

# Receiving God's Spirit and Victory

by Charles Simpson

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*The speaker shares his personal journey of struggling with his faith and seeking spiritual regeneration, highlighting the importance of a personal relationship with God and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

**Duration:** 56:02

**Scripture:** John 3:3, Romans 8:26, 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit Baptism", "Spiritual Transformation", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

Charles Simpson shares his journey from a traditional Baptist upbringing to a transformative experience with the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the difference between mere religious knowledge and a genuine relationship with God. He recounts the struggles of living a double life, feeling the pressure of societal expectations, and ultimately discovering the power of the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal setting. This encounter led to a profound change in his life and ministry, igniting a passion for sharing the gospel and fostering a vibrant church community. Simpson highlights the importance of being filled with the Spirit for true spiritual victory and the necessity of seeking a deeper relationship with God beyond religious practices.

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## Transcript

My background is a Baptist background. Now, that doesn't mean as much up here. You have Baptists up here.

I saw some raise their hands. But you have a lot of Methodists, and a lot of Catholics, and a lot of different things. But where I was raised, the only church in town was a Baptist church.

I knew there were other folks in the world, but I didn't think there were so many of them. It was the same group taught school, taught Sunday school. We just moved it from one building to another.

You almost had to be a Baptist to vote. That's the way I always thought about it. Now, you just have to, you just have to try to understand this.

Willie knows. There's even down there, there's a lot of Baptists. There's a saying down there, if you're not a Baptist, somebody's been fooling with you.

Well, my background goes way back Baptist. Great-grandfather, grandfather was a Baptist deacon for 40 years in Chambers County up near Lafayette, Alabama. And he was sheriff up there for a number of

years, ran a mercantile store.

And my father is a Baptist preacher for, oh, I suppose, 40 years. And I was born in a Baptist hospital, went to a Baptist seminary, two Baptist colleges, married a Baptist girl, of course, and so forth. So my understanding was pretty Baptist.

I wouldn't say I was prejudiced, but I did see things kind of one-sided. Now, to me, that was as much a part of my culture as farming is in an agrarian society, as industry is in an industrial section. That was just part of it.

I grew up going to church. My father began a pastorate in a suburban area of Mobile, Alabama, 30 years ago this year. And he's still there by the grace of God.

And I was raised in this little town. I joined the church when I was 12 years old and got involved in religion, like many of you did, because it's the cultural thing to do. It's what we do.

I remember I had memorized in our vacation Bible school a number of scriptures. I had learned John 3.16, Acts 16.31, Romans 3.23, Romans 6.23, and all those verses about salvation, faith, 10th chapter of Romans, and I could give them back. And an invitation was given, and some of my friends stepped out, and I just impulsively went with them.

And after the service was over, my father questioned all the inquirers, and I was able to give all the right answers, because I had it in my heart. I learned the scripture. But nothing really happened to my life.

It took me a few months to find that out. But I began to realize, as I heard more preaching, the Bible says, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things pass away, and all things become new.

Now, I wasn't a new creature. I had not been, as I heard my Episcopalian brother share, and others here, I had not been born again. And we preach being born again.

You can preach being born again and not be born again. You can have the doctrine of the new birth and not have a new birth. And I could explain the doctrine of the new birth, but I'd not been changed.

That's something that happens by faith, by trust in the Lord Jesus. And I had academically said yes to everything my father believed and preached, but I had not given my life over to it. There's a lot of difference between religion and reality.

And the crux of the matter is, is when you begin to act on what you say you believe, then you've ceased from merely being religious, and you've entered into faith. I wasn't risking anything to join that church. It didn't take any faith.

In fact, it would have taken faith for me in that community not to join it. I was simply going along with what everybody did. But I began to discover that, that nothing really happened.

Now down south, we have what you might call hellfire preachers. We don't have as many as we used to, but we used to have a lot of hellfire preaching. My father called for an evangelist, and if a man can't really turn loose, don't get started in a fundamentalist Baptist church.

They'll sleep on you. You've got to be able to really... Abraham Lincoln said he liked to hear a man preach like he's fighting a hive of bees. And that's the way this man preached.

He preached about hell like he had just gotten back. He came from Texas. My dad sent over there, and he was a friend.

And he was a long, tall, raring preacher. And my father's short, and the pulpit's short, and this man would lean way over the pulpit like he couldn't get close enough to you. And by the time he dropped his long arm over that short pulpit and his finger looked about 18 to 3 feet long and dropped that right down on your nose, you knew he was talking about you.

He did everything but call my address. And his favorite message was on church members that don't know Jesus. And brother, I couldn't miss it.

I mean, I'd shift places in the building, but it still landed right at the same place. So one night after the meeting, he had asked for everybody that was concerned about the soul to raise their hand, and I did. I didn't mean to.

He said, Lord, bless you. And I really wondered who the Lord was going to bless. And I realized it was me that I had raised my hand.

I had no premeditation of doing it. And so after the service, I went up to him. I said, well, I guess you saw me raise my hand.

He said, I did. What are you going to do about it? I said, well, I want to be saved. You know, there's nothing more miserable in the world than living a lie.

And the more fundamental that lie is, the more miserable you are. The more pharisaical you are, the more dogmatic you are. If you're not true to your dogma, the greater your guilt.

And he, I thank God, all the condemnation that probably he did leave in the hearts of many people, he did it sincerely, and he preached the gospel as he knew it, and he did know how to tell a man to find Jesus. We went in the office. He repeated those verses I had learned, but something had happened in my heart.

I was ready. You won't get more from God than you're ready for. Jesus is a gentleman, and he waits till you see your need before he gives you the answer.

But I was ready. And I knelt down by that little straw-bottom chair and asked the Lord to come into my heart. And he did.

I wish I had time tonight, or perhaps if it were relevant, I would share what happened. But I really got on fire for the Lord. The Holy Spirit was there.

Thirty people were converted in that meeting, in that small rural church. I told all my friends on the ball team about Jesus, many of them, maybe most of them. They accepted the Lord as their Savior.

I thought, this is the greatest thing that ever happened, and it was. And I thought, I surely will never let my flame burn low. Read my Bible religiously.

With devotion, I prayed regularly. But you know, the pressures of youth, even then, were fantastic. Now, I really have a burden for young people.

We really ought to pray for them every day. There are two people, I think, two groups, we ought to pray for more than anybody else. We ought to pray for our youth, and we ought to pray for our government every day.

It's a great need in both areas, because they're under tremendous pressure, and there are many sincere people in both areas that are seeking the will of God. Well, the pressure got to me, the pressure of popularity and so forth, sports, whatnot. And God began to deal with me.

Now, you see, if you're not taught about the reality, the power of the Holy Spirit, and you need it, you're in a miserable state of existence. I knew about the Holy Spirit from my conversion experience. I knew what ought to be living because of the preaching that was going on, but I wasn't able to measure up.

And I was getting colder and colder and colder all the time, and I was getting afraid. And we Baptists don't believe in backsliding, but we practice a lot of it. And I was practicing some of it.

I began to pick up the habits of the world. Now, nowadays, it's the hip look, the street people look. In those days, it was the hood look, some of you might remember, the duck tails, and, you know, the peg pants, and, you know, the gangster type, and pink shirts.

And, of course, pink shirts don't mean that now, but then they did, and we had the stripe down. Well, Willie doesn't have his on tonight. And the stars say white bucks, but I won't get into that.

Anyway, but that was the thing, see. And, well, I'm glad, hallelujah, that you can look good and still be a believer and be bright. But I didn't know that then, and I thought the no-chrome look was it.

That's what a Christian ought to look like. But I couldn't stand that, so I blossomed out and then picked up king size to go with it. And you'd never thought I'd had an experience with the Lord.

And God began to deal with me. Now, if you know Jesus and you're a Baptist, and this is true of some other groups, and you know you're not living what you ought to live, and there's a revival meeting going on, what you're probably going to do is rededicate your life. Now, if you're like me, you're going to.

I hated to see another service come because I was always under such guilt and under such condemnation that if anybody could bring a little devotional, I'd have to rededicate my life. I mean, I was just ready. I was a candidate.

If the decision's what they look for, I was a candidate. You could have a service anytime. I was ready.

I needed it. I'd need it before the next one, too. I was like one fellow who said he wore his rededicator out before he could get the Holy Spirit.

Well, and I went through this, and I knew I was living wrong, and my father didn't have to be a prophet to know it. He lived with me, you see, and when he'd preach, there I was. I mean, if nobody else got it, I got it, so I said, Lord, you know, you must be dealing with me.

I've rededicated, and that lasts till Tuesday, and the only thing I knew, if you were saved, you had it all, so you had to either God was dealing with you to be a preacher or a foreign missionary. I said, that foreign missionary business is out. I'm going to try being a preacher.

If that doesn't work, I'll backslide. I just can't be a foreign missionary. Well, it was hard for me to say yes to God for that, because I'd always said the last thing I'd be is a preacher, and some folks think that that came to pass.

Anyway, but I just said I can't be that. I revered my father, but he looked like he was made out of a different kind of stuff, and it was pretty obvious. You know, people tell preacher's kids from their earliest years, and you should never do this, but everybody does it.

I have to, and they do it. I try to shield them from it, but they say, oh, you're going to be like your daddy when you get big, see? Well, by the time I was 12, I pretty well convinced them I wasn't going to ever be like my daddy. I made it a point, and so I had a lot to get over when God began to deal with me, and so I said, all right, I'll be a preacher.

But you know, that isn't really what God had in mind at that time. God wanted to introduce me to the Holy Spirit and a personal life with the Lord and a deeper relationship, but I struggled, and God accepted that struggle, and since I dedicated my life to be a preacher, I figured the thing I've got to do is get educated. I was taught to worship at the idol of intellect, like many people have been taught in our generation, wonderful as education is.

It will not substitute for spiritual regeneration and spiritual power, and education is only as good as the fact that's lodged in your mind. And so I went off to the school. I went to a university in a neighboring state, enrolled in the School of Philosophy and Theology, and our professor was a member of the American Academy of Philosophers and Theologians.

My Sunday school theology wasn't ready for the barrage that I got. He was fluent in five languages, born in another country, a master of modern and ancient philosophy, and he could speak more doubt in one language than most folks could in five, and he was proficient in five. When he got through with me, the only thing I knew to do was take up boxing.

I just couldn't. And I thought of his picture every time I hit that bag. I couldn't.

I'd go home and throw my book up against the wall. He denied everything my father believed. Somehow I knew my father was right, but that guy had all the answers.

Besides that, he had a drinking problem. I won't go into that. He was also a minister.

He ran into a cow under the influence. We had a little joke about whether the cow was in the road or he was in the pasture. Anyway, it's no wonder to me a lot of our kids drop out, brother.

It's amazing to me some of them hang on. That's the amazing thing. Well, I changed schools.

This time I went to a Baptist school, and I thought, well, this will be better. Now, my father was a spiritual preacher, more spiritual than the average preacher, I believe, and this is one of the reasons I had a problem, because I had heard a level of spirituality that was above what I was experiencing in my own life, and this left me in a contradiction. I went to this Baptist school, and they did better, I think.

They taught the word more, but I worked, and so I didn't have any time for fellowship, and I just wasn't a happy young man. I think the best piece of advice I got in a meat market. I was a butcher part-time and worked in that trade for a number of years while I was studying, and it was a Friday night in Birmingham in

a section that's, oh, I suppose 100% Negro, and I was raised in a section not quite that high, but I suppose 50-60%, and I had worked among black people all my life, and so I was quite secure there.

They asked me to take this job, I did, and it was a busy Friday night, and it was busy. We had meat cases lined up longer than the width of this room, and there were about four or five butchers, and we were staying so busy, we didn't know what to do. It was about eight or nine o'clock.

We were trying to get out, but the store was just packed, and I was working hand over fist, and there was a real heavysset lady came in the front, and she was very happy. I knew the minute she walked in the door that I was going to have trouble with her because she wanted to talk and fellowship, and I wanted to get out, and I knew I had that innate feeling she was going to make it to me before she got out of that store. Well, she laughed at the cashier.

She's the kind of person that when they're happy like they're happy, you're miserable if you're not happy like they're happy, and the happier she got, the more miserable I got. I was miserable anyway. I was just looking for an excuse to get more miserable.

Well, she came around, you know, and she got to my place at the counter, and she was laughing, wanting to talk, and I didn't want to be ugly to her, but I wanted to hurry, and she said, you're new around here, aren't you? I said, yes, I'm new, and I kept moving the meat out, you know, and she said, you go to school? I said, yes, I go to school. She said, what are you studying? I said, I'm studying to be a preacher, and she laughed big. You could hear her all over the store laughing.

She laughed, she laughed, she said, studying to be a preacher. She said, boy, you don't study to be an old preacher. Either you is or you ain't.

I guess I don't remember anything I learned that year, but I'll never forget that. Well, what I did was change schools again at the end of that year. I went to another Baptist school.

Now, in the meantime, I was asked to preach at this little Baptist church in Mobile. Now, Baptists don't have to be a certain age or a certain degree in school. If they're asked to take a pulpit and they meet an examining counsel, they can be ordained, and that was my case.

I was about 20 years of age, and I was between my sophomore and junior year, and I was invited to speak at this church, and again, and again, and I did, and so I transferred my school to a nearby school, commuted about a hundred miles. Well, I was flattered that they asked me, but the church wasn't in the best of shape. Actually, the associational missionary director called me up, and he said, there's a church that doesn't have a preacher, and would you preach? I said, well, I'll be glad to.

He said, actually, they're not in too good a shape. I said, well, that's all right. He said, really, they can't afford a preacher.

And I got the message right away, and so I said, that's all right. I'll preach anyway. So they were bankrupt, and I was too.

We started off together, but there were about 35 people that wanted--you know, I'd rather have 35 people that know they need help than 3,500 that feel self-sufficient. And they were in trouble. I knew they were in trouble, and I knew I couldn't help them.

So we just prayed. Now, I still had the hood look, still smoked king size. You can imagine why I didn't get too many great opportunities.

But I was rebellious inside. I was determined not to identify with the clergy image. I didn't know there was a better way.

But God, in his grace, prospered. Our church began to grow. God dealt with me, and things began to change in my life.

Finally got through with college, got married, went off to seminary. But this thing left me about studying to be a preacher. Not just what the lady had said, but I felt somehow, and I knew that I wasn't ready to be a man of God.

You know, that's a very awesome-sounding word. I knew I wasn't that, and I didn't know exactly where to find it. I kept thinking that the next year I would discover it in some learning institution.

So when we enrolled in seminary, my wife and I, we expected that God, through that institution, would reveal himself. Now, I'm not being critical of any institution. Please don't misunderstand me.

We are expecting more of institutions than they ever were meant to perform. We're expecting every institution we have, whether it be government, learning institutions, to do something for us that we're not willing to do ourselves. And that is seek God Almighty for a personal answer to our personal problems and needs.

When I got there and what I found, well, you see, I had already been pastoring for nearly three years, and so I had all this learning and wisdom and experience stored up, and I went there to help them out any way that I could. Well, they didn't need my help, and that frustrated me because I didn't like what they were teaching. And so it was a standoff.

I quit three times, but I found the first time I never had seen men before whom I felt to be men of my own doctrinal convictions deny things like the blood atonement, the veracity of the word, and those sort of things. And I went through a terrible inner turmoil because I had been wedded to a doctrine. Now, what I did, instead of breaking out of that, I became more fixed and I reacted.

I don't like to say this, but our enemies are right when they say that we are reactionary because we do react. We wait for the enemy to do something, and then we react to it. I believe God has a program, and I don't believe it's reacting to what the devil does.

I think God has something positive in mind for us. I remember the first time, though, that I heard a statement by one of our men, a professor, and I went to him after class. I said, Professor, you mean you don't believe that Jesus died in our place and his blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness? He said, No, I don't believe that.

I went home and threw my Bible on the little couch in our efficiency apartment, and I didn't want to do it. It felt like the bottom had been pulled out. I knew I believed it, but I was suddenly ignorant of everything.

The Bible went blank, and I threw myself on the floor and I said, God, you've got to tell me something now. I tossed my Bible, a little amplified New Testament I had just bought, on the couch and fell on my face before it. I said, You've got to show me something, Lord.

If that's not true, then I've got to find something else to do. I can't preach. I said, If it is true, you've got to tell me somehow.

While I was praying a rather lengthy prayer, the Lord was turning the pages of that little Bible. When I lifted up my head, right before my eyes was Hebrews, the ninth chapter, that says he entered into the holy place, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with his own precious blood. I had an answer from God that would stand questioning.

I knew that God, by his supernatural direction, had shown me that the blood of Jesus cleansed me from all sin. That means a lot to you when God tells you personally. Now, I don't advise you to study your Bible that way.

You know, sometimes we get in a habit of flipping through and closing our eyes and pointing. Well, that's all right. In a crisis, God sometimes blesses that.

I remember a number of occasions where God gave me a verse. But if you get to doing that too often and God wants you to sit down and eat daily disciplined meals, he's got a way of curing you. You'll close your eyes and open your Bible and point, and it'll say, you are doomed, or something like that.

And you'll close it up and say, two out of three, Lord, two out of three. Now, God wants us to eat regularly. But sometimes in a crisis, he'll speak to us.

And he did. He spoke to me. Well, I thought, when I get out of school and give myself full time to this growing congregation that loves me, and I love them, and get through with all this seminary, then my problems will be over, and I'll preach what I know, and everything will be all right.

1962, while I was in school, I still smoked. I didn't smoke cigarettes. I graduated to cigars.

A young man was sitting behind us in theology class. He was a Bob Jones graduate. I don't know if he really didn't graduate.

He went three years and then graduated from a Bible school. I don't know if you know anything about Bob Jones up here or not. But it's a rather fundamental school.

Two things you don't do. One, smoke. The other, speak in tongues.

Anyway, he never did the first, but later has done the second. But he sat behind me without any introduction. He said, do you smoke? I don't know how he knew, you know, because you smell a cigar across the block.

But he said, do you smoke? I said, yeah, I smoke. My attitude was, that's my sin. What's yours? You know.

And he said, you ought to either quit smoking or quit preaching. Man, I never had anybody to tell it to me like that. I didn't know whether to hit him in the mouth or pat him on the back.

So I just said, well, I'll pray about that. Next day, I'd given it some consideration. I knew who this fellow was.

He was a fiery preacher, a good preacher, had a large church, won a lot of people to Jesus, and not many folks had been meeting Jesus in our church. You can imagine why. So I said, how about preaching a revival for us? I think that staggered him as bad as he had staggered me, because he never expected me to speak to him, let alone invite him to preach.

Well, he said, I'll have to pray about it. But if I do, I'll preach against tobacco. I said, that's all right.

I've considered that. So he did. And he did.

And, well, the thing of it is, God did convict me, not that that's the most important thing in the world, but it was in my case, because that's what God was talking to me about. When God's talking to you about something, it's the most important thing in the world. We became very good friends.

God delivered me. We had a wonderful meeting. A number of people met Jesus, and we grew close together.

That's very important to this story. He pastored over in Pensacola, Florida, which is about 60 miles from us. My wife and I were taking a trip down the intercoastal waterway in a little boat that we had, a little cabin boat, and we stopped to visit with him.

He was building a new auditorium seat, a thousand people, and we were exchanging ideas. Both of us were dry and hungry. We were talking about ways to pick up interest in our church.

I offered him a program. He offered me some suggestions. He was talking about going back to school.

He already had a master's degree in education, a master's degree in religion. But he said, I believe I'll go back and get some more studies. He said, I'm just not happy.

Well, that didn't appeal to me, because I hadn't been too happy in my study, but I knew something was needed. Went on down the waterway and came Sunday, and we had spent ten days aboard. It was time to go to church, my wife and I, and I was hungry, looking for something.

People are looking for something. I was doing instead of asking, like I said earlier. But I was getting to the place where I was ready to ask.

We visited, and we had to walk because we didn't have a car. We were on a boat, so we walked to a large Baptist church in that little resort town. And I went in that morning expecting perhaps to find some new ideas.

But instead, I was the only one in my Sunday school class. So we went to another Sunday school class, but they didn't talk about Jesus. They talked about the job and what they did on the job and social confab, but no meat.

And so I had the gift of criticism. I don't know if any of you have ever had that gift or not, and the gift of suspicion. And it really began to operate in me.

Now, if that thing ever starts operating and you stop and get rid of it before you go on, because it's not the others that's going to be heard, it's you. And that acid began to flow inside. And my teacher, to top it off when it was all over with, said, I can't go with you into worship.

He didn't know I was a reverend. I never told him. But he said, my daughter has been asking me to take her swimming.

You know how it is. I said, yeah, I know how it is. I could tell how it was.

But he said, you go on and somebody will make you feel at home. He said, there'll be somebody there to welcome you, and I'm sure you'll enjoy the service. I wonder if it's so enjoyable why he didn't go.

But I went. That fellow was going to make me welcome never showed up. He must have stayed home, too, because I never did feel welcome.

Anyway, I went in and wasn't touched by a soul. Had a clear feel right down the aisle. Got in my pew in a miserable state, all ugly inside.

Whatever they'd have done would have been wrong at that state. Preacher got up and made some announcements. He talked about his golf game.

And that's another thing I didn't want to talk about. Mine wasn't too good. I never did cuss when I played.

But where I spat, grass would never grow again. And I thought, this fellow's not spiritual at all. And then he passed out vistas ribbons.

I've done that before. But these are the most audacious red vistas ribbons. Big, bright red.

Said, I'm a vistor. I look like a bedsheet. I told my wife, I said, I'm not going to put that on.

I said, well, my wife's a very reasonable and very polite person. She said, if you don't put that on, they won't know you're a vistor and they won't know to be friendly with you. Well, that makes sense.

You wouldn't want to be friendly with the members. And so I put it on. And I sat there with my bedsheet on and a growl on my face.

And he got up to preach. And he said, this morning, I'm going to speak on alcohol. I nudged my wife in the rib.

I said, well, any Baptist preacher can get stirred up on liquor. We ought to have a little action. Well, he did.

He preached for 35 minutes and he never said whether he was for it or against it. So I told her, I said, let's go. And that sign must have said, excuse me, because they all did.

Nobody touched me going out either. I got a block down the street. I said, I'm going to pull mine off.

What about you? They didn't need it at the boat, doc. Those drunks down here speak to you whether you're friendly or not. No wonder to me, a lot of folks go to the world for fellowship.

That's the only place you can find it sometimes. I told them on the way over here, I went to a bar one night to get something to eat because everything else was closed. I'd been in church all day, hadn't had anything to eat and went to a nightclub and everybody was so friendly.

They were all laughing and having a wonderful time talking across the tables. And the young fellow got up to sing and he sang, put your hand in the hand of the man of Galilee. Then he got up and sang Bridge

Over Troubled Waters and Amazing Grace.

I said, man, I've been in the wrong place all day. We walked out of that mortuary that morning and started down the street and I was fit to be tied. I'd have bit a dog if it had run out against me.

And I said, I don't know what we're going to do tonight, but I got to go to church. Every Baptist has got to go to church on Sunday night if he's a good one, if he's going to make a hundred percent. And so, but I said, I can't go back there.

I lost more than I had and I didn't have much to start with. So my wife was quiet. She knows to be quiet at times like that.

She's blessed with that gift. And so I'm just grumbling with myself. And I see a little sign in the bushes.

We're walking down the road back to the boat and a little faded out sign says Church of God, one block. And I see a little sign in the bushes. We're walking down the road back to the boat and little faded out sign says Church of God, one block.

Now we don't have much of a non-Pentecostal Church of God. You have a good bit of that, but most all of our churches of God are the Pentecostal variety. The only thing I knew about Church of God was it was Pentecostal.

The only thing I knew about Pentecostals were that they rolled on the floor and swung from the chandeliers. Now don't be offended if I say that because if you get to fooling around where the Holy Spirit's moving, a tail will get out on you too, you see. I discovered that.

When the Holy Spirit fell in our church, I found out that rumors get around. We never have been spiritual enough to roll on the floor or swing from the chandelier. All we do is just say amen once in a while.

We got kind of warmed up. But a fellow came to our church one day. He said, you know, I've really enjoyed your service.

He said, I don't know why I didn't come a long time ago. He said, I've been afraid to. I said, why have you been afraid? Well, he said, I heard something.

I said, what did you hear? Well, he said, I heard. He said, you want me to tell you the truth? I said, yeah. He said, well, I heard y'all rolling on the floor when a woman bit a man on the foot.

Well, I'm mischievous. I kept a straight face. I said, well, she didn't bite him on the foot.

His eyeballs got as big as two fried eggs. Well, I was scared to go to that church of God. I didn't want to go.

And I said, now my wife's a very quiet, introverted, shy person. I thought if I got her over there and that thing broke loose, she might go into a traumatic withdrawal and that'd be the end of her. I said, are you game? She said, yeah, if you are.

I said, well, I guess the monkey's on my back. I'll go. So we went.

I don't know what time the meeting was supposed to start, but it didn't start at that time. Now we Baptists are pretty clock conscious. You can tell that about quarter to 12 every Sunday morning.

But anyway, we got there and we were the only ones there. We were on time. I said, well, it's going to be like this morning, but it wasn't going to be anything like this morning.

Anyway, we got there and sat down over in the corner. That's not the best place to sit in a strange church, but we did. We sat in the corner toward the back.

A few minutes, the first one came in. A young man, I judged to be 24, 25 years of age, very pleasant looking young fellow who had evidently been in touch with the Lord during the day. He came up the steps, walked in that little country church.

It was on the edge of town a little bit, wooden building. He didn't see us in. He was looking straight up.

I thought if there was a hole in the floor, he'd break his neck. He walked in looking up and then he waved like this. I thought, who's he waving at? There's nobody in here.

And he was praising God, muttering to himself. And then he looked around and realized we were there and he saw us. Now the Lord has a wonderful sense of humor.

You can look at people and tell that he has a sense of humor. He wasn't a maid most of us. But God heard me grumbling about not having my hand shook.

I had been murmuring all the way back about how cold and unfriendly that church was. And the Lord probably said to one of the angels, you see that guy walking down there muttering? I've got something planned for him tonight that's out of this world. I was sitting there minding my own business and that guy turned in me and he looked and his eyes got real big.

I told somebody I know how a worm feels when a bird looks at him. He said, he said, brother. I thought I wasn't even his cousin.

And he came at me and he tried to hug me. Now listen, that hand shaking is all right, but that hugging is something else. I say he tried to hug me.

He didn't hug me. He couldn't hug me if his arms had been four feet longer. But anyway, you know, I tried to be nice about it.

I scooted over close to my wife and I thought we're in for a night here tonight. And he went on and sat down. A few minutes.

Well, that was attempted several times with about the same amount of success. And finally, somebody came by, some dear soul and said, we're glad to have you and your wife. Nobody asked me my name.

I don't guess it mattered. Nobody asked me what I did for a living. And if they'd asked me, I'd have lied to them.

I'd have never said I'm a Southern Baptist preacher. I'd have said I was a painter. And the lady said, we'd like to have you sing in the choir.

Then they were being nice. I mean, they just were glad to have us. They didn't care who we were, see.

And I had already looked at the book. I didn't know any of the songs. I said, try to be nice.

I said, no, thank you. We, you know, if you don't mind, we won't sing tonight or ever. It really is what I had in mind.

But then somebody else came, you know, and I said, I, you know, it's real. I told him, I said, what kind of, I told my wife, I said, what kind of deal is this? You couldn't get in our choir with a detective if you hadn't been to rehearsal. And here they're just asking total strangers.

And I don't know how we got in that choir, but there my wife and I were right in the middle of that Pentecostal choir. And we're sitting there, see, and that thing's fixing to go off right in the middle of that choir. And I thought, boy, if some preacher that I'd gone to school with walked in the back door and saw me, I'd say, I don't know who you think I am, but I'm not who you think I am.

That's an uneasy feeling. I know how some of you folks felt when you walked in here tonight. But you know, what happened was really a surprise because nothing that I thought was going to happen happened.

What did happen was when they started singing, suddenly I was aware that those people loved Jesus. And they loved him about like a crowd I'd never seen before. I mean, they sang.

Now, anybody that's born again knows the Holy Spirit when he runs into it. And I knew the Holy Spirit was in that place. And they sang and the pianist played.

And she looked straight up and played all every key on that piano. She used it. And big old tears would roll down her cheeks.

And I told my wife, I said, I don't know what they've got in here, but whatever it is, we need it back home. And they need it in that church up the road. Well, the preacher got up and preached, preached about an hour.

I'll never forget what he preached. That was in 1962. He preached from Romans 9 on the worth of a soul where Paul said he would be willing to be a curse for his brethren, the Jews.

And he said what he meant and he meant what he said. I couldn't vouch for all the things he said, but I knew one thing. He believed everything he said.

When he got through preaching and gave an invitation, none of the things that I thought might happen would happen. In fact, had they happened, I would have had an excuse. The fact of the business is it was so much in order and so much of God that I was left without an excuse.

I wish it always was that way. God spoke to my heart. We left there that night walking back to the boat, and we didn't say much, either one of us.

It was just a few days. A preacher friend called me on the phone. He said, Charles, I'm graduating from seminary.

I got my B.D. I don't have a church. Could you recommend me to a church? I said, man, I don't know any churches that are vacant where I could recommend you. He said, what about this church over in Florida? And he named the church where my friend pastored.

I said, I couldn't recommend you to that church. My friend pastors over there. He said he doesn't anymore.

Haven't you heard about him? No. I said, heard what? He said he's gone holy roller. I said, man, he's gone off on the deep end.

I said, he has? Where is he? He said, I don't know. I said, when you know, let me know. Well, he said he's ruined his ministry.

I said, well, I couldn't recommend you because he's a friend of mine, but I'd like to find out more about what really happened to him. A few days later, I saw an advertisement in the paper. He was going to preach in a Baptist church in our area.

Well, we were friends, but I'd heard something. I decided to go. He was standing out front when I turned my lights out to walk in the building.

I was going to, and we had been kin and Charles, but I was going to say Mr. Brother Summerall, his last name. But as I got about as close from here to brother Ebal, before I knew what happened, he reached out and grabbed me and hugged me and said, hallelujah. I said, I don't know what it is, but he got it.

I guarantee. They had a revival in that church. More people converted in that one week than any time in that church's history.

I said, what's happened to you? Well, he said, I don't have time to tell you, but I've got a tape that was made at a meeting like this one. Would you take it home and listen to it? And it'll tell you the story. I said, well, I'd be glad to.

So I took that tape home. I didn't take it to the office at the church. I took it to the office at home, closed the door, pulled down the shades, turned the volume down real low and listened.

And they were laughing a lot on that tape. They were just laughing and rejoicing. And there I was, I hadn't laughed in so long it would crack my face to laugh.

I was dry bones inside and there was rivers. I wanted to get in that tape recorder. I said, I said, man, I called and I said, when are you meeting? He said, we have a prayer meeting every Thursday.

I skipped Lions Club, drove 60 miles to be in a prayer meeting. I remember when I wouldn't walk across the street to be in one, unless it was Wednesday night at 7.15. So I drove over there and I walked in front of this little rented store building. They had about 20 or 30 Baptists that had been filled with the Spirit sitting down front.

And I came in and I looked and I was half scared. No, I was about three quarters scared. But there was something in me that said, you got to get down there.

I sat down about halfway. They were praying down front and it was not light where I was. All the light was down front where the people were.

It was about twilight sort of. And I was trying to read my Bible. And, uh, I heard a voice behind me say, bless him, Jesus.

And I looked around and about five women had got around behind me. Oh, I thought they've hemmed me in this place and I can't get out. They're between me and the door.

And besides that, they probably never went to seminary. And who are they praying for me? But the Lord impressed me. They just love you.

And after a while they went away and I sat there and they'd sing down front. Somebody would give a scripture and somebody, some blessing, somebody share, they'd pray. Somebody was in charge of me, but you couldn't tell who it was.

Finally, it was over with. It didn't seem like a real long meeting. I'd come in there 9:30 that morning.

I went out and the light was bright on the street. It was, I looked at my watch. It was nearly two o'clock.

I'd been in that place nearly five hours. Man, I felt spiritual. I said, whew, I've been in church five hours.

I turned to my friend. I said, I enjoyed this. He said, I did too.

I said, I'm coming back next week. He said, me too. In the meantime, I did some more studying.

I read the Bible. I became convinced if I wasn't before that this was a biblical experience. Now being a fundamentalist, that's the first hurdle I had to get over.

If it wasn't Bible, I didn't want it and didn't care how good it was. But I began to see it on every page. I was back the next week and I sat in the same place.

The meeting was similar to what it had been the first week. I relaxed a little bit. And you know, the Bible began to come alive to me.

I know why a lot of people don't read the Bible. It doesn't mean anything to them. The Holy Spirit is the interpreter and he's the author.

And he was in that place. You know, I got so dry. I've said this before, but it's the truth.

I got so dry. You don't know what a misery it is to try to preach when there's nothing in you to preach. I read books, went to convention.

You ought to pray for preachers that are dry. It's harder on them than it is you and it's hard on you. I mean, I got so dry I couldn't get a sermon out of the Gospel of John.

That's the truth. I'd read it, it'd all go together. After God filled me with the Spirit, I could preach out of the index.

That's so. I sat there and the Bible was like, it was like a little coffee percolator. It was going perk, perk, you know, I mean, I said, man, there is something in here, you know, and I'd read it.

And I just started just opening my Bible. I opened it to Romans 14, 17. It was a new book.

I was discovering treasure on every page. Some of it would be saliva. I'd just start laughing.

I never saw, I laughed about, I laughed about Balaam and his mule. Can you imagine him getting on that mule against the will of God, asking God and God said no, and they promised him a bigger honorarium and he asked one more time and God said go ahead. That's acquiescence though, not leadership.

God acquiesced and he got on that cantankerous mule. I've been on that same mule a lot of times. And that mule kept running off the path and he kept haranguing that mule and finally the mule ran into the wall and skinned his leg and he jumped off and kicked that mule and God opened that mule's mouth and that mule said, what are you kicking me for? Haven't I always been a good mule? I laughed at that.

I said, Lord have mercy. I could see the look on that guy's face. One day brother, your automobile is going to talk back to you.

And I'm sitting there, John 14, 17 says, I looked at John 14, 17. I read these words. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

And when I saw those words, joy in the Holy Ghost, something in me popped loose. I mean, I felt like laughing. I chuckled.

I said it again. I said it out loud. I said, joy in the Holy Ghost.

And when I did, I heard another voice behind me saying, he's going to get it laughing. And I looked and there's those women again. And I, the Lord, the Lord impressed me when that happened.

He said, you know what I'm fixing to do to you? I thought, no. He said, I'm going to baptize you in the Holy Ghost. Now I had never seen anybody get that blessing.

That's what I was there for. And I had the images of running wild or losing control, but now I wasn't that kind of a person, but I had become so desperate that if that's what it took, I was willing, but I didn't want anybody to see me. So when I, I knew whatever it was was going to happen pretty quick.

And so I told those ladies, I said, would you excuse me? I thought there'd be a little room around where I could go and pray, see? And they said, yes. And so, but there wasn't any, it was all one big room and the main door emptied right out on the street. And I didn't want it out there.

And, but I had a distinct feeling wherever I was going, I better hurry up and get there. Now it doesn't happen to everybody this way. In fact, this is different, but God was dealing with me.

I didn't have any instructions. I was just hungry. Well, I saw across the back corner, a little petition about the size of a blackboard, about, oh, about yea so high.

So I thought I'll run back there. I'll get out on my knees like a good Baptist. I'll start begging the Lord and whatever he's going to do, he'll do it.

So I started for the back and I got about halfway and I saw that it didn't go all the way to the floor. And that if I knelt down, they could see me underneath that board. And, and, and it didn't come, but to right here up high, see? So I bent over like this.

You know, pride will make you do strange things. But I said, Lord, this will have to do. And I, I got before God and I started to beg God.

I figured if I begged him enough, he'd bless me. And I was going to say, please Jesus, but you know, the wonderful atmosphere in that place made me say, praise Jesus. And I began to just praise him.

Never in my life had I realized really how wonderful Jesus is. And I began to be overwhelmed with a desire to magnify the Lord. I found myself lifting my hands and saying, oh Lord Jesus, I love you.

I realized that God wasn't dependent on me to keep the kingdom running anymore, that he was able to run it himself. I resigned and gave it to him. And I began to just give myself to doing what God wants us to do.

And that's worshipping the Savior. And the more I began to worship him, the more the Holy Spirit came on me. The more the Holy Spirit came on me, the more I worshiped him.

And it was a wonderful cycle. Like one brother said, he shoveled in, I shoveled out, and his shovel was bigger than my shovel. He kept pouring in the Holy Spirit.

I found myself out of my innermost being, worshipping God. Oh, hallelujah. I finally stopped and just asked, glory to his name.

If I had known years before, I would have asked. Oh, thank God for the day that I stopped and asked. He wanted me to be filled with himself all the time.

I don't know how long I stayed back there until I could get myself sort of unemotional again. I didn't want to interrupt whatever they were doing up front. I stepped out from behind that little petition, and they began to sing Higher Ground up front.

Well, I knew Higher Ground. I think it's 269 in the Broadmond hymnal. I had learned it.

But I had never been on Higher Ground singing Higher Ground. And the minute I stepped out, without knowing I was back there or anything was going on, they started singing, Lord, lift me up and let me stand. By faith on heaven's table, a higher plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on Higher Ground.

That second verse was especially meaningful to me. My heart is no desire to stay where doubts arise and fears dismay. Though some may dwell where these abound, my prayer, my aim is Higher Ground.

That aisle became a staircase. I started walking back where they were singing, and then after they had sung a bit, it got quiet. It got the kind of quiet you can hear.

It got ominously quiet. It was as though somebody said, everybody be quiet. And I stopped, frozen in my tracks, waiting to see what was going to happen in the expectancy.

That is a very holy moment. Whenever that comes, we should all put our flesh to rest and wait on God. That is the glory of the Lord.

That is the best thing God can give us. You should never be familiar with that. The Bible says, keep your foot when you come into the house of God.

I stood there and a little lady, standing halfway between myself and the front, unaware I am sure of my presence, began to speak a rather bold-sounding, resonant message in a language I had never heard. It came, it sounded like out of an echo chamber, deep. She was slight and small.

This voice was not her own. It was, but it was under inspiration, anointed. It sounded with great authority.

It was a long message. I did not know anything about this. I knew just enough to know, according to what I had read, that this was an utterance that God was inspiring her, and it would have to be interpreted.

I anxiously awaited. She spoke for a good while. As she had started abruptly, she stopped abruptly.

As I was wondering about it, I found myself speaking for a prophetic interpretation. I had preached eight years, but I had never felt that kind of an anointing. It came from deep inside, and I found myself speaking as though I knew exactly what I was talking about.

I began to speak about God pouring out his Spirit in the earth, and the Lord doing. I did not know God was doing anything in the earth. In the middle of that, it is like I got out of myself and looked at myself, and I said, Boy, what have you gotten yourself into? I never missed a beat.

I kept speaking as though I had something from God to say to those people. When I finished, I said with authority, Thus saith the Lord, and my mind said, He did, and my spirit said, He did. Needless to say, my theology was in a mess when I left that place.

I got in my car and I drove back, and I said, Lord, what has happened to me? This is the most wonderful thing, but I am confused. This does not fit anywhere in my seminary background, my college. I do not know what I am going to say to the people.

I said, Well, I will be sacredly secretive. I will use wisdom. That is another word sometimes for fear.

I said, I will just try to behave and see what happens. Our congregation had been dead. It had been so dead, our baptism had cobwebs in it.

No one would come. I told my wife one Sunday, I said, If I left a thousand dollar bill on the altar, they would not come and get it. I made it easy for them.

I would give the easiest invitations and they would stand there. I would say, If you love your mother, come forward. They would not come.

They would just stand there, and I would go away. That Sunday morning, and this is true, that Sunday morning when I stood up to preach, I had my manuscript in front of me. I opened my Bible to Matthew 3.11 and read that verse, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire.

I could not get away from that text. And I preached a sermon that God put in my heart. Before I finished, and I tried to make something very clear, I said to them, I am not talking about rededication, because I know you know about that, but I am talking about another experience, a Pentecost in our generation with signs and miracles.

I hammered on that thing. They listened to me like they were glued to what I said. Before we could begin to sing, and before the musicians could play, the people started coming forward and kneeling.

And all over the front they knelt. I thought they misunderstood me. I thought they thought I wanted them to rededicate their life, and I stopped the invitation.

I said, you have misunderstood me. I do not want you to rededicate your life. If you are not interested in the power of Pentecost and a filling and a baptism with the Holy Spirit, do not come.

They did not even hear me. They kept right on going. Something happened in our church.

Well, this is really where the testimony ought to begin, but it has to conclude. That was seven years ago in April. I was saved in April.

I was born in April. I was called to preach in April. I was filled with the Holy Spirit in April, and every April I get nervous.

I do not know what God is going to do. But something happened. I appreciate the Lord.

I was ready to quit. I should have quit. But the Lord gave me something, and my people knew it, that it was of God.

One lady came after that session. She said, I do not know where you have been, but I sure want to go there. And she did.

Hundreds and hundreds of people have been filled with the Spirit. Contrary to what the course could have been, the congregation as a whole accepted the message. The Church has moved in this dimension for seven years.

By the grace of God, it has remained an active, regular-standing Southern Baptist Church, though unusual, to say the least. And I do not mean that to be super spiritual. It is just different.

People of all faiths, races, and all backgrounds find God there and stand before God. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that while we were without hope, strangers and aliens, that you did come and by the veil of your flesh tear down the middle wall of petition and made of us one people, a holy temple being built for your habitation. We thank you for this assembly that is a part of that great body that you are building.

Help us, Lord, that we might be living stones prepared for the temple. Thank you for all the hammering that is going on down here now, the chiseling that is getting us straight prepared. Thank you, Lord, for your dealings.

Thank you for exposing in us those things that are not transformed or matured. Thank you for showing us in advance, ready us for the day of revelation and salvation. Thank you, Father.

Thank you, Lord.

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