift, the same way as salvation is. Salvation is unconditional, it requires only faith and repentance on my part.

But the gift of the Holy Spirit is not unconditional. This is what we've always taught, and what we've always believed. But I'm going to go to a few scriptures now, and trust that we'll see that in fact it is not unconditional.

In Acts 5, and I'm going to jump around a little bit, and I'm going to actually want us to look at each one of these scriptures, because it's important that we get this. Acts 5, verse 32. And we are his witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to whoever wants Him, to those who obey Him.

Now I don't need any other scriptures, that's all we need, to dispel this idea that God will just give His Spirit to whoever asks for it. He gives His Spirit to those who obey Him. Now one of the things that the cessationists throws against us, is that what we are doing is we are creating two classes of Christians.

First class Christians who get the Holy Spirit, and second class Christians who don't get the Holy Spirit. Well, it's not we who've done that. God has said that He will give us His Spirit, everyone can receive His Spirit, but He's not going to pour His Spirit into an unclean vessel.

God is not going to inhabit a temple which is not worthy of Him. Now I'm not speaking about salvation, I'm speaking about the pouring out of His Holy Spirit, which is symbolized in the Old Testament by the glory of God coming down on the tabernacle. And you remember the process in the tabernacle, as Moses built that tabernacle, and you go through to the last chapter of the book of Exodus, you'll see that over and over it says that he built the altar as the Lord commanded him.

He set the labor up as the Lord commanded him. He did this as the Lord commanded him. Over and over, he did as the Lord commanded him.

And when he had finished everything exactly as God commanded him, the glory of God descended. Now, folk, I believe with all of my heart that Moses could have done 90% of it good and right, but he could have decided in his own mind, let's take the altar of sacrifice, which was the first thing you saw as you came in, and said, this is a mess here. The animals are being killed here, there's blood, there's stuff lying, it's a terrible place, let's just take this and put it at the back there.

Because it spoils the beauty of the rest of this wonderful thing that we have built for God. And if Moses did that, I don't believe God's glory would have descended. But we mess with God's order in our lives, we mess with God's order in the church, and we wonder why his spirit doesn't come.

When we don't do what he tells us to do, when we live lives that are disobedient. Now, I know that one of the arguments that people use is that in the charismatic revival, God poured his spirit on all sorts of people. Roman Catholics who were worshipping Mary and sacrificing Jesus on their altars week after week after week, and that God gave them the Holy Spirit.

Now, folk, I question whether God gave them his Holy Spirit, let me just tell you bluntly. Because on this basis of God's word, I don't believe that God would give his spirit to those who disobey him. Because here's the thing, there is so much fake going around in charismatic and Pentecostal circles.

And let's just face facts. And if there's fake in your life, it's time that you face those facts in your own life. You say, well, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and I spoke in tongues 20 years ago.

And as I said last night, I don't care if you were. Is there evidence that you were filled with the spirit today? That's really the question. You say, but I spoke in tongues, well, I don't care.

Maybe it was fake. Now, that'll rattle a few people's faith. But folk, we have to be real.

And as we said last night, I'm not going to preach last night's message over again, don't worry. But it's no good saying you have something when you don't have it. And it's no good the church saying we have the Holy Spirit when we don't have the Holy Spirit.

Because we've become just like the church in Laodicea. They said we're rich and increased with goods. And they're not only speaking material things, they're speaking about spiritual things also.

We're rich and increased with goods. We have need of nothing. And Jesus says, you don't even know that you're wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

And that's the problem. And so I desperately don't want you to go away and to judge this church or your church if you come from another church. But I want you to judge your own life.

That's the only thing that you can control. You can't bring the Spirit into any church. But you can make sure that you personally are filled with the Holy Spirit.

And if each one of us will do that, well then we'll have an assembly of people who are filled with the Holy Spirit. But going around and saying, oh, well, you know, the Berean Assembly or this church or that church, they just don't have it. Well, that doesn't help anything.

Do you have it? That's the only question. And if you don't have it, maybe it is because there's disobedience in your life. It's as simple as that.

Now let's go to Acts chapter 2 and verse 38. Acts chapter 2 verse 38. Then Peter said to them, Peter preaching the day of Pentecost, Peter said to them, repent.

Let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now I've heard that preached hundreds of times probably.

But what does Peter say? Repent. Be baptized. And then you will receive the Holy Spirit.

Now I know that there are times when God pours His Spirit. There are examples in the book of Acts when He pours His Spirit on people who have not been baptized yet. But I don't believe there's a single example of Him pouring His Spirit on people who have not been repented yet.

Now we preach a gospel today which is void of repentance because we have this cheap grace message. Just believe. That's all you have to do.

Just believe. Now I don't have the time to deal with that whole thing, but that's a huge doctrinal issue. And I'm not the first one to speak about that.

Bonhoeffer who lived and died during the Second World War spoke about it, wrote a tremendous book, The Cost of Discipleship. And he coined this phrase, cheap grace. And the basis of his thesis was quite correct because he was a Lutheran and he says that we Lutherans have taken Luther's idea of salvation by faith alone too far.

Because it's not just faith alone. Faith needs to be proven by works. Faith results in repentance.

If you've really believed when you came to Jesus Christ, there will and must be repentance. The idea that you can become a Christian and continue in your wicked lifestyle like most Christians in America and in the West do today, that is absolute nonsense and absolute rubbish. You say, but I believed.

No, you didn't believe. If you believed, you would repent. If you believed in God's judgment and God's wrath, if you believed in hell, you would repent.

If you believed the message of the cross that Jesus paid that terrible price for us upon that cross of Calvary, you would run from your sins. So we haven't really believed. So we're not changing the message of salvation by faith alone.

But faith must produce repentance. And so Peter is saying then repentance and baptism. So what's the big deal with baptism? Well, remember that those days you didn't get baptized unless you were genuine.

You didn't get baptized just because everybody else does it. Because baptism those days meant exactly what it does in Islamic countries. It meant that you would be cut off from your family, that you could even be killed by the family if that was what they felt like doing.

But certainly it contained a tremendous price. It was not something you did if you were half-baked and you weren't genuine about your repentance and about your salvation. Now today baptism doesn't have the same thing.

And yet there are many Christians who choose not to be baptized. And we say, well, what's the big deal? Because it's a little step. And you say, well, it's just such a small thing.

What's the big deal? No, it's a small thing that shows a big problem. Because if I'm not willing to be baptized, I'm being disobedient. He gave his spirit to those who obey him.

And now baptism is not, obviously, not the only issue that keeps us from the baptism of the Spirit. Any area in which we're disobedient, I don't believe that we can expect God to pour his Spirit into our hearts and into our lives. John chapter 14.

There are other scriptures also, but I'm going to just give you these three this evening. John chapter 14. And this is Jesus speaking in the upper room to his disciples just before his crucifixion.

And he speaks about the fact that he's going away and he's going to send the Spirit. And John chapter 14 verse 15. And if you love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever. Obviously, the Holy Spirit. Now look again.

If you love me, keep my commandments. That's the first issue. We say, well, I love Jesus.

Prove it by keeping his commandments. God commended his love towards us. God proved his love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And so God didn't just say, I love you. He showed his love. He declared his love by Christ's death.

And he's asking the same from us. It's no good just saying, I love you. He's saying, prove that you love me by keeping my commandments.

And then the next verse, and here's the problem. We read these verses one by one because they have a number. And so this is one idea.

That's another. Each one is a separate idea. No, they're not.

When the book was written, it didn't have different verses. And so really verses 16 and 17, is it? 15 and 16 shouldn't even be two separate verses because verse 16 begins with the word and. So what has he just

said? Keep my commandments and I'll pray the Father and he'll give you the Spirit.

Can you see the connection again between keeping the commandments and obviously it's not the Old Testament commandments. He's saying my commandments, New Testament commandments, keep my commandments and I will pray the Father and he will give you the Spirit. Now folks, right there I can stop this message and I've answered my question.

Why does the church not have the Holy Spirit? Why do Christians not have the Holy Spirit? Because of disobedience and because of sin. A lack of repentance. Those two issues.

And so that's where we need to begin. Now the second myth that I'm going to try and dispel this evening is the idea that because it is a gift, and it flows from the first idea, because it is just a gift, all I need to do is I need to go to the pastor or come to the church or whoever and we have this idea of impartation today. So whoever has the ability to impart the Holy Spirit, if I come to them they'll zap me and that's it, I'm going to receive the Holy Spirit.

Now it doesn't quite work that way either. Now as we went through the five or six different examples in the book of Acts, you'll remember that there was one occasion when it just happened immediately. But I want to take my cues from the day of Pentecost because that's really the prototype.

That's really where the model is set for us. Now remember just by the way as we go through the book of Acts, there are many things in Acts which are just recorded for the sake of history, that that's what happened then and they are not what we call normative for us. They applied only to them and they didn't apply to us.

And the trick of course is understanding what was just for them and what is for us. And so in the upper room there was tons of fire and there was a sound of a mighty rushing wind. That was just for them.

There may be and I've read records of other times when there have been tongues of fire, I think in the Philippines if I remember right, and at other times where there's been the sound of a mighty wind. But those are the exceptions. That is not normative.

That is not the norm for every situation. And so we have to separate those things out. So let's go back then to the book of Acts and let's see how this happens.

It would help if I was in Acts and not in John. Acts chapter 1 verse 4. Acts chapter 1 verse 4. Being assembled together with them he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father which he said you heard of me. John truly baptized with water I'll baptize with the Spirit.

Wait in Jerusalem. How long did they wait? If you were in Sunday school this morning you'll know the answer if you were awake that time of the morning. Ten days.

Good. Ten days they waited. So we have 40 days from the ascension or the resurrection to the ascension and then we have 10 days from Jesus' ascension to the day of Pentecost.

So we have a total of 50 days which is the Greek word penta, 50 and so it is 50 days from the resurrection basically give or take a couple of days depending on how you count the days until the day of Pentecost. So we have 10 days. For 10 days they are locked into the upper room and we don't know whether they

slept there, they may have slept there or whether they just went there during the day but certainly they spent most of the time of the day there and they did that for one purpose and that is to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now immediately we have this problem that they waited for 10 days but we want to wait for five minutes. When I was a young guy growing up in the church we used to have and I'm sure you had them here in America, tarry meetings. Tarry meetings based on the old King James version of this passage, tarry in Jerusalem, wait in Jerusalem so they are waiting meetings.

Well the longest waiting meeting that I know of would go through the night but most of the time it would be two hours or maybe three hours while people pray for people and try to get them filled with the Holy Spirit. Now there is a little difference between two hours and 10 days. Now please understand I'm not saying that we have to wait 10 days.

The 10 days is not a magical number but the issue, the principle is one of waiting until it happens. Waiting until it happens. Now let me get back to that but let me just deal with something else in between.

As they are waiting during those 10 days what were they doing in those 10 days? Does the scripture tell us? It tells us about one thing they did at least. They were going through the scriptures. I don't know whether they had a copy of the Old Testament or whether many of them could recite it but somehow they were going through the scriptures.

And for what purpose were they going through the scriptures? I believe one of the reasons they were going through the scriptures was to check whether they had obeyed His commandments. Whether there was something in them that prevented the Spirit from coming. You say well that's a long shot.

That's a big guess. Well let's look at the scripture. Verse 15, Acts chapter 1 verse 15.

It says that the Spirit of God was in the midst of the disciples. In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples. Altogether the number of names was about 120.

And he said, Men and brethren, this scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry. Now this man purchased a field and so on.

Verse 20, For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his dwelling place be desolate, let no one live in it. And therefore of these men who have accompanied us all the time since the Lord Jesus went out and so on, let's appoint a man. So what did they discover in their searching of the scriptures and of their own hearts? That there was something that was undone.

That there was something that was undone and that was appointing someone in the place of Judas. And so they appoint Matthias and I'm not going to deal with the mechanism, you know the story. So they appoint Matthias.

Now remember this happens in this period of ten days. Acts is not giving us a day by day or a moment by moment chronological account of exactly everything that happened. But Luke is writing and remember that Luke writes with incredible detail.

And what Luke records is for a very specific, Luke is incredibly precise in the way that he writes. And if you go to verse 26 of chapter 1. Now remember there are no chapters. And they cast their lots and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all in one accord in one place and suddenly there came a sound from heaven. So what is Luke doing? Luke is saying they discovered that there was this thing that they had not done, that they needed to do. They obeyed and did and set in order what needed to be set in order and then what happened? The Holy Spirit came.

Now it may not have been the next day, it may not have been the same day. We don't know. But Luke is clearly making a connection here between their obedience and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

So when we speak about tarrying, one of the things that is essential in tarrying, which I've never heard in a tarry meeting or a receiving meeting, is that the first thing that needs to happen is we need to take stock. Or as you say in America, take inventory. And Brother Keith will tell you when they take inventory it's a big business in retail.

Because you have to go through every shelf, every rack and count every item and make sure what is there is there and what is on the books is on the shelf and that nothing is missing. And so part of this process, and I don't advocate public tarrying meetings any longer, exactly for this reason, because for some people it can take several hours, but for most people this is a process that can take weeks, months or years, depending on how quick you are in fixing the stuff that needs to be fixed. But the first part of that process, now I've never heard this taught in Pentecostal circles, but I can't come to any other conclusion based on what the Scriptures teach.

The first thing we need to do in this process is to start taking inventory and go through the Scriptures and say what is there as the same way as they at Home Depot check what is on the computer is on the rack. You have to check what is in here, whether it's in my life. And if it's not there, I'd better fix it.

Because he's only going to give me the Spirit once I've obeyed him. Now it doesn't have to be a long process because generally we deep down know the issues that God has spoken to us about. We know the issues we're disobedient about.

And so it really shouldn't take a long time, but unfortunately sometimes it does. The problem is not recognizing the problems, the problem is fixing the problems. And those shouldn't take a long time, but unfortunately we don't rush to do these things.

We delay in making right. We delay in repenting. We delay in doing what God has asked us to do, because generally we're just those kinds of people.

And so as they obeyed him, he then poured out his Spirit. And then the second thing that I want to emphasize on this, and there are many other details that we can speak about, but the second thing I want to emphasize on this is the principle of waiting until. Waiting until.

Now what would have happened? Now in hindsight we know that it happened on the day of Pentecost to fulfill the days as it were, so it happens on the day of harvest, and so God had predetermined that day, knowing that they would obey and all of that kind of stuff. But what would have happened if they stopped on the ninth day? Now remember, nine days is a long time. Some of us are very tired after having been in this place for three days, and we've got to go home and do other things in between.

But imagine just being in prayer and just waiting upon God for nine days. And I suspect, I don't know, but I suspect that they may even have been fasting during that time. And so after nine days they say, well, you know, I've got it.

I can speak in tongues. Buy a Cadillac, buy a Cadillac, buy a Cadillac. Now folk, we joke about these things, but it's incredibly serious, because that's exactly what we do.

We begin to imitate things, we begin to force people, we begin to use all sorts of techniques and things to get people just to say a few words in tongues so we can go home. If you really want this, and I believe that we must want the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but if we really want it, we will wait upon the Lord whatever time it's going to take. Now I'm not suggesting that you go out into the woods or somewhere there for a week or two weeks or whatever.

If that's what you want to do, that's fine. But it may just be a process you're going to have to go through in your daily living or setting time aside every day and seeking the face of God, checking your life, going through the inventory, going through the scriptures, going through the issues that need to be fixed, going and seeing the people that you've held grudges against and repairing those relationships, making right the things that you need to make right in your life, and then coming to the Lord and saying, I'm going to be here in your presence one hour every day until I get it, two hours every day, whatever it takes. Because you see, one of the principles, and I don't want to preach the whole Sunday School lesson over it, but it's amazing how the Spirit works.

See, here's one of the things I've learned in the last few years, is that we sometimes want to do everything that we can just spontaneously, because we say, well, we're led by the Spirit. So we don't want to organize things properly, and we don't want to prepare things, and so you'll see on those MP3s, what I do back in Sun Valley, in LA, is I teach through the Bible, verse by verse, through different books. I teach the book of John in Sunday School, I teach 2 Corinthians in the morning service, and I teach John's epistles in a Bible study on Thursday night.

And some people have come to me and said, well, you know, you're not allowing for the Spirit to move, in terms of what topic you're going to deal with, because I'm going to deal with wherever I stopped last week, I'm going to continue this week. Well, I think that this morning was an illustration of exactly that. I came here this morning, and Sister Carolyn asked me if I would do the Sunday School, and I said, well, what is the lesson? And she said, here's the lesson.

The lesson is Luke 11. Luke 11 deals with the Lord Jesus saying, ask, and keep on asking. Knock, keep on knocking.

Seek, and keep on seeking. And then he says that if you who are evil fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, and remember that all of the best of us as fathers are evil in comparison to God, but you who are evil fathers, if you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will a father not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? But you see, here's the lesson of Luke chapter 4, because it speaks first of all of the man, the parable of the man who gets visitors in the middle of the night, and he goes knocking on his friend's door, and he says, I don't have food for my visitors. Give me some bread.

And the guy says, I'm in bed. I'm not going to get up and give you bread. But the man persists.

He keeps knocking until eventually the man opens the door and gives him the bread, and it says not because he was his friend, but because of his persistence. Now, what does that parable teach us? Now, here's the problem. In classical Pentecostal teaching, that passage is used, and it says, you see there, it says, just ask and he'll give it to you.

But that's not what Luke 11 says. Sorry, let me get back to my original point and then I'm going to come back to this one. Did the Holy Spirit know that we're going to have this conference speaking about the Holy Spirit this weekend? Yes, he did.

Did you think that God could somehow organize the program, going back months whenever you started that program, and whoever wrote the program or the thing, that God knowing that in ten years' time, we're going to have this conference, and that the church will be at this particular Bible study that deals with persistence in waiting for the Holy Spirit, you think that that's too hard for God to do? No. So I don't have to try and figure things out. Sometimes we just need to let the Lord just do what he wants to do.

And this is just what happened this morning. I believe it's very significant, because what it tells us is that God is in control. That is not just chance.

There are thousands and thousands of scriptures that could have been set for the lesson for this morning. There are thousands of topics we could have chosen for this conference. But God powerfully and miraculously, over a period of maybe many years when that program was written, organized for these two things to coincide at exactly the same time.

Worked in his sister's heart to say, that is what we need to do today. And this is something I've seen over and over as I just teach through those books. Not every Sunday.

We try to bring an application which is relevant every Sunday, or every week we teach the book. But many, many times I see how the passage I happen to come to just happens to be exactly what we need to deal with in the church today. Now that's by the way.

So where were we? Wait in Jerusalem. The lesson that is taught from Luke is just ask and he'll give it to you. Now that is not what Luke teaches.

What Luke 11 teaches. What Luke 11 teaches is persistence in asking. Then he gives his spirit.

He gives his spirit to those who are persistent. Now I'm not going to go back over the whole Sunday school lesson this morning. But one of the reasons he wants us to be persistent is he wants to see whether we're really serious about this thing.

Because most of the time we're not that serious. We say, well Lord, give it, take it or leave it situation. Lord, you know, I'd love to have the Holy Spirit, but you know, I'm a bit busy right now, so if you can really just give it to me quickly, that's cool, I'll be out of here.

Well I'm not really serious about it. Now maybe you say that you've been filled with the Spirit before, maybe you've not been filled with the Spirit before. But are you filled right now? That's the question.

And it's a question you alone can answer. And if the answer is no, I am not filled. The question is not whether you're 50% filled.

The question is whether you're overflowing. Remember in John, Jesus says, if any man thirsts, let him come to me and let him drink, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. So if you've just got enough for yourself, you're not full.

You need to have enough to be overflowing so that others are able to drink and to be blessed by what you have. And if you don't have that, it's going to cost you. Now there's a question.

I'm not going to answer that. That's a concept we don't like, because it's all free. It's going to cost you time.

It's going to cost you sacrifice. And those are things we're not serious about. You know sometimes Baskin Robbins has, do you have Baskin Robbins here? It's an ice cream thing.

Yeah sometimes they have a free ice cream. You get a coupon in the mail and the thing and you know, go down there and get a free ice cream. Well my wife and I have gone down to Baskin Robbins a few times with a coupon and looked at the line.

And we say, well you know, we're not that serious about this. And we do the same with God. God says, you know, I'll give you the Holy Spirit.

But there's a little bit of a process. Ah well Lord, maybe some other day. I'll just read a book about psychology and try and fix my problems that way.

I'll just shout a little louder when I'm preaching. Maybe that will cover up the lack of anointing. All sorts of stuff we do to compensate for what we don't have.

Wait in Jerusalem until you've got it. And folks that's what we need to do. There is no shortcut to this thing.

That's why I don't like it. I'm glad that Brother Gary says that you don't have those kinds of meetings here. Sure we'll pray if you want us to pray for you at the end of the meeting or at any stage.

We'll pray for you. But certainly I'm not going to go into a long waiting situation because it's something that you need to resolve with the Lord. He said, well what about the other times in the book of Acts when the Holy Spirit just fell upon them? Well I think there was a little bit of a difference in their dedication, in their holiness, in the quality of their repentance and ours unfortunately.

And if our repentance was as holy and as complete as some of those people's were, and remember even Paul didn't receive it the same day. He received the Holy Spirit a few days later. But that moment when he fell down on that road and he says, Lord what do you want me to do? Paul came to a 100% surrender.

Paul knew at that moment, he knew the price because he was the one who was exacting the price upon those who were followers of Jesus. He knew what it meant at that moment. But he said, Lord, the moment he just said that word, Lord, Master, in other words I submit and I surrender to you.

That was a 100% thing with Paul. And I believe that Paul could have received the Holy Spirit at that moment, but even then the Lord makes him wait three days and sends another man, just another man, not even a great apostle, just another man called Adonai to come and pray for Paul that he might receive the Holy Spirit. Alright, so how do we receive the Holy Spirit? We need to wait.

Time in his presence. We need to ask, we need to seek, we need to knock. There needs to be a persistence as we find Jacob who wrestled with the Lord and he said, I will not let you go unless you bless

me.

And God met with him on that day and Jacob left that place a changed man, physically changed, emotionally and spiritually a changed man. And folk, I believe that God will hear that kind of sincerity and of persistence. And if you take nothing else away from this weekend or from tonight, if you can take this one thing away, Lord, I'm going to not let you go until I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you filled me with your Spirit.

John chapter 37, I just quoted that earlier, Jesus said, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. I understand that in the New Testament, in some of those cases, God used people to lay hands on others to receive the Holy Spirit. But at the end of the day, He is the giver of the Holy Spirit.

You need to come to Jesus. Come to Him. Now, we can talk about the motive for which we want and I'm running out of time so I'm not going to go there.

But what do I want? Do I really want the power so that I can go around saying, look at me, look at what I've got? Or do I want some kind of experience? We spoke about that over the weekend. The only valid motive that I believe is acceptable before the Lord is Lord, I want more of you. It's not about what I can get out of it.

It's not what I can do with it. It's just that I have this hunger and I have this thirst. And remember that that's the Beatitudes right at the beginning.

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. The beginning of God's blessing in our lives is when we recognize our poverty. When we recognize, Lord, I don't have it.

Blessed are those who mourn over their sin. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness because they will be filled. Now Jesus is speaking about other things in the Sermon on the Mount there, when the Beatitudes.

But they can apply equally to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It begins with poverty of spirit. It begins over mourning over our sin and it results in a thirst and a hunger for righteousness.

Now let me go to 1 Kings chapter 18 and you know that I'm drawing to a close. Now the story in 1 Kings is a beautiful story of the victory that Elijah gets over the prophets of Baal and there are many details there that we can interpret in many different ways. But I want to just highlight a few things there very, very quickly for you.

And really the falling of the fire is a symbol that represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a sense. The first thing that he does is he repairs the altar. He repairs the altar that had been broken down by the prophets of Baal.

And we know what the altar represents, it's the place of prayer. Now here's one of the problems we have is that prayer is an unpopular thing today and none of us, and I say this without fear of contradiction, not a single one of us, including the pastor there and myself, spend enough time in prayer. That's just the way it is.

But he repaired the altar. He cut the bull in pieces. He was willing to make the sacrifice.

So get your prayer life in order to begin with. Make the sacrifices you need to make. Cut the bull in pieces.

He laid the wood in order. Set in order the things that you need to do. They had to select Matthias and appoint him.

There are other things in your life that need to be set in order. Set the things in order that need to be set in order. And then he doused the whole thing with water.

Now here's the thing. In the classical tearing meeting, what we do is we create an environment which is conducive to people being filled with the Holy Spirit. We have people singing in tongues.

We have other people speaking in tongues. We've created an expectancy. We've created a whole environment.

Now folk, I'm worried. I'm not making a definitive statement, but I'm worried that we're not far from the prophets of Baal who would come pulling all the tricks they could, jumping up and down, working themselves into a frenzy, doing all these crazy things just in the hope that maybe we can make something happen. And here's the thing that has really just ministered to me over these last few years, and this is just something that I want to share with you.

Elijah comes and he says, I will have nothing of the flesh. I'm not going to make this thing happen. I don't have secret matches that I'm going to light this thing with.

I'm going to kill everything that could be humanly represented of some kind. I'm going to kill everything. I'm starting a human fire.

And from a human point of view, I'm going to kill everything I can, because if God's fire falls, it's not going to worry about the water. And God doesn't need gas and God doesn't need matches or lighters. God doesn't use zippers.

And folk, that's what I believe for my church, and I can't impose that upon you. But I will not create an environment where people get some kind of false sense of saying, well, I've got something. But I'm going to pour water on the situation.

And that's what I've done tonight. I've made it hard for you, because it is hard. But when you get the real thing, you'll know you've got the real deal.

We can so easily create a situation where it looks like we've got the fire, but we've got nothing. And so he pours water on the whole thing, and then he simply says, Lord, your God, let it happen. Verse 38, Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, licked up the water that was in the trench.

And I think that one of the reasons we don't want to go there is because we don't want to lose everything. But he lost everything. He lost the altar, he lost the sacrifice, he lost everything.

But the response in verse 39, Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, he is God. The Lord is God. And folk, this is the cry of my heart for my church and for your church, that those around us will see the fire of God and will acknowledge him as the Lord.

Amen. Pastor Gary.

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