

The Gift of the Holy Spirit: The Birthright of All Christians

by E. Stanley Jones

The Holy Spirit is a person who convicts, converts, cleanses, consecrates, and commissions us, and we receive Him by making it our intention, surrendering ourselves completely to God, and receiving Him by faith.

Duration: 25:53

Scripture: Romans 7:24

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, Dr. E. Stanley Jones discusses the importance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. He emphasizes the need for conversion and becoming like little children in order to enter the kingdom of God. Dr. Jones explains that in this new spirit of living, believers work together with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit providing the power to accomplish God's work. He also addresses the concept of the subconscious mind and its potential for redemption through the Holy Spirit. Overall, the sermon highlights the gift of the Holy Spirit as the birthright of all Christians and the key to living a transformed life.

Transcript

This is the Methodist Thinker podcast with timeless teaching by Methodist pastors and leaders. I'm Joseph Slife and this week a sermon by the late Methodist missionary E. Stanley Jones. Three or four of us young men were praying about 10 o'clock when suddenly we were all swept off our feet by the Holy Spirit.

From that moment I was ready to go anywhere and do anything. E. Stanley Jones was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1884. While a student at Asbury College in Kentucky, he had a powerful encounter with the Lord and offered himself for service as a missionary.

He spent much of the rest of his life in India, although his mission work eventually extended to many other areas of the world as well. E. Stanley Jones also founded what is known as the Christian Ashram Movement, a series of retreat locations in various countries where people seeking after God could gather for several days of teaching, prayer, and spiritual renewal. The message we'll hear today was preached at an ashram here in the U.S. in the summer of 1960.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones with a message titled, The Gift of the Holy Spirit, The Birthright of All Christians. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians are these familiar words, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. I'm going to

talk to you tonight about the Holy Spirit.

Who is he? What does he do? How can I find him? Brother Boyce said something about the new thing that came to him in this ashram. He won't mind me if I recount it. He said, you know, when you talk about the Holy Spirit, cold chills have gotten down my spine.

I said, why? He said, I'm afraid of it. I said, what are you afraid of? He said, I'm afraid of rampant emotionalism. I said, but Boyce, the power that was in Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus was the most balanced character that ever moved down through the pages of human history.

Every virtue balanced by its opposite virtue, and in possession of all his faculties. Are you afraid of being made like Christ? Nothing psychopathic about him. Oh, he said, that changes the picture.

Then he took me by the lapel of the coat and he said, come out here and sit down and talk to me about it. I sat down and I quoted this passage of scripture. I said, if he then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? I said, Brother Boyce, let's ask him.

And I started to pray. I hadn't prayed two sentences. When he grabbed my arm, he said, you needn't pray, he's already come.

I never finished my prayer. From resistance to receptivity in two minutes. Brother Boyce worked fast.

But when the conception that it was a Christlike spirit dawned upon him, then he could take with both hands and open arms. We're afraid. But why should we be afraid? I believe the receiving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is normal Christianity.

And the Holy Spirit is my birthright as a Christian. The Holy Spirit is not an influence or an energy, merely an impersonal kind of something that is power. Jesus speaks of he shall guide you into all truth, makes him a person.

Now Jesus said to his disciples, don't leave Jerusalem until you're being endued with power from on high. Their tendency, of course, would be to get out of Jerusalem. They'd caved in at Jerusalem.

They'd all forsaken him and fled. If they could get rid of those bitter memories, by distance they would take it. So I suppose they said, let's go to Galilee, get away.

Jesus said don't. Stay right where you've been a failure and I'm going to make you a success. Where you've caved in, I'm going to give you power to face that situation.

And that did something for the apostles. Suppose they'd received the Holy Spirit in Galilee, in Galilee, in a quiet mountain. They'd have said, yes, it works here in a quiet mountain, but it won't work up there.

So Jesus said stay right where you've been a failure and I'll make you a success. They stayed. And when the Holy Spirit came upon them, in them, they turned and faced Jerusalem.

Without a quiver of an eyelid, they called Jerusalem to repentance. You killed the Lord of glory. Opened the gates of repentance and salvation and the people poured into it with the thousands.

They conquered Jerusalem. All sense of inferiority and escapism and runawayism had gone. They were now marching up to the worst and conquering it.

Now my text says it's one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The one Lord, of course, is the Lord Jesus. And it's interesting that those early disciples said Jesus is Lord, not will be, is.

How did they come to that conclusion? How could they believe that a man was born in one of our stables and worked at one of our carpenters benches and walked our dusty roads and slept upon our hillsides, died upon one of our trees and was laid in one of our rock tombs, that that man was at the right hand of the final authority and would have the last word in human affairs, whoever had the first or the intermediate word. How did they believe that? Not easily. Their characteristic word was, hero Israel.

The Lord our God is one Lord. God was Lord. Here they were saying Jesus is Lord.

How did they come to that conclusion? Not lightly. They were forced to it. They saw that his touch upon life was the touch of God.

He was doing something that only God could do. And from their almost unwilling lips came the confession, Jesus is Lord. One Lord.

And one faith. One faith in that one Lord. And that was the thing that unified them.

If I were to say to this audience tonight, what do you believe, you'd go that way, no two believing exactly alike. But suppose I'd say, whom do you trust, and you'd come together that way, one name upon your lips, one loyalty in your heart, Jesus. Around him we're one.

It's one faith in the one Lord. And there's one baptism. Now the usual interpretation is that it's baptism by water.

I've nothing to say derogatory to water baptism, for I've given it in many lands in many modes. But it would seem a comedown if it was one Lord, one faith, and then one baptism by water. What was this one baptism which this one Lord gave? The account tells us, John says, I baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me, he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

That was his one baptism. And Jesus said, John truly baptized you with water, but he shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days hence. Jesus never baptized with water, though his disciples did.

Why didn't he baptize with water? Because he saved himself to give the one baptism. The account says in Acts that he has ascended to the Father and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, he poured forth this, which you now see and hear. That was his baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now if the Holy Spirit comes upon us, what happens? I'm going to lift out of the Scriptures as far as I can certain things that the Holy Spirit does, and then we'll see at the end how we can find him. First, he convicts. You remember it says that he shall convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come.

The Holy Spirit upsets us in the beginning. To set us up on a higher level, it's a divine upsetting. The Holy Spirit doesn't bring comfort, he brings a divine uneasiness.

So the Holy Spirit convicts us, and if you felt badly, it's all right. It's an upset to set you up on a higher level. The second thing that he does is to convert.

If he convicts, he converts. Jesus said, except ye be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. Three things there.

Except ye be converted, here I am going the wrong direction, away from God. The first step is to turn around. It's a new direction.

I come to Jesus and he gives me a new spirit, the spirit of a child. Except ye be converted and become as little children. Spirit of a child, the all wiped out, a fresh beginning, and a new simplicity, and a new openness, and a new receptivity.

I can turn around, but I can't give myself a new spirit. God must do that. He must reach down and change this basic human nature of mine.

Then I enter the kingdom of God. A new direction, a new spirit, and a new spirit of living. And in that new spirit of living, the kingdom of God, Jesus and I work out things together.

I supply willingness, he supplies power. And the Holy Spirit does that work for us. It's a mystery and a miracle.

I can't explain it, but I know it when I know it. The third thing that he does is that he cleanses. He convicts, he converts, and he cleanses.

Usually there's a period separating conversion and cleansing. He was with me. After I was converted, I walked under cloudless skies for a year.

The sun of my happiness had apparently risen in the skies to stay there forever. But after about a year, I found things coming up out of the subconscious. I didn't know about the subconscious then, but down to the depths for me.

Tempers, uglinesses, grumpiness. I hadn't known before. I said, what's the matter here? And I was appalled because I thought everything was straight, and everything apparently wasn't clean.

At that period, I got hold of a little book called *The Christian Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitehall Smith. I began to read it. I got to the forty-second page when a voice within me spoke and said, now's the time to receive the Holy Spirit.

I said, I don't know what I want. This book's telling me, let me read it. I tried to read on, but the voice was persistent.

Now's the time to get it. But I said, I don't know what I want. Let me read this book, and then I will seek.

I tried to read on, but the words were literally blurred, and so I saw I was in a controversy. I dropped on my knees beside my bed, and I said, Lord, what shall I do? And he said to me, will you give me your all? I thought a moment. I said, why, yes, I will.

I'll lay it all on thy altar. Well, he said, take my all. And that altar sanctifies that gift.

I said, yes, I believe that. And I rose to my knees. I said, yes, it's done.

But I had no evidence, and I walked around the room pushing my hands this way, as though I were pushing doubt away. I did that I don't know how many minutes, when suddenly I was filled. Wave after wave of divine fire seemed to be going through my being, purging, cleansing.

I could only walk the floor with tears running down my cheeks. In praise, he'd moved in. And then life seemed to be unified at a deeper level.

I didn't seem to be at war with myself as I had been before. I now see that he'd moved into the subconscious. We know that in conversion, the conscious mind is converted.

A new loyalty, a new love is introduced into the conscious mind. But what about the subconscious mind? The psychologists have lifted the lid from the subconscious, and what they show is not very beautiful. Driving urges, which have come down through a long history, racial history, and they have bent toward evil.

And what they describe is strangely like original sin. Can the subconscious mind be redeemed? These driving urges of self, sex, and the herd reside in the subconscious. Can they be redeemed? If not, then the seventh chapter of Romans is the best that we can have.

Oh, wretched man that I am. I want to do this and can't, and I don't want to do this and I do it. And some people think that that's Paul's gospel.

If that were Paul's gospel, we would never have heard of Paul again. No gospel in it. Defeat.

The eighth chapter is Christianity, where the Holy Spirit, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. He sends his way down through that eighth chapter. Free.

Can the subconscious mind be redeemed? The glad good news is this, yes. For the area of the work of the Holy Spirit is largely, if not entirely, in the subconscious mind. And if we'll turn over to him all we know, the conscious, and all we don't know, the subconscious, he will move into depths we cannot control and cannot order.

And he'll take over these urges. Not efface them, but he'll cleanse them. Self, he'll cleanse from selfishness.

Give it back to us again. Cleanse from sexuality, give it back to us again. And then the conscious mind and the subconscious mind are now under one control, the control of the Holy Spirit.

And under that one control, both beat out music faster than before. The subconscious mind is redeemed. Jesus said the good man out of the good store brings forth good.

And that good store is strangely like the subconscious. The cleansing of the subconscious. The fourth thing that he does is he consecrates.

Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God? Is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of consecration? Yes. Now good many people have the idea that you have to consecrate yourself, and you have to stand over the altar and keep your things on the altar. Nervously and feverishly keep everything under control.

You don't. You turn it over to him and say, now you've got me and you've got to keep my powers under control. And so he keeps them on the altar, keeps us consecrated.

And then he commissions us. The Holy Spirit said to the group at Antioch, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. They laid hands on them and sent forth thus by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit then sends us forth. He's the Spirit of commission. He commissions us.

Everything takes on meaning and value and layman and minister both feel commissioned when they receive the Holy Spirit. Then he conforms us to the mind of Jesus. But we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are changed into the same likeness from one degree of glory to another.

But this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. And then he makes us creative. It's power.

An Indian woman said to me one day, most people are problem conscious instead of power conscious. And that simple Indian woman taught me something very, very important. We should be not problem conscious, but power conscious.

He recreates us and then makes us creative. It says in the Old Testament, his Holy Spirit who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses. God's glorious arm was going at the right hand of Moses.

When Moses lifted up his right hand, God's right hand went with it too. That came from the Spirit. So he makes you creative and makes it possible for you to do anything you have to do.

A missionary in India was treated by someone who said you've only got a third class medical education. And this missionary said, yes, but I've got a first class God. Some people have a first class education and a third class God.

God's a weak influence in their lives. But some people with half the education do twice as much as the other people, because God has their powers. They're not working in the energy of the flesh, but in the power of the Spirit.

How do we receive the Holy Spirit? First, it's God's intention to give you the Holy Spirit. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive. Note the phrase were to receive.

It was God's intention to give them the Holy Spirit. And to whom? Those that believe on him. If you believe on him, then it's your birth right to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And it's God's intention to give you the Holy Spirit. You don't have to overcome his reluctance. You may have to lay hold on his highest willingness.

Second, make it your intention, not your vagrant wish nor will, but your intention to get your birthright. You as a child of God now have a right to assert your right to the birthright. The house of Jacob shall possess its possessions.

Go and possess your possessions. It's yours, but you haven't taken it. Third, a complete self-surrender.

The Holy Spirit surrenders to us when he comes in. The divine audacity to be willing to come down and live within me next to everything I think and say and am. He must love me to be willing to do that.

He gives his all to come within me. Can I give less than my all? No, it's an exchange. My all, my little all for his all.

And what an exchange. And then forth we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by faith. Faith is welcoming that which you believe in.

You believe in it, now welcome it and make it your own. Faith is pure receptivity. Just before I was called to the mission field, an experience came to me which I think I might recount.

It was so unprovoked, even unsought, and I couldn't understand why it happened. It was the greatest spiritual experience that I'd ever witnessed in any land. A group of us, three or four of us young were in a boy's room praying about 10 o'clock in college.

And I remember I was rather drowsy and I had my head on the side of the bed this way as I knelt beside it, when suddenly we were all swept off our feet by the Holy Spirit. We never slept the balance of the night. I could only walk the floor and praise him.

Brother Pickett, the father of Bishop Pickett, came up about two or three o'clock in the morning and he said, Stanley, he giveth his beloved sleep. I said, yes, Brother Pickett, but I can't sleep. The next morning we went to the chapel service and there wasn't any chapel service.

Only people down on their faces, prone, praying for pardon, for release. They would get it. People came in and when they come inside of the college compound, they would fall under the power of the Spirit.

Before they even got to the place, every classroom was turned into a prayer meeting. No classes for three days. And at the end, there was probably not an unconverted person in that whole school.

I wondered what it meant. But I saw what it meant later. From that moment, I was ready to go anywhere, do anything.

And he said, all right, I want you to be a missionary. That created the climate. I said, all right, I'm ready to go anywhere.

I thought it was Africa, turned out to be India. But I saw the resources that's behind a person when he goes out. You don't have to work in the energy of the flesh, but you can work in the power of the Spirit and you can take everything you've got and make something else out of it.

By faith, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more should your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? God's highest gift can be had for the asking when you ask Him with your life. The late Dr. E. Stanley Jones, speaking in the summer of 1960.

That sermon is among several collected in a book published last year titled Living Upon the Way, Selected Sermons of E. Stanley Jones on Self-Surrender and Conversion. On next week's podcast, a sermon by Bishop Robert Hayes, Episcopal Leader of the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church. I'm Joseph Slife.

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