

(The Better Covenant) 4 - the Spirit's Fullness

by Zac Poonen

The new covenant is better than the old covenant because it gives us the ability to do God's will and sets us free from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 59:04

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28, John 7:37, Hebrews 8:7-8, Hebrews 8:13

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the friend at midnight from Luke 11:5-13. He emphasizes the promise that God will give us as much as we need when we ask Him. The preacher shares personal experiences of relying on God's provision when speaking to large crowds. He highlights the importance of seeking the gifts of the Holy Spirit not for personal excitement, but to serve others in need. The sermon also touches on the progressive nature of sanctification and God's desire to make us like Jesus.

Transcript

We continue our study in the Better Covenant. Many times in the book of Hebrews, as I said, God has established a better covenant through Jesus Christ. But it's not only that.

I want you to notice two significant verses in Hebrews chapter 8 this evening. First of all, it says in Hebrews 8 and verse 7. It's very important to read these verses with an open mind and heart. When we read the Scriptures, if you come to it with a preconceived opinion, unwilling to change your preconceived ideas, you'll never get anything from Scripture.

One of the things I decided very early in my Christian life was that if I ever found anything in Scripture that contradicted some cherished truth I had held for many years, I would give it up. After a careful study of Scripture, if I found a truth, I would follow it, whether it was popular, accepted or not. And that's what's lifted me from one degree of glory continuously to another.

Scripture is like a well. And there are many, many new things that God can teach us if we are faithful to what He has already shown us. And if we come to it with an open mind.

Hebrews 8, 7. If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. What does that teach us? The plain, simple truth is that the first covenant was faulty. I wouldn't

dare to say that if Scripture hadn't said it.

The plain meaning of Hebrews 8, 7 is that the old covenant was faulty. Does God make a covenant that is faulty? Did He have second thoughts? Is the new covenant like some new model of car that is made rectifying the mistakes of the old? Far from it. God never makes any mistake.

Then why did He give the law? It was to teach man that you could never come up to my standards, no matter how hard you try. It served a purpose. It was faulty in the sense that it could not make anyone perfect.

That's what it says earlier on in Hebrews 7, 19. The law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, there's the bringing in of a better hope.

So the first covenant was faulty in the sense that it could not accomplish what God actually wanted to do in man. And man needed to understand that. God knew that from the beginning.

But it's something like, you know, when a child is doing a mathematics problem at home. And he's struggling and you know he's going on the wrong track. He's taken steps that are wrong in the calculation of that arithmetic problem.

And you tell him, son, that's wrong. Let me just show you the right way. And you know how children are stubborn.

No, dad, just leave me alone. I know how to do it. What do you do? You say, go ahead.

A half an hour later, after trying so many times, he may come to you and say, dad, show me how to do it. That was the purpose of the law. The law was our tutor, our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

But it would only lead to Christ those who had tried to keep the law and could not succeed. In that sense, the law was faulty. Romans 8.3 says, what the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God accomplished.

What was it that the law could not do? The law could not make a man free from sin within. The law could only deliver him from sin on the outside. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal and so on.

And because of that threat of punishment if they violated the law, Israel became a morally upright nation compared to all the other nations of the world. But it never changed the heart of people. Paul himself says, in one place he says, I kept the law from childhood, I lived with a good conscience.

According to the righteousness of the law, he says in Philippians 3, I'm blameless. The same Paul says in Romans 7, but when it came to the last commandment, thou shalt not covet. I found all types of coveting inside my heart.

I found all types of lusting, the word coveting is the same as lusting. Thou shalt not lust was the last commandment. Nine of the ten commandments you could keep, they were all external.

God put a tenth one in, which is inward, to see how many people would be honest to confess that they could not keep it. The last one was thou shalt not desire thy neighbor's wife or anything that is thy neighbor's, thy neighbor's daughter. Every girl who walks down the street is your neighbor's daughter.

Thou shalt not desire, thou shalt not lust. Paul was honest, he said I couldn't keep it. I tried, all the external commandments I could keep, but when it came to the tenth, I couldn't keep it.

And the law could do nothing to a man who was so wholehearted and radical like Paul. The law was faulty, it could not help man. But there were not many who were honest like Paul to acknowledge it.

Man is quick to acknowledge sin that's committed on the outside, which other people can see. But very few are honest like Paul to say, Lord, but there's lusting inside. Am I supposed to live with this forever? Paul knew he was not supposed to live with this forever.

He cried out, O wretched man, who shall deliver me from this? And then he says the law of the spirit of life has set me free. Though what the law could not do, God accomplished. Romans 8 verse 4 says, so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled inside us.

Who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Holy Spirit. That was the primary purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We want to speak today about the Spirit's fullness.

The other verse I want to show you is Hebrews 8 verse 13. When he said a new covenant, he has made the first covenant obsolete. If the government of Australia, if the parliament of Australia wrote up a new constitution, the first constitution would be obsolete.

You'd have to live according to the new constitution. A court of law would uphold the new constitution. You can't do something and say, well that was right according to the old constitution.

The court would say, but we are under a new constitution now. You can't go by the old one. The first is obsolete.

That's exactly what God says about the old covenant. How many Christians have understood what it says in Hebrews 8 verse 13? That the first covenant is obsolete. Cancelled.

And that which has become obsolete is growing old, ready to disappear. They were living in a transition period at that time. The writer to the Hebrews inspired by the Holy Spirit says, that's finished.

That old agreement God made with man is finished. He's not talking about the Old Testament of the Bible. Don't mix up the Old Testament of the Bible with the Old Covenant.

The Old Testament is three quarters of our Bible. And there's a tremendous message in it. In fact, one of the reasons I produced that 70 hour CD, was to teach this generation that did not value Bible study, how there was a message in every single book of the Old Testament for today.

So, I value the Old Testament greatly, but the Old Covenant that God made through Moses is obsolete. We're not under law. We're under grace.

Today is the age of the Spirit. Moses went up into the mountain and came down with two tablets of stone. Ten commandments.

Jesus went up to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to replace those two tablets of stone. Those two tablets of stone were God's law written on the outside, on rock. As it were, God was saying to the Israelites, it's easier for me to write those commandments on rock than in your hearts.

But when the Holy Spirit came, the promise in the Old Testament was, in Ezekiel 36, I will take away this rocky heart of yours, and I'll give you a soft heart. And I'll put my Spirit within you. And I will write my laws upon your mind and your heart.

How does he write it? If you compare a passage in Matthew chapter 12 with Luke chapter 11, we don't have time to look at it right now. We can look at it later. In one passage, Jesus said, if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

And in the parallel passage, he says, if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, the kingdom of God has come upon you. When you compare Scripture with Scripture, you discover that the finger of God is the Spirit of God. It is with the finger of God that he wrote those commandments on the tablets of stone.

And it is with the same finger of God, the Holy Spirit, that he writes his laws upon our mind and our heart. Like it says here in Hebrews 8.10, this is the covenant I will make with them. I will put my laws into their minds, I will write them upon their hearts.

This means two things. It means, first of all, God gives me a mind, a desire to do his will. He puts his law into my mind so that I say with the psalmist, I delight to do thy will, O God.

But the Old Testament people couldn't go beyond that. I long to do your will, but the man who wrote it, when he saw Bathsheba, he didn't do God's will. The ability was not there.

He says in Psalm 40, I delight to do thy will. Many a Christian is living right there. I believe many of you sitting here, you have a tremendous delight to do God's will.

But in the moment of temptation you can't do it. That's exactly where David was under the Old Covenant. And if you don't believe that the Old Covenant is obsolete, you will live under that Old Covenant forever.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. When Jesus said that in John 8, 32, the Jews said, what do you mean free? We're already free. That's what a lot of Christians say today.

We're free, we're not going to hell. And Jesus replied to the Jews, whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. That's the freedom I was talking about.

And I believe that is the word that Jesus would speak to many a Christian today. You think you're free? Whoever commits sin is the slave of sin. And if the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Jesus has sent the Spirit first of all to set us free from sin. You can't do it on your own. Fifteen hundred years under the law proved that they couldn't do it.

Paul, who was a man who kept the law from childhood, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he couldn't do it. It's no use wasting our time trying. You cannot make it.

But if the Son of God, if you allow Him to do it in your life, He'll free you from the inside. You won't just get a reputation for being a kind, good person on the outside. Sin, you'll be free from sin inside.

That is the message of the new covenant. What the law could not do. The law could not deal with sin inside.

God did. Now the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled inside us. This is the primary purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And I'm not surprised that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the doctrine which has caused maximum controversy and division in Christendom today. You think the devil is stupid not to do that? Of course. He's smart.

He knows that this Holy Spirit is the thing that will make, that will set Christians on fire. That will be the, make Christians a threat to his kingdom. So what does he do? He divides Christians into two extremes.

One who have gone on to a fanatical, gone off on a tangent of fanatical extreme. And counterfeiting the gifts of the Holy Spirit with psychological gimmicks and emotionalism and calling it the Holy Spirit. And doing all types of things which, like Paul says to the Corinthians, if somebody came to your church they'll say you're mad.

That's exactly what we see. And then he's got a whole lot of other Christians who react against this and go to the other extreme and say we don't want the Holy Spirit at all. The devil is happy with both.

He doesn't, he doesn't care which edge of the cliff you fall over. So long as you hit bottoms. But there is a narrow path between these two extremes.

And that's the path we see in scripture. Jesus, as I said earlier, was given to man by God as an example. A forerunner.

Let us look unto Jesus and run this race. I remember when I was a young Christian I was in an assembly where, quite honestly, though we studied the scriptures and all, I could not honestly look up to any of the leaders of that assembly as godly, spirit-filled men. But I never opened my mouth and criticized.

I was a young person and God told me to shut my mouth. But what the Lord told me was, if you don't find a human example to follow, look at me. And very early in my life, Christian life, I learned the secret of the Christian life was looking unto Jesus.

Not criticizing men, it's not my business, God is their judge. But if I didn't find a man worthy enough as an example to follow, I would look at Jesus. And I saw in Jesus the perfect example of a spirit-filled man.

And I said, Lord, this is what I want to be. I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that I can be like Jesus. So that I can preach like Him.

So that I can live like Him. So that I can serve the Father like He did. We don't have to be turned off by the extremes that people have gone to today with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

We don't have to be turned off from the teaching of the baptism in the Holy Spirit just because some people have taken it to a fanatical extreme. The other day I asked you this question. What is the first promise in the New Testament? And I mentioned it in Matthew 1.21. He shall save His people from their sins.

Do you know what's the second promise in the New Testament? Matthew 3 verse 11. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. And I want to say to you, I'm not talking about the counterfeit fire we see in many large sections of Christendom today.

I'm not talking about emotionalism. I'm not talking about unchrist-like practices. I'm talking about the genuine fire of God.

We read in the book of Leviticus that when the fire of God fell, the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu tried to duplicate that. And God smote them. And today we see the same thing happening in Christendom.

There is genuine fire here and there. But the vast majority are trying to work it up. And God hates it.

And the result is many sincere Christians are being turned away from seeking God for the power of the Holy Spirit and the fire of God in their life. Because they've seen the counterfeits. I remember as a young Christian, I was born again, I was baptized, I was studying the scriptures.

And I felt there was something missing in my life. And people tried to convince me theologically, oh yeah, you got everything when you were born again. I tried to believe that.

I went to an assembly that taught that. But when I read in the scriptures words like this. John 7, 37-39 If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.

He who believes in me from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake about the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified, but whom those who believe in him would receive. And I said, Lord, whatever people may say, rivers of living water are certainly not flowing out from my life.

I know that. I find what's flowing out from my life is trickles. And that also with great effort.

In many parts of India, where there's not enough water, they set up a hand pump with a bore well. And people have to struggle, struggle, struggle, struggle, and pump, and pump, and pump. And if there's not enough water underground, a few trickles come out.

That was my experience. Certainly wasn't rivers. I felt dry so often.

I felt so bored. I couldn't talk about rivers. When I got up to speak God's word, it was such a struggle.

I knew I had to serve God, but it was such a struggle to preach. And I looked at Jesus' life and it wasn't like that. And I said, Lord, there must be something here I've missed.

I don't know what it is. And I don't want to be convinced by some theological argument. And neither do I want to be deceived by some emotional counterfeit in this matter of the Holy Spirit.

I don't want a theological argument, and I don't want an emotional counterfeit. I want the real thing that Peter, James, and John got on the day of Pentecost. I want that which transformed Peter from a coward who could not witness about Jesus, to a maidservant, to a fiery man who could stand before the high priest and tell him, you denied the Holy One of Israel.

I thought I didn't have that. But I was born again. And I began to seek God.

I knew I needed something. And the Lord said to me, don't let your understanding of truth be a reaction to the extremes you see in other Christians. That's a word I've never forgotten.

Don't let your understanding of truth be a reaction to the extremes that you see in other Christians. It was, you know. I saw some extremes even in those days, way of nearly 40 years ago.

And I said, Lord, I don't want that. That's not the Holy Spirit. That's just emotionalism.

That's just hypnotism and psychological gimmicks. I don't want it. I'd steer away from that.

And the danger was I'd steer away into dead, dry Christianity, what I call Christianity. My experience was not the experience of Jesus or the apostles. And I began to seek God, and God met with me.

My whole life was changed when God filled me with the Holy Spirit. Not a once-for-all experience, but a continuous experience. What did it bring? What is His name? His name is not Father, Son, and noisy spirit.

Or Father, Son, and emotional spirit. It's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's what He brought in my life.

Holiness first. I thank God for that. Power to be free from sin.

There's a prophecy in the book of Zechariah, chapter 12. I think it's verse 9. Which says, On the inhabitants of Jerusalem, says the Lord, in those days I'll pour out the spirit of grace. The spirit of grace.

The grace that we heard about earlier. That is sufficient for every need. The grace that will deliver from sin's power.

That's the spirit I received. Many spirits can work you up emotionally. Evil spirits can do it.

Many spirits can duplicate some of the gifts of the spirit. But evil spirits cannot make you holy inside. Evil spirits can make you religious on the outside.

Evil spirits can make you a Pharisee. They can't deliver you from lust in your heart. No evil spirit can help you to keep the tenth commandment.

The righteousness of the law fulfilled inside. Now if a person's happy with his defeated Christian life. Perpetually disobeying the tenth commandment every day.

And he's quite content with that. He doesn't need the Holy Spirit. Why does such a person need the Holy Spirit? But Jesus said, if anyone thirsts.

If anyone is sick and tired of his defeated life. If anyone is weary and heavy laden. Trying to keep the law.

Especially the tenth commandment. Not able to keep it like Paul. Then he thirsts.

He's willing to pay any price. And Jesus said, when a person thirsts like that. You're ready to come to me.

Who said that Jesus invites everybody to come to him? He doesn't. He says, if anyone thirsts. Let him come to me.

A lot of people try to come to Jesus without thirsting. They don't get much. But those who thirst.

They get the best. Those who are weary and heavy laden. Because they've been struggling to please God.

Jesus says, come to me. And you'll find rest. Right from the beginning of scripture.

We find in Genesis chapter 1. You know, Genesis chapter 1, by the way. Is a little picture of the whole Bible. I personally believe that there's a gap between verse 1 and 2. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

And verse 2 should read, the earth became formless, void, dark. God never creates anything formless, empty and dark. Whenever God creates anything, it's perfect, full of life, with perfect shape.

How did it lose its shape? How did it become formless? How did it become empty? How did it become dark? Because between verse 1 and 2, Lucifer fell. And the angels fell. Satan became Satan.

Lucifer became Satan. That's not described here, because this book was written for man. And that's why the fall of Lucifer is described later on in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

But that's what made the earth formless, empty and dark. This is a picture of man. God created man perfectly.

That's verse 1. But then, Satan came. And man became, like it says in verse 2, formless. He lost the image of God.

Empty. Dark. The prince of darkness had come in.

And then, God begins to work on this earth. It's a picture of what he does with man. Not all in a moment.

One day. Two days. Three days.

Four days. Five days. Six days.

To teach us that sanctification is progressive. There is no once for all experience that sanctifies us and makes us perfect. Sanctification is progressive.

And at the end of the sixth day, man was in the image of God. And God said, this is very good. And that's what he's working towards in your life and mine.

Ultimately, to make us like Jesus perfectly. So that he can look at every aspect of our life and say, very good. The whole message of the Bible is encapsulated in Genesis chapter 1. Now, this is what I've shared on that CD in Genesis 1. And how I see that this message comes through the whole Old Testament.

Of what God wants to do with man. But, what I want to point out here is, how did God do this? Because there we see how God can do it in us. First of all, we saw it was day by day.

The Bible says, the outer man, 2 Corinthians 4, is decays. But the inner man, 2 Corinthians 4, is being renewed day by day. God wants to make us more and more like Jesus every day of our life.

We will not be sinlessly perfect until the day we see Jesus face to face. That's why when I spoke about victory over sin, if you remember. I spoke about conscious sin.

We can see only about 10% of our life. And we can get victory only in that 10%. There's a whole 90% of our life like an ice cube.

The 90% of an ice cube that floats below the surface of a glass of juice that we cannot see. Which remains hidden. We are unlike Christ in many areas that we cannot see.

But as God works in us by the Holy Spirit. You know, it's something like if you were to slice off that top 10% of that ice cube. What would happen? You know what would happen? Something that was hidden would come up.

That's exactly what happens when we deal with the sin that we know. God gives us light on another area of un-Christ likeness in our life. Through the Holy Spirit.

And then gives us grace to fight in that area. And overcome in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some more of that ice cube is sliced.

What happens then? Something more that was hidden comes up. This is progressive sanctification. So in a sense, we are never perfect.

Paul said at the end of his life, I have not attained. And the more godly a man is, the more aware he is of the fact that he hasn't attained. He hasn't become Christ like.

But, he's dealing with sin. Like a student going from grade 1 to grade 2 to grade 3 to grade 4. In grade 1 he's struggling with addition. In grade 2 he's not struggling with addition.

He's gone on to subtraction. Then he goes on to multiplication. Then he goes on to division.

I mean, even if he goes up to doing PhD in mathematics, he's struggling. But he's not struggling with the same thing that he was in grade 1. So is the Christian life. We don't have to be defeated by the same sins we were defeated by 20 years ago.

We get light. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth who will gradually lead us into all the truth. Not just all the truth of scripture.

But all the truth about the sin in my life. Which I inherited from Adam and my parents. That God wants to deliver me from.

From one degree of glory to another, it says in 2 Corinthians 3.18. This is the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit. What do we see in Genesis 1? How did God transform this corrupt earth into something so beautiful that even Almighty God could look at it and say, Very good. Man's certificate is useless.

If one day God can look at me and say, Very good. That's the greatest certificate of all. And God's working towards that goal.

But what I want you to notice is, He did it using two instruments. One, the Holy Spirit. Who appears in the second verse of the Bible.

Over this formless, dark, empty earth. The Spirit of God began to hover. To bring light, shape, form.

And the second was the Word of God. God said, let there be light. But each day He said something.

And each day the Holy Spirit operated. It was the joint operation of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that transformed this corrupt earth into something beautiful. That God Himself could certify as very good.

And I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, It's the joint operation today of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that's going to transform corrupt man, Even after he's born again. Day by day. Into that perfect image of Christ.

And I believe this is where a lot of Christendom has gone astray. Some emphasize the Holy Spirit. Some emphasize the Word of God.

What do we need? In the olden days we used to have steam engines. In India. What did that steam engine need to go from one railway station to another? It needed two things.

Steam. And the railway lines. God's Spirit.

And the Word of God. Which is more important? Which is more important for the steam engine? You can't really make a choice. Supposing it had steam but no rails? Supposing it had rails but no steam? Why should Christendom make a choice? But unfortunately today we have these two groups in Christendom.

Some who emphasize the steam. Boy, we need steam. They ignore the rails.

It's not important to know the Word of God. God derailed and stuck in the mud and blowing the whistle and making a lot of noise. No progress.

And then there are other people who are polishing the rails every Sunday, making sure it's dead straight. No steam. They're stuck too.

Oh yes, they're dead right in their doctrines but they're both dead and right. What's the use of that? Why do we have to make a choice? I wish we could have Christians in our day. Who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

And who know the Word of God. Who know what God says in His Word. And stick to the rails of God's Word.

Who will say, if I don't see that in Jesus and the Apostles, I don't want it. You know, for a lot of things that go by the name of the Holy Spirit today, and the Holy Spirit's working, I apply a four-fold test. Did Jesus do that? Did Jesus teach that? Did the Apostles do that? Did the Apostles teach that? And if it fails all four tests, I say, brother, you can keep it.

I don't want it. I don't want to have anything to do with that. And I would give you that way to test everything that goes on today.

There's a lot of counterfeit. Jesus never did it. Never taught it.

The Apostles never did it. Never taught it. God's Word is our guide.

But that's not enough. We need the power of the Holy Spirit. Now I want to tell you something about the Holy Spirit's power.

The first five books of the New Testament. All of them begin with one promise. Have you noticed that? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts.

All five of them begin with one promise, neglected by many Christians. You shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And fire.

Baptism means immersion. That's all it means. It's unfortunate that they use that Greek word, baptizo, instead of translating it as immersion, like they translated the rest of the Greek New Testament.

They should have translated that word, instead of introducing a Greek word into it. Immersion. You've got to be immersed in the Holy Spirit.

Just like Jesus spoke about being immersed in water. To stand under a waterfall. The Bible says the Holy Spirit is like a river.

The river of God that flows from the throne of God down to the earth. And I stand under that waterfall and I'm drenched. And I need to live under that waterfall.

Ephesians 5.18 says, Be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. It's not an experience I have once, and then, this is another mistake a lot of Christians make. Maybe they do have a genuine experience, but then they live in that date.

What's the use of a date? Dates are found on tombstones. I don't need a date. I need a living experience of the Holy Spirit right now.

That produces rivers flowing through me right now. I don't want to quote a date and say rivers flowed through me then. This is another mistake.

I'm not interested in a date. I don't even know the date I was born again. That's not important.

I mean, just because a man doesn't know his birthday, is that how you determine whether he's alive or dead? What does it matter? I know lots of people in India who had no record of their birthdays. Don't place so much value on a date. The reality of being filled continuously with the Holy Spirit.

Now, what I wanted to say was, be careful of trying to formulate a theology of the Holy Spirit where you try to put everything into a pigeon hole. That's another mistake that Christendom makes. I've tried for 40 years to try and formulate a theology of the Holy Spirit and I haven't succeeded.

Because He's God. The wind blows where it lists. You hear the sound thereof.

You can't capture the wind and put it inside a box. You can't pigeon hole the wind. So, I don't try to do that.

I say, Lord, I'm not interested in the doctrine as much as the reality. I know there was something that Jesus had, which I believe He offers me. The New Testament begins with John the Baptist filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb.

Mary, upon whom the Holy Spirit came to produce Jesus in her. Jesus, in the time of His baptism, praying. It says He was praying in Luke chapter 3. And the heavens opening and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

The apostles waiting in the upper room on the day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit coming upon them. This is how my New Testament begins. Have we missed something? Have we sought for theological, tried to convince ourselves theologically? When there's dryness in our life, as I said, I don't want to go off the rails of God's Word.

But I know that I cannot explain everything. And I don't try to. I want reality.

Consider the case of Jesus Himself. If John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb, you think Jesus wasn't? How could that be? Born of the Spirit? And yet, what was it that happened in the

River Jordan when it says the Spirit of God came upon Him? If we use argument, we say, didn't He have the Spirit before? This is the type of argument people use today. Do we have the Spirit? Don't have the Spirit? I say, I can't explain it.

But I know that it says in the Bible that Jesus was filled with the Spirit and went into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan, came back in the power of the Spirit. I know that something happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost that changed their life. And I say, Lord, I know that's what I need.

And I believe my brothers and sisters, that's what many of us need. Don't let your understanding of truth be a reaction to the extremes that you see among other Christians. Do you see a lack in your life? If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

He who believes in me, he who comes to me like a little child. Jesus said, I thank you, Father. You've hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent who try to analyze everything, pigeonhole everything.

And you reveal them to babes who come with a simple heart and say, God, I need you. I need you. I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in my life.

I want reality. I want rivers of living water. And that's what I said to God.

I said, Lord, I don't care what it's called. Call it whatever you like. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, fullness in the Holy Spirit, whatever you like.

But I want rivers of living water flowing out of my life. I'm not worried about the terminology. Don't get hung up on terminology.

Think of the matter of conversion. Somebody says, I was born again. Somebody says, I accepted the Lord.

Somebody says, I was converted. Somebody says, I became a child of God. Did they have four different experiences? No.

Why should I force another person to use my expression? Paul said, crucified with Christ. Peter never uses that expression. John never uses that expression.

There was an individuality about these apostles, even when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Don't get hung up on terminology. Let's look for reality.

The Spirit's power is what we need. And not only for our personal life. We need the Spirit's power in order to serve others.

I believe this is a mistake when we think that we can serve God without the supernatural gifts that God gives us. And by supernatural, I'm not talking about spectacular. I know that the ability to proclaim God's Word in an anointed, prophetic way, for me anyway, you may not know it, I know it, is a gift from God.

I know what I was as a young Christian, timid, shy, afraid to stand before people. I never took part in any debates in school. I never was a public speaker.

I was shy, reserved, withdrawn, and God called me and told me to preach. And I didn't know how to do it. I never went to a Bible school.

I was a naval officer. I studied God's Word on the ship, on my own. And I said, Lord, those apostles never went to Bible school, but they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's the answer. That's what I want. And that's what changed me.

That's what equipped me to serve. That's what enabled me to experience rivers flowing. Now, I'm not saying that everybody who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be a preacher.

It came to me like that because that was my calling. If you're called to be a mother, you'll be a spirit-filled mother, not a preacher. But we need the power, whatever function we have in the body of Christ.

You see, if a paralyzed hand gets power, it won't become an eye or a tongue. It won't start talking. It will get power to be a first-class hand.

If the tongue is paralyzed and gets power, it will begin to talk. And a man who is called to be a preacher, when he is filled with the Spirit, he becomes a spirit-filled preacher. A mother, when she is filled with the Spirit, she becomes a spirit-filled mother and makes disciples of her children.

We all each have a distinctive ministry in the body of Christ, but we all need power to fulfill that particular calling that God has called us for. And I want to turn you to Luke's Gospel, chapter 11. In Luke chapter 11, we read of a situation where the disciples came to Jesus and said, Lord, teach us to pray.

And it's a long answer that Jesus gives. Sometimes we don't read the full paragraph or the full section as the answer to this question. First of all, Jesus taught them what is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer.

When you pray, say, Our Father, hallowed be thy name, and so on. Verse 2 onwards. And then, He is still answering their question on how to pray.

Supposing one of you has got a friend, verse 5, and you go to him at midnight and say, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey and I've got nothing to set before him. This is a picture. I want you to see this picture.

Here is somebody who has come to my house at midnight. And I love him so much. He is so hungry.

And I don't have any food in the fridge. I don't have any food in the house to give him. What do I do? I go to my neighbor.

I do the shameless thing of going and banging at my neighbor's door at midnight and say, Give me some food. And even after he says, Don't disturb me, I'm asleep. I continue to be shameless and say, I am going to disturb you.

Give me some food. Why? Because I love this other friend so much. And he opens the door, gives me the three loaves of bread I asked for, and I come and set it before this needy man and his need is met.

What is the message of this parable? Verse 13. If you fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly father, that's my neighbor, give the Holy Spirit, that's what I need, to those who keep on banging at his door and asking him, What for? Because I need a gift to serve

somebody who has come to me who is needy. So, what should I seek God for the gifts of the Spirit for? I'm sorry to say, many people are seeking for the gifts of the Holy Spirit today for personal excitement.

This man didn't go and was not asking for loaves for himself. He was not asking for the loaves for personal excitement. He was asking the loaves for another.

And if you go seeking God for the power of the Holy Spirit because you want to serve other human beings, you're more likely to get a genuine gift from God than the counterfeits that many are receiving today. Where does it begin? It begins with a burden for those who have a need. Somebody comes into your life with a need.

It could be a neighbor. It could be your sisters. Somebody comes visiting you.

Or somebody you meet has a great need in their life. If you don't love that person, you could tell this friend, well, it's midnight. Let's go to bed.

You could ignore the need of the person. That's what a lot of Christians do. They come across needy people.

They say, well, I can't meet that need. I don't have anything. And you stop there.

This fellow also didn't have anything. But he didn't stop there. That was the difference.

He said, well, I don't have it. But I'm going to go to somebody who has what it takes to meet this fellow's need. And that's our calling.

That's how Jesus taught us to seek for the power of the Holy Spirit. Here's someone I've come across in my life who's got a need. And I don't have what it takes to meet that need.

Okay. But I know somebody who can meet his need. My father.

And he's got more than enough to meet the need of that person who's come across my life. Well, I'm going to bang away at my father's door and say, God, give me the gifts of the Spirit by which I can serve this person. And I knock.

Nothing happens. And I knock. Nothing happens.

I ask. Nothing happens. I pray.

I seek. I knock. I'm not going to give up.

Because I'm determined to bless this brother. To bless this sister. And God tests me to see whether I'm serious.

And when he sees that I am, he gives me. What does he say? As much. Verse 8. Have you noticed that? He will give him as much as he needs.

Boy! What a promise! He'll give him as much as he needs. I can think of many, many times in my life when I've had to get up and speak God's Word to multitudes of people. In different situations.

Sometimes 5 or 6 times a day. For a whole hour each time. And I've said, Lord, I don't know these people.

I don't know their need. How can I give them a Word which is exactly according to their need? I know they are needy. Sure.

There's no doubt about that. There are a bunch of needy people sitting there. God, give me the Word.

Give me the Word. I don't want anything for myself. I want the river just to flow through me.

And satisfy the thirst of other people. I don't want any glory. I don't want any honor.

I'll give that all to you. I don't even want money. I want to serve you.

And again, and again, and again, and again. I found He's been faithful. For more than quarter century.

He's never failed me. It's real. It's real.

Isn't it wonderful to spend our earthly days like this? Have you missed something in your Christian life because of theological prejudice or because of a reaction to the extremes you've seen in some parts of Christendom? Why not look at Jesus? What did the fullness of the Holy Spirit produce in Jesus' life? Compassion. Goodness. Humility.

It made Him wash their feet. Words, prophetic words that blessed people. Is it possible that God can give us such words? Sure.

You meet people whom I will never meet. Who's going to bless them? You're going to meet people whom nobody in this room is ever going to meet. Yes, you.

You have a circle of people whom you meet whom no one else in this room is going to meet. How is God going to reach those people? Shall I tell you? Through you. You say, I don't have what it takes.

Exactly. This man didn't have what it takes to meet that need and to bless them. That's why you need to go to God.

Say, God anoint me with the Holy Spirit. Give me gifts to serve other people. I praise God that He hasn't asked us to produce things.

Many times I've thought of those disciples who had to feed the five thousand. How can you feed five thousand with five loaves and two fish? Impossible. But not when you go to the Master again and again.

Their basket was full. They'd go out and distribute the loaves and the fishes. And when it was empty, they didn't scratch their heads and say, well, what are we going to do now? It was simple.

Go back to the Master. Master, the basket is empty. Well, here is some more.

Go back again and distribute it. And this is what the Lord said to me. You don't have to be in the production business.

You've got to be only in the distribution business. I thank God for that. I'm not in the production business.

And I thank God for that word the Lord has spoken to my heart. Whether I have to speak ten times a day or any number, I don't have to produce the words. I'm not in the production business.

I'm in the distribution business. And there is an abundance with my Father that will meet any man's needs. I've just got to go to Him and say, Lord, my basket is empty.

But there are needy people there. Will you give me something to give them? For their sake. Lord, I need it.

I'm not going to give up till you give me that which will bless these people. That which will set them free from the chains the devil has put upon them. That which will make them kings who are sitting there as slaves.

That which will open their eyes to see the truth of God that will set them free. My brothers and sisters, God wants to use you to bless other people. Will you seek Him? Let's pray.

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men take it by force. What that means is not physical violence, but in your mind you have to do violence to the theological prejudices and hang-ups that you have that hinder you from seeking God to be filled with the Holy Spirit. To be continuously filled.

Don't look for an experience. Look for reality. Seek God that rivers of living water will flow from you continuously from now until Jesus comes every day.

Seek God for a life which is fresh with the dew of the Holy Spirit every day. Jesus purchased this for you on Calvary. He went up to heaven and sent the Spirit for you and me.

Let's not treat that lightly. Let's value this wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit's power. Are you willing to pay the price? Are you willing to lay everything on the altar? Including your preconceived ideas and prejudices? Are you willing to humble yourself and acknowledge your need? Are you willing to confess that you're not burdened sufficiently for the people whom you meet who are needy? You've just ignored their need.

Are you willing to confess that sin? Are you willing to say, Lord, it's not going to be like that anymore. I want to be a blessing to everyone I meet. And where I cannot meet someone's need, I'm going to come to you and seek you for the power that is needed, for the words that are needed to bless them.

Lord, I'm going to seek you. I will never stop seeking you until rivers of living water flow out from me continuously. Heavenly Father, I believe there are many, many sincere people bowed before you this evening.

I pray that from many of our lives, rivers will begin to flow. Even if it starts as a trickle, it'll become a river. And many rivers in the days to come that our lives will never be the same again.

After what we've heard tonight, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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