

# The Positive Nature of the Holy Spirit

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the positive and active nature of the Holy Spirit in transforming lives and fostering fellowship among believers.*

**Scripture:** Luke 12:49

**Topics:** "The Holy Spirit", "Positive Living"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the positive nature of the Holy Spirit, illustrating how the Spirit transforms neutral or negative situations into positive action, akin to fire that ignites and propels forward. He explains that the Holy Spirit is not only the answer to the waiting period after Christ's resurrection but also the driving force behind the Christian walk, urging believers to walk in the Spirit rather than consorting with the flesh or the devil. Sparks highlights that true fellowship and service in the Christian life are rooted in the positive engagement of the Holy Spirit, which empowers believers to witness and maintain unity within the body of Christ. He calls for a recognition of the Spirit's active role in overcoming negativity and encourages believers to embrace the Spirit's positive energy through the Cross.

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## Transcript

I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! (Luke 12:49,50).

Being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4,5).

"Wait for the promise of the Father... not many days hence." The thought that I want to pass on to you concerns the positive nature of the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit is the answer to the words of the Lord Jesus: "I came to scatter fire". The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a baptism of fire. Now fire is always positive; and if the Holy Spirit corresponds to the fire, it means that the Holy Spirit is also positive. Fire is neither cold nor neutral: fire is positive. When you touch it, or when it touches you, or when you get near it, you know that you are in the presence of an element that is positive.

The Spirit Abhors a Vacuum

Now here in these words at the beginning of this book, which we might call 'The Book of the Scattered Fire', we have a pause, a suspense, a kind of parenthesis. The Cross with all its meaning is an accomplished fact. The work of redemption is finished. Everything has been done as to the basis of the future. And everything has been foreshadowed and foretold as to the purpose. Here it is: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem... Judaea... Samaria... unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8). Meeting His disciples after the Resurrection, He had given them the great commission and told them what was to be their future ministry and work to the nations, to the remotest parts of the earth. Everything foreshadowed and foretold, as to the purpose: and yet, a pause, an interlude, with a big question hanging over it: a waiting. They can do nothing, with all that. With all that, it is still negative, it is still all in suspense, it is still in this state of question. And the Holy Spirit was the answer. The Holy Spirit moved right into that 'neutral zone' and turned it into a positive; changed the whole thing from negative or neutral or question, into a mighty, positive affirmative. The rest of this book is just the story of the positive activity of the Holy Spirit.

That may seem very simple; it may not strike you as having very much in it, or being very profound. But in fact there is a very great deal in that that we ought to think about, we ought to recognize. Let me say again: wherever you come upon the Holy Spirit in the Bible, you will find He is positive. He does not believe in vacuums. The Bible opens with a vacuum - and immediately it says: "the Spirit of God". "The Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters". The Spirit of God is reacting against a vacuum. 'Without form and void empty... and the Spirit of God...' You begin your Bible with this very positive characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

And so it is all the way through. If you run through your Bible, even from memory, with this thought in mind, when you come on the Holy Spirit in any expression, whether in symbol or in action, you will find that He is always tremendously positive. You have only to recall the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecies. The living ones, the wheels, and the Spirit - and they go! They go, and they go straight forward; they turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. It is the Spirit who is the Goer; the Spirit of the positive, who is against all that is negative, all that is neutral and all that is empty, always seeking to be on the move forward towards the great and consummate end. He is the 'Goer-Spirit', if I may coin that phrase. He is always the executive of the Godhead, the energy of God in the things of God. He is always in action. So this book ought to be 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit', for it is that.

#### A Positive Walk

Now, this law of the Spirit is the principle of the walk of the Christian. The walk of the Christian is supposed to be a walk in sanctification; there must be a sanctified walk. That is what it means to walk in the Spirit. The definite statement is: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Are you struggling, striving, fighting, not to fulfil the flesh? That is negative; you will get nowhere along that line. The way not to is to do something positive. The positive is the answer to the negative. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not...". It is a great principle of deliverance. God's way is always a positive way. We are occupied so much with the negative, striving and wrestling not to do this, to stop this and that. And we do not find that we get very far in that, do we? The provision of the Lord is: "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not...".

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? Well, it means to consort with the Spirit. You say, what does that mean? It is best understood by recognizing what we do. We, by nature, consort with the flesh: we are all the time consorting with ourselves - our poor miserable selves; occupied with ourselves, talking about ourselves, praying about ourselves; keeping ourselves, our miserable selves always in front of us. When

we are so continually occupied with what we are in ourselves, that is consorting with ourselves, is it not? How far do we get that way? Nowhere at all! We make no progress at all by consorting with ourselves.

And I am afraid there are some Christians who consort with the devil. It is not always easy to distinguish between ourselves and the devil, but you know he is always talking to us through ourselves. If there is something that is wrong with us, he lets us know it. If there is something that troubles us, he adds to the trouble, he accentuates. Give him a little bit of his own ground, that he himself created for himself - for he created that ground of the old fallen Adam for himself and for his own purposes, to work out his own designs - give him a little bit of that which he has made for himself, and see what he will do with it. He will make everything of it, and it will not be long before people who do that will find that they are in terrible bondage to the devil through their own selves - their own make-up and faults and weaknesses and sinfulness. And that is consorting with the devil. He comes and accuses, and you listen; he makes a suggestion, and you take it on - you almost enter into a discussion with him. You consort with him, or you consort with yourself: and that is walking after the flesh.

Don't consort with the flesh, don't consort with the devil, have no truck with them at all! Consort with the Spirit! The Spirit is the One who has come alongside: the very meaning of His Name, 'Advocate' or 'Comforter' (Gk. *parakletes*) is One who is called alongside. Consort with the One alongside. Have your communion with the Spirit. Challenge yourself, and challenge the enemy, on this: Is this really of the Spirit, does this correspond to the Word of God, is this true according to the gospel of grace? If the answer is: No, of course it is not! then repudiate it! That is consorting with the Spirit, always moving on the ground of grace, the Spirit of grace.

That is a very simple beginning, but it indicates that the Holy Spirit is positive. All that other is negative: it is pulling back, it is draining, dragging; it is all a big 'No'. The Spirit never comes on that ground; He is against anything like that. As in the first creation He moved against the void, so in the new creation He has nothing to do with, and no interest in, vacuums, voids, or anything that is negative. Take positive ground, and you will find the Holy Spirit is with you. Forsake your negative ground in your spiritual life.

#### Positive Testimony

This, in the next place, is the law of service, or testimony. Notice quite simply: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses...". The principle of service or testimony is being positive. How many Christian lives get tied up in knots because they do not testify! They do not witness, they do not let their light shine; they are just negative. They are all the time thinking of what people will think or say, what the reactions from others will be. All sorts of considerations come in, in that way, and they just neutralize us, get us all tied up - and what poor specimens of Christians we are then!

Now note here: "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen..." (11:19) went everywhere, testifying. There was no ordination service, no putting on of special uniform, or a badge - 'Christian Worker!' It was spontaneous, because the Holy Spirit is positive, always. And again, while this may be very simple, I know of many lives which are tied right up on this very thing: they are not positive; they are negative, or they are neutral. The Holy Spirit is therefore not moving on His own normal and natural basis in their life; they are limiting Him. Be positive, and you will find the Holy Spirit is with you, and you will get surprises. Just take notice! That is what is in this very book of the Acts: 'the Spirit said...' (10:19, 13:2), 'an angel of the Lord spake...' (8:26), and the men responded. When Philip responds to the Spirit, when Peter responds to the Spirit, oh, what tremendous things happen! - to their

surprise, to their amazement! The Spirit is positive. You be positive, and you will find that He is positive, He is with you in that.

### Positive Fellowship

Thirdly, this is the principle of fellowship. The fellowship of the Spirit is the spirit of fellowship: but, again, it is positive. Fellowship is not a passive thing: it never can be a passive thing, because all the hosts of hell are out against it. If there is one thing that hell is against, it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the people of God. Unceasingly, by any and every means, those evil powers will seek to destroy that fellowship, because that fellowship spells their final undoing. Therefore fellowship can never be a neutral, passive kind of thing. You have got to fight for it, you have got to stand for it, you have got to be positive about this. Let some rift go on, and just see the havoc that delay over putting that right will work!

If you have the Spirit - and of course I am addressing those who are supposed to have the Spirit - you should know that, if you are out of joint with another member of the Body of Christ to which you belong, it is, as it is with a dislocation in the natural physical body: there is an ache, a perpetual ache. The Holy Spirit sets up this ache in the spiritual Body, where there is a dislocation. And you know what happens in the natural body if that is not attended to. Two things happen. One is that the longer you leave it, the more difficult it becomes to put it right; and the other is that adhesions set in - something extra. Extra things begin to come in and complicate the whole situation, so that it is no longer a straightforward thing to put that joint back. The same thing is true in the spiritual. If you let it go on, it becomes very much more difficult and more complicated. All sorts of other things - accretions and adhesions - have bound themselves round that thing, to make it a very complicated thing now. The inflammation is there and the ache goes on.

By that inflammation and ache the Holy Spirit is giving a positive witness against this thing. But if you go on long enough, the Holy Spirit will withdraw and leave you to it, just because He is positive. He will not brook persistent negatives on these things; He just will not have it. He is going on and saying: 'All right, if you are determined to stay there, you can do so. I am going on.' And there arises a very, very serious situation. That is, of course, grim and terrible. But it all gathers round this truth that the Holy Spirit is positive on the matter of fellowship. The Spirit says: 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but so much the more...' (Hebrews 10:25). That is not a legal thing - that you must, under legal obligation, attend all the meetings, and so on. That is your very life, that is a spiritual thing, that is the way of the Holy Spirit. You are violating the very movement of the Spirit, if you detach yourself and live an independent kind of life. That which you call 'legal', which you are seeking to throw off, is really spiritual. There is a liberty which is not the liberty of the Spirit - it is the licence of our own souls.

If the Spirit is inactive, quiescent, not doing anything, not moving; if there are marks and signs that the Spirit is not at work, that is an abnormal situation. It means that, from the standpoint of the Spirit of God, there is something wrong, something is not right. If everything were right, the Spirit would be active; He would be doing, going; there would be movement.

The Spirit will always be positive if He has His own ground. And what is His ground? It is the Cross - it is the cup. The cup and the fire, the fire and the cup, go hand-in-hand. The mighty energy of the Spirit, that positive element in the Spirit that is like fire - you know it when it comes near, or when you touch it; it is alive - that positive element of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with the cup, which rules you out and rules me

out in nature. His ground is the Cross applied deeply to us. If the Spirit has that, then He goes on, then He moves. His ground is always the Cross.

We must challenge our hearts about this. The Holy Spirit, normally, is always positive - I could almost say aggressive. He is never negative, He is never neutral. If He has to pause, it means that He is waiting for something; for it is not His nature to do that - He would go on. May the Lord fill us with the mighty energy of His Spirit!

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