



Gospel Advance – Part 4

The Life-Changing Message Spreads

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Well, before we all had access to the Internet and before any of my sermons were on a sermon app, before there was a Focal Point radio ministry, what I'm trying to say is before anyone really listen to any of my sermons, when it came to making and writing and crafting sermon titles, I was much freer back then. I was unencumbered. I was a bit experimental, you might say. Quirky? I don't know. I just went about it a little differently. I happened to come across a list of, like, my oldest sermons and I just have to share how good they were. Here's one. It was Easter morning, it was Resurrection Sunday morning, you know when all the visitors show up at church. Emblazoned across the top of the worksheet was the title of the sermon. Ready for this? Easter Schmisser, I called it. I'm not kidding. Easter Schmisser. You had to be there, I guess. I had a reason for it.

I thumbed through some more of those early sermons and I mean, a lot of them were handwritten and at the top I had in a sermon I preached at church from Second Timothy Chapter 1 verses 13 and 14. And if you think biblically, think about that it's Paul's letter to Timothy. I found the title and here was the title of the sermon was "Here's My Fish." I actually pulled out the paper and I look through it, I'm still not sure why I called it that. It had nothing to do with the feeding of the 5,000, it had nothing to do with fishermen. It was just "Here's My Fish."

But there was one in that list I couldn't help but think of, it's the reason I started looking at old sermon titles because I remembered a sermon title that I had constructed years and years and years ago when I was preaching a message on the Holy Spirit, which certainly was what made me think of it as I was studying the passage this week in Acts Chapter 8. It was a sermon about the Holy Spirit and his work in our lives. Here was the title. Are you ready? "Holy Ghost, You Scare Me." (audience laughing) That was the title. I mean, come on, that's good, that's good, that's a good title. It's a good title because I still think it's good, because it's true. I mean, a lot of Christians are scared by the whole topic. Right? "The Holy Ghost!" What's going on? I mean, we've lived in the wake now in the last 120 years or so of the modern charismatic Pentecostal movement and it certainly, you know, has led to a lot of Christians who are students of the Bible, they're Christians, and they look at the text of Scripture and they think of all the kind of confusion and commotion going on in parts of Christianity and they say, "Well, I'm kind of scared by that topic. I mean, is this going to mean I got to go through some weird thing or be slain or fall on the ground or say weird things coming out of my mouth? I don't know that even want to dig very deep into this topic."

And sadly, this all-important part of the Bible and the Christian life, a lot of people have just purposefully remained clueless about these things. I mean, they are purposely ignorant about what the Bible has to say about the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or they just touch on it on a surface way. But they don't go much deeper than that in trying to understand what the Bible says regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And, of course, you know, I am never going to suggest that that's a good response to a topic, although there may be a lot of weird



things being done in the name of the Holy Spirit these days. We better know what it is if we're students of the Bible, if we say we're connected to Christ, we've got to know what this is all about. And sadly, a lot of the confusion and a lot of the commotion has really been rooted in two passages primarily, if you really want to think about it theologically, two passages in the book of Acts, one in Acts Chapter 19 and one in the passage that we've reached today in our study in Acts Chapter 8.

These two passages have been really the foundation for a lot of confusion in entire segments of the Church. And so as we get to this text, I'm thinking, OK, this text has to be rightly understood, because if we don't dig into the topic of the Holy Spirit, I can guarantee you two things. Number one, you're going to impede your Christian growth. You just will. The Holy Spirit is integral in that, and you better understand it. And number two, you're going to not be the effective person in relaying the message of the gospel to our generation. If we're talking about gospel advance, you better know what the Spirit's role is in all of that. And you ought to be identifying it and relying upon it and expecting it and cooperating with it. And you've got to know what those things are.

But it's passages like this that are so often misrepresented among Christians, not only now, but historically. In many ways it's ramped up, as I said, in the last, you know, century and a quarter. And we need to make sure that we say, "Oh, I understand that." I know that and I can look at the whole of Scripture and put these two passages and understand them in their right, historical and redemptive context and say, I get what's being said here.

So let's not avoid it. Let's dig into it. That's why I only picked four verses for us to study here today. So take your Bibles out if you haven't already and let's make sure we understand what's going on in Acts Chapter 8, verses 14 through 17. Now, remember where we've been. The thing about preaching consecutive texts you got to kind of keep up in your mind as to where we've been in the past. We've got here the persecution breaking out in Jerusalem. So it's scattering the Church. Right? Steven has been martyred and Philip now becomes the subject of a lot of what we're reading here in Chapter 8. Philip goes into Samaria and Samaritans and Jews did not get along. It's not much different than what you're seeing on the news when you see the headlines this weekend about all the tear gas and the rubber bullets and the rock-throwing that's going on in eastern Jerusalem, and even on the Temple Mount there at the mosque on the Temple Mount. All of that's going on and you're thinking these people cannot get along. How long have you not been able to get along? And you think that's how it was in the New Testament.

Just like you see the Palestinians and the Jews fighting in suburban eastern Jerusalem and you see it all erupting in riots on the Temple Mount. That's the kind of thing, the hostility, animosity that was going on in the first century in that the Samaritans certainly had no dealings with the Jews and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Matter of fact, when you said you cannot come, Samaritans, into the Temple Mount, you're excluded, you're barred. Well, then they set up their own and they said fine. And they had Mount Gerizim and they had their place where they worshiped and did their sacrifices. And you had these two rivals. And the Jews could hardly think less of a group of people than they thought of the



Samaritans. And yet here was the promise in Acts 1:8, the Spirit is going to come upon you. You're going to have power now to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and then Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

That was a problem. That was a problem in so many ways because you had to convince an entire group of people who relied on the promises and covenants of Abraham and everything that God promised, and then the coming of Messiah and reading all about Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Daniel, the major prophets in particular, about all the major promises of the coming of Christ. And they said, "Here he is, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the Messiah." And now you're going to take that into Samaria that has a rival religion going on, although they claim they followed God, these guys are bad guys. And all of a sudden now you've got to take the gospel to the world. Philip was chosen to be the key player, the running back who takes the ball into Samaria and as he's there, you see he's endowed with special abilities to break natural law and do some things like heal the paralytic we saw, and people respond and they respond well.

Not everyone, of course, but in the Samaritan town, they have conversions and people are trusting in Christ, they're believing the "Euaggelion" the good news of the gospel that is preached by Phillip and he baptizes them in water. All that seems to be going just fine, it's a great story, we've seen it in Acts 2, we've seen it in Acts 4, we've seen it in the New Testament all throughout as God is bringing people to repentance. That all seems perfectly fine until we get to verse 14.

Acts 8:14 through 17, follow along as I read it from the English Standard Version. "Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God." And that's not just, "Yeah, I like that verse." They heard the preaching of Phillip, who had heard the preaching of Stephen, who'd heard the preaching of his pastor, Peter. They knew the gospel and Philip had brought the accurate gospel and they embraced it. Well, when the apostles who stayed back in Jerusalem when the persecution broke out, you might remember, they said we're going to send our senior pastor, Peter was the primary preaching pastor, and John, the associate pastor of the megachurch in Jerusalem. We're going to send those to key apostles and they're going to go down to Samaria, which is really north, so it's up but it's down in elevation. Verse 15, "They came down and they prayed for them."

So Peter and John, two of the key apostles, go down and pray for the Samaritans. Right? Who had received the word. They'd already been baptized in water, "that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for," explanation verse 16, "for he," the Holy Spirit, "had not yet fallen on any of them." Any of who? The Samaritans, but "they'd only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." They had only been baptized... The word that should bother you in that sentence is the word "only." Like that's the whole point, isn't it, to make disciples baptizing them? I mean, what's the deal? This whole point of trusting in Messiah and following Christ... they did it? What do you mean they only were baptized in him? Well, something was missing, but what was missing? The Holy Spirit, they hadn't received the Holy Spirit, verse 17, and "They then laid hands on them," verse 17, "and they received the Holy Spirit."



So let's put this into categories. The accurate gospel, the right gospel goes out through Phillip, the right response from the Samaritans, they repent, they trust. Then they get baptized in water, which is supposed to be the expression that you've become a disciple. And then, think about it, you're in Samaria, that's two days journey from Jerusalem. So it takes at least two days for the word to get there, taking at least two days and maybe a day for Peter to pack. I don't know. I mean, they're taking a week probably to get them back and now they show up and now it's like, "OK, you're going to get the Spirit." So you got right gospel, right response, water baptism, and then the Holy Spirit a week later or however long, I don't know, I'm guessing, but the word got there and that two guys come back, the apostles, and they get the Spirit.

I said Acts 19 should be in your mind paired with Acts Chapter 8. Acts Chapter 8, that's the pattern. Acts Chapter 19, the same thing happens. You have the right gospel, the powerful gospel of, in this case, Apollos preaching in Western Asia and in the city, key city, of Ephesus. And they respond rightly to it. These Ephesians, these Asians, they respond rightly to the gospel and then they get baptized in water, right? Which is what you're supposed to do. Right gospel, right response, baptized in water. That's your first act of obedience to declare that you're a disciple. But they don't get the Holy Spirit. They're not filled with the Holy Spirit until Paul shows up and the same thing happens. Well, what do you see? You see what we see all the time going on in our Christian life is that we want to give the right gospel, we're praying for the right response, and then, hey, you're now part of our deal, let's get you baptized. Let's declare that in water. And that declaration that we see that at all times. Well, what's going on here in Chapters 8 and 19 that all of a sudden now, there was some delay?

Well, that's the question we need to answer, I need you to understand it. If you're taking notes, jot this down. Number one, we need to "Know Why the Spirit Was 'Late' to Samaria." Where did he go, right? What happened? Why am I saying that? Because let's think through what we've already seen in Acts, Acts Chapter 2. Peter preaches the right gospel, the people respond rightly. Now, think about this. If you read it in context and you look carefully, you have to tease this out and look at it, but you'll see the Spirit comes upon those people and then they go get baptized. So that's the sequence. And if there's any confusion in Acts 2, and there's not, really, if you're careful to study that passage, well then maybe I can take it to passages like, I don't know, Acts 10. Acts 10. Peter, he knows the gospel, he goes to Cornelius. He's an Italian in Caesarea Maritima. He's on the coastal city of Caesarea, a Roman port. And the right message is brought to these people. God prepares their heart and they have the right response. And the Bible says the Holy Spirit came upon them and then they were baptized in water. You have that pattern throughout the book of Acts.

Matter of fact, let's take some notes. Let me give you some passages. I mean, we could go on for a long time this morning, but I know you have lunch reservations, So let's just go quickly through this. But let me give you a couple of passages to write down. How about this one? How about Romans Chapter 8 verse 9? Listen carefully now. Romans Chapter 8 verse 9. He says, "You are not in the flesh, you're in the Spirit," which is the philosophical way, theological way, to put it. But he says this, "If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ," the Spirit of God, "does not belong to him." Now, OK. Think about



that verse. Think about that instructive verse. Lay it over the top of these narrative texts and ask the question. OK, so those Samaritans for that week, or those Ephesians for that month or however long it took between the fact that they got the gospel, responded rightly and were baptized in water, how long until they got the Spirit. And then you're going to say, did they not belong to Christ? Well, if you look carefully at Acts Chapter 19, when Paul comes on the scene, he identifies them as disciples of Christ. They're Christ's. He says that. He makes that clear. They are Christ's. Well, the text here says if you don't have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you're not Christ's.

How about First Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 12 and 13. First Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 12 and 13. It says, "There's one body and just like a body has many members, we are all members of the body." Now he's writing to the Corinthians and he starts out being very clear, I'm writing to the saints, the Christians at Corinth. "All the members of the body, though there's one body, there are many members, and so it is with Christ. For we in one Spirit were all baptized into one body," the Spirit then put us in this, "whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free. We were all made to drink of one Spirit." So if you're in the body of Christ and you're counted as a part of this organization that is of redeemed people, well, then you drank of the Spirit. Now a lot of verbs, right? Fall, Spirit falling on you, Spirit filling you, right? In this case, drinking of the Spirit, all this connection of you, these spatial proximity analogies of the Spirit, all of that is happening in your life if you claim to be in this thing called the Church, the redeemed Church. So it seems like if I'm really a Christian, I have the Spirit.

How about this one, Titus Chapter 3 verse 5? Titus Chapter 3 verse 5. "He saved us, not because of the works we've done in righteousness," not by earning it, we didn't do it by our works, "but according to his own mercy." How are we saved? He's defining it now, "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." We're saved and he defines it this way, "by the washing of regeneration." Picture that like a washing machine, "and renewal," comes out clean, "of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit of God does that. The Spirit's intimate involvement to make me new inside and forgive me of my sins. So the question, I guess, for the Ephesians and the Samaritans is how long between your right gospel, right response, until you got the Spirit washing you and making you... "I mean, are you telling me that they were not forgiven for that month or that week? Is that what you're telling me? Are you telling me that they weren't saved? I mean, everyone was celebrating their salvation at their water baptism. They were going, "Yay, I'm now a follower of Christ." Paul calls them in Acts 19 "disciples of Christ."

First John Chapter 4 verse 13. First John Chapter 4 verse 13, it says by this, "We know that we abide in him," in God, "and he in us." How do I know I got a relationship with God and he's in me and I'm in him? "Because he's given us his Spirit." Think that through. How do I know that I'm God's, that he's in me and I'm in him? How do I know I have this relationship? Because I have his Spirit. So again, I'm asking those Ephesians and those Samaritans are you telling me that the right response to the right gospel and the celebration of their faith in Christ. They didn't abide in Christ? What were the quiet times like that first week? I mean, this is weird. How are their prayers and their worship?



Romans Chapter 5 verse 5. Romans Chapter 5 verse 5. "And hope," which in the context is all about me knowing that I've got a future, I'm not going to be cast into outer darkness when I die, that I'm right with God, "this hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." So the Holy Spirit's given to us and I now know that I have the love of God, and that gives me the hope. God loves me, he's not going to condemn me, I'm accepted, I have peace with God. How do I know that? Because the Spirit of God came into my life.

So, again, I'm thinking we celebrated all that because of the preaching of Apollos with the Ephesians, the preaching of Philip with the Samaritans, and it's... I don't get it. It seems like are they saved or are they not saved? Galatians Chapter 3 verse 2. Galatians Chapter 3 verse 2. He asked a rhetorical question. He said, "Let me ask you this: Did you receive the Spirit," do you have the Spirit in your life, "by works of the law?" Well, we already know that, Titus 3:5. No, we don't get the Spirit by the works of law, "or by hearing with faith." So there's the equation. Right? I know that his answer to that rhetorical question is you get the Spirit by hearing and trusting in response to that.

So I'm again, I'm saying, why was the Spirit late to Samaria? Why? I mean, it doesn't make any sense. It doesn't fit the clear, instructive teachings of Scripture. And it's everywhere, the book of Acts Chapter 9, the apostle Paul, right? Ananias, not the one killed in Chapter 5, but Ananias, this disciple, shares the gospel. Right? And I mean, we don't see all the details of that but Paul then responds, it says, "He's filled with the Spirit." The Spirit came upon him and he's saved and then he gets baptized in water. That pattern is consistent. That pattern is described. That pattern cannot logically, you cannot get out of that straitjacket. I just gave you six verses right there and we could go through 60 about how the fact that you are a Christian because the Spirit of God dwells in you. If you don't have a Spirit of God, you're not Christian. I mean, it was enough to quote Romans 8:9, but I'm just making the point. So I got to say, scratch my head, scratch my head, scratch my head, what's going on in these two passages?

Now, here's the problem, the animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews. The animosity that exists, though secondarily but still very large, between the Jews and Gentiles. I want you to look at the pattern in three contrasting cases. Acts Chapter 8, Phillip with the Samaritans. Acts Chapter 19, Apollos and the Ephesians, and then I want you to add this one, in Acts Chapter 10, Peter and Cornelius, the Italian. That's still in Israel. But the question is, why is the pattern different with these two and yet, like here's Peter giving the gospel and we have the same thing. We have the right message, the right response, we have the Spirit come into their lives, which seems to be the standard normative thing throughout the Scripture. Not only normative but seems required that you can't be a Christian without the Spirit in you, and then you have water baptism as an expression of that. That sequence we have with Peter as he leads Cornelius to Christ.

Do you know anything about Chapter 10 of Acts? How much prep did God do in Peter's heart to get him ready for that? A lot. And he's an apostle, an apostle, the authorized agent bringing the authority of Christ to this situation. A whole chapter is written on this and the sequence is normal. The sequence is not normal in Acts 19 and it's not normal in Acts Chapter 8. Why?



Because we don't have apostles there and read our passage again. Look at it. It's, I mean, now it starts to make maybe more historical, redemptive sense. "Now when the apostles of Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God," which is like ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding. That's crazy. How can that be right? If they rightly received "they sent Peter and John," apostles, "who came and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit." He's not there. Why? At least not in the way that he is in every other Christian's life when they become a Christian. "For he had not fallen on them, they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." They did what they were supposed to do. They responded rightly. They even took their first step of obedience, but "they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

Now here was the promise of Christ. In John Chapter 10, I am the shepherd of you guys, talking to his disciples and "I'm a good shepherd. Lay down my life for the sheep." But "I have sheep of another fold." Right? They're not here. They're not part of us. I'm going to go get them and "bring them in." And those outsiders, including Samaritans and Gentiles. Right? They're going to be a part of this. We're going to have "one flock and one shepherd." We're going to take two, to quote Paul to the Ephesians, take two hostile groups of people, which includes Gentiles and Samaritans, and we're going to bring them in with the Jewish people and everyone who trusts in Christ. They're all going to be on, whether slave or free, whether Jew or Greek, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, whether Scythian or barbarian." It doesn't matter. Everyone responds to Christ and they're in one body.

Now, I know the hard thing about mixing oil and water here, which seems to be, like on the news, you see the difference of hostile groups of ethnic people, you say, how in the world can that be? Well, it's going to be by promise and now by authorized, credentialed, if you will, precedent. That the first Samaritan saved is going to have to have that authentication of the apostles present to say, "Yes, this is real." The wild olive shoot really has been grafted into the tree and it's real. And now there's going to be supernatural signs that affirm it, which though our passage doesn't talk about, I mean, there's no expression of that, we know it's there. How do we know it's there? Because in verse 18, it says "Simon saw the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostle's hands and he offered them money saying, 'Give me this power also, so that anyone I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Now, you just watch us today commission some people. And we even commissioned and ordained a pastor and we laid our hands on them. And I don't know if I said, how much would you pay for that power to do what I just did? I don't think it's going to be a very high bidding war, am I right? People might say, "Like, so what? I could do that." Right? Well, you could do it, it wouldn't have the right kind of sanctioned authority of Christ, but it ain't no big deal. Some guy with a half-hearted conversion to Christ didn't go, "I want that power. I want that power right there." So we know and it's explained further in Acts Chapter 19, that when Paul shows up as an apostle of Christ and he lays hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit and these miraculous things start happening.

Well, the same thing happened with Peter. The same thing happened when Peter came to Cornelius in Acts Chapter 10 and Cornelius is saved and there are supernatural signs that



affirm that this is real. But there was no delay. Why? Because there was an apostle there. There was a delay and we can see that Simon the Magician wanted some kind of power because he'd already seen Phillip healing paralytics, but now this is even bigger. Whatever's happening here is so clear in front of the crowds that he says, "I want that power." So God is affirming through what he says in First Corinthians 12:12, the signs of an apostle, miracles, wonders, these things take place as God says, I know I promised it. Now by credentialled, authenticated, verified precedent, I'm saying now, if you're a Samaritan, you can be a Christian, the messiah of Israel can be yours. The blessings of Abraham can be for you. You can even be an Italian soldier.

The gentile in Caesarea was in Israel and God sends Peter personally to start this. The first Gentile in the book of Acts saved. The Gentiles in Western Asia, Apollos hits that one first, but eventually those Gentiles, so it's bifurcated, we've got two sets of Gentiles. We got the ones that live in Israel. In this case, he's working in Israel in Cornelius in Chapter 10, and those living way out there in the outskirts of the West in Asia, Asia Minor, as we call it. So, Gentiles outside of Israel. All of that leads me to believe, now notice this, that Chapter 8 and Chapter 19 must be exceptions that are based on the need for the verification for the early Church of precedent through signs and wonders, making sure that we know that this is real and is true. They have a whole council in Chapter 15 just to verify this is real. Salvation has come to the Gentiles.

OK, you may be going, "Yawn, when is this over?" Listen, here's why it's important. Because Pentecostalism, much of the charismatic movement, much of Wesleyanism, the Holiness movement, if you know your terms, Keswickian theology, the Hermonites. I mean, we can go through so many movements of Christianity, even guys that you don't think would be in this camp. Guys like the D.L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, Simpson. There are so many people that you've read and you say, I read them... Do you know what they're talking about? From time to time you may scratch your head. They'll talk about a "second work of grace." They'll talk about the baptism of the Spirit. They'll talk about the Spirit falling on you. They'll talk about second-tier Christianity. And the dividing line is you get Christianity because you got the right message, the right response, you've been baptized. All of that's cool. But then the Spirit, man, BAM, you get the Spirit.

That's based on Chapter 8 and Chapter 19 of Acts. And that second work of the Spirit, it's called the second blessing theology, is everywhere, particularly in modern Christianity. When you add the layer of well, they did miraculous signs, it's implied in Chapter 8 and it's evident in Chapter 19, so we want to see you at least speak in some, you know, other kind of weird language or fall down and shake or maybe like the Brownsville Revival, if you just laugh and show that the Spirit has gotten you drunk with the Spirit, let's do that. So we got two tiers of Christianity. I've even tried to clarify the dangers of like a lot of early dispensationalism that are distinguishing, if you know that branch of theology, the distinguishing of like junior Christianity and varsity Christianity. They'll talk about Jesus being your Savior and then being your Lord. And a lot of them, if you look at their early writings, you'll see that movement from J.V. football Christianity to Varsity. Well, that's the work of the Spirit there. It's when the Spirit gets involved and goes into high gear.



Now, not all of them use that terminology, but the second blessing theology, the two-tiered Christianity. Can you not admit that in Acts 8 and Acts 19, there's clearly a two-tier Christianity? And I'm just saying you've built entire theologies on that, that's not normative. There was a reason for that historically, like a lot of things. Matter of fact, if I start looking at Acts Chapter 9 when Saul of Tarsus, the future apostle Paul, gets saved and I say, "Look at that, that's the pattern for conversion." Do you know what happened there? Light shines down on him, he hears a voice, he gets knocked off his horse, has scales put over his eyes. I don't know, what does that tract look like, right? Here's how you get saved. "Let's wait for the voice and the light to shine. Let's make sure you get knocked down on the ground and then you're going to grow scales over your eyes and then someone's going to come in and you're going to be released from that. Then you can get baptized once the scales fall off your eyes." Like, whoa!

Because it's in the Bible does not mean, in what we call a narrative section of Scripture, that it becomes the instruction for the Church. The instruction for the Church is clear. You become a Christian, you get the Spirit, he indwells you. And as a matter of fact, I could add a lot of layers to that - guarantee, right? He's the guarantee of our future. He is there as the seal of God. So it's permanent. You don't lose him and you don't get a second dose of him or you don't become a Christian without him and then you get him later. Can you see how many are just... At least give me a raised eyebrow that you've heard of this second blessing kind of theology? It's in a ton of places, mostly in the last 200 years, 300 years, but really intensified in the last 120 years. And I'm saying this: when you hear someone say, "Have you been baptized in the Spirit?" They're probably trying to give you some question relating to their two-tiered Christianity, oftentimes looking at these two passages to say, "Have you had the second work of the Spirit yet? Have you had the second blessing? Have you had the work of grace that come secondarily post-conversion?" And you need to say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, are you talking about Acts 8 and Acts 19? Lay that one on them, right? Like, they think, "Oh, man, you know this stuff." You should know this stuff because I don't want you to be driven by every wind and wave of doctrine because you'll sit there going, "Well, maybe I don't have enough of the Spirit. Maybe I get... where do I get the Spirit? Do I have the Spirit?" They reply, "Yeah. You know, if you get Spirit, then you'll be able to see it by the evidence of you speaking in tongues or having some encounter or falling down or being slain in the Spirit." You have heard these things, right?

Why was the Spirit late to Samaria? Well, he is late if you look at the pattern of Scripture, but it was all about the authentication of the precedent of Samaritans being saved and Gentiles being saved. Ends of the earth, Samaria. Jerusalem, Judea, no problem. Samaria, ends of the earth.

Back to our text. Acts Chapter 8 verse 17. "Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." Now if I ask the question, when do you receive the Holy Spirit based on that, unless you slept through all that or I'm a terrible teacher, you're going to say, "This is the exception, not the rule. It is when I have the right gospel, right response, that's when I receive the Holy Spirit and then I should go get baptized in water." You get an "A" on that.



Right? When do I receive him? I received the Holy Spirit when I become a Christian. They received it late. I get that. I understand that. It's the exception in this narrative text, not the rule. Matter of fact, it is a very rare exception. Chapter 19, Chapter 8.

So you're telling me you received the Holy Spirit? Yep, that's exactly what I'm telling you. And if you are a Christian here today you've received... How do you know? I'm glad you asked that. Number two, you need to "Understand What the Spirit Is Doing in You." If you're claiming, Pastor Mike, that all of us get all of the Spirit the moment of our conversion when we respond rightly to the right message, when we get the gospel and we respond in repentance and faith, I got the whole Spirit of God in my life. Well, I'm going to say, what is he doing?

Let's go back to the very beginning. Let me give you seven things. No groaning, no groaning. But let me give you seven things, OK? Super quick in eight minutes. Are you ready? Here we go. Number one, jot this down, if you would. John Chapter 16 verses 7 through 11. John 16:7-11. I think you already know this verse, but it says when Christ goes he you going to send his Spirit and the "Spirit is going to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment." So number one is the word "conviction" of the Spirit. If you look back in your life when God was working on you pre-right-response, when you've got the right message and it started to congeal in your mind and you felt that conviction, let's call it this, you felt bad. What did you feel bad about? You are a sinner. Ask your neighbors if they're sinners. They'll probably say, "Nah, I'm not a sinner. I'm a good person." Well, you came to the place because the Spirit of God worked on you and you felt bad. Work of the Spirit, number one, just thinking chronologically and the first two are chronological. Right? You felt that. What is the Spirit coming in you to do? To make you feel bad. That's the first thing, make you feel bad. And you felt bad and you said, "I'm a sinner, I deserve the condemnation of God."

Then the next thing the Spirit did in working the right response in your life, number two, let's put it this way, Titus Chapter 3 verse 5. We've already read it so we can go through it quickly. "He saved us, not on the basis of our works done in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration..." Regeneration, Genesis, Genos, Abiogenesis, Genesis. What does that mean? Birth, rebirth, second birth, born again. I got born again by the washing and renewal of the Spirit. That's why when Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You got to be born of water and the Spirit," the picture of water in the book of Ezekiel is the washing and cleansing of sins. Like in Isaiah 1, "Your sins are like scarlet," but they're going to be washed, "they're going to be white as snow." That's the cleansing. So the Spirit's first thing chronologically was to make you feel bad about your sin. Then the Spirit, when you responded rightly to the gospel as he produced that in you, he made you feel better. He made you feel, I'll put it this way, relief. He made you feel clean. He made you feel that you could stand up and say, "There is no condemnation for me in Christ because all my sin had been nailed to the cross." You had that sense of payment of sin forgiven, right?

I mean, we could probably go to our bookstore and find little packages of "Forgiven," and there's that great sense when you've had that release of I've been washed. Right? You start singing the words of songs differently. Amazing Grace. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the



sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found." That's the picture of the Spirit's work in your life. He made you feel bad, then he made you feel relief.

Now, none of these are in order, but let's talk about since then, what's his role? Let's think about the book of Acts, think about gospel events. Let's just think about... Well, the first thing that needs to happen, which was happening certainly contextually in Samaria, is we have to learn that the Samaritans are dependent on the Jews, the Jews are dependent on the Samaritans to fulfill God's promise, we are all interdependent. We are all in this thing together. Let's put it this way based on, let's use Colossians Chapter 1. There are so many passages, but Colossians Chapter 1 verses 3 through 8. Jot that down. And that is this: that I love the people of the Church, that I accept them, that I embrace them, that they become part of my family, that I have a relationship with them and I don't have animosity anymore.

You watch the news today and you watch them throwing rocks and shooting rubber bullets and all that conflict over who lives where and all that. Think about that. If you could just sit down and see them all at peace, having tea together this afternoon, joking, you know, hugging each other in the Middle East, you'd go wow! Miracle. That would be the work of the Spirit and Christ does that work. The Spirit goes into people, Scythian, barbarian, slave, free, circumcised, uncircumcised. We all are one in Christ. The love and commitment I have. It's like in First John Chapter 3, I see a need in the body of Christ. I'm willing in that personal need that I see, "how can the love of God dwell in me" if I'm not willing to meet those needs. If I say, "Be warm, be filled," I don't love those people. The love of God is produced by the Spirit of God.

To put it in terms of the word Spirit which isn't used here. First Thessalonians Chapter 4, Paul said "God himself has taught you to love one another." You ask, "Well, how do you do that?" Through the Spirit he sent in your life. The Spirit of God makes you love. And by that, I want to use a word, it's just not feel friendly toward them, it's my commitment to you. Extra mile, extra hour, extra dollar, I'm willing to spend that. You're not my family. If you get a little baby, the common grace of God makes you love that baby even though that baby's done nothing for them. It's just a blob, it may not even look like you and it's like, "I love my child." How did that happen? That's a God thing. Common grace of God. Well you become a Christian now, born again, you're in a family, all of a sudden you start loving those people. You wouldn't have hung out with them before. You may not have anything in common with them except for Christ. But that's a huge "except."

When Mary and the brothers of Christ were coming to get him in the book of Mark, and they thought he was crazy and he was teaching. They said, "Come, come, come." And they sent word through the crowd to Christ. They said, "Hey, your mother and your brothers are outside and they want you to come see them." And he said, "Who are my mother and brothers? Aren't they the ones here?" Right? He motions with his hand. "Those who do the will of God. These are my mother and brothers." That picture of having a closer relationship with your church family than your unbelieving family members is a picture of the work of God's Spirit. You felt bad. You felt relief. You felt that sense of commitment to the church and the people in the church.



How about this First Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 4 through 7. We see this throughout the book of Acts. Not only do the Samaritans need to love the Jews and the Jews love the Samaritans. But now he's going to leave behind a church and that church has got to function. Just like we having a service today looking at the functioning members of the church. We need leaders and we need administrators and we need executive assistants and we need associate pastors. We've got to have people in their places making that church healthy. We're sending off this embryonic church to Texas and we think we've got to have the right people in place. And in here we've got this bigger church, we've got to have everybody doing their part. Every part in the body, as it says, as Paul likes to analogize, every ligament, every muscle, every joint is doing its work.

First Corinthians Chapter 12 says that's a manifestation of the Spirit. So there's that sense of responsibility to do something for the common good, the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. And that's a compelling thing that you have because the Spirit makes that happen. He wants to manifest himself for good, for the common good. That's like taking a big, you know, paycheck and saying, "Now, wait a minute, I'm going to give to the good of my church." Now, I give it as a gift to God, but even that giving my money... Tell your non-Christian friends you do that. And then to say, "I find joy in that. I'm a cheerful giver." The word in First Corinthians is like you get the word "hilarity" from it, laughter, "I'm happy to give this check." Think about that. People are going to say, "I don't get it." It's the work of the Spirit. The Spirit works in your life, and all these churches had to be set up in Samaria and these Gentile towns, which a lot of the book of Acts is going to tell us, what you need, first of all, Christians, we've got to have the conviction of the Spirit. You've got to have the relief of forgiveness. You've got to have that commitment to the body of Christ. Then you've got to have that empowerment and that sense of responsibility for the common good, for service, conviction, relief, love, service.

How about this: number five? Go back to the beginning of the book of Acts, Acts 1:8. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses." Power to witness. People often reply, "I don't want to witness to someone because, I don't know, they're going to think I'm weird, they're not going to all agree with it, they're going to give me an argument. I don't want to press my religion. I'm don't want to jam religion down their throat." You got a bunch of reasons not to evangelize and be witnesses. But this text says the Spirit going to give you power to do that. You're going to have the courage to evangelize. God is going to prompt you, even though, like Paul, he comes to town with sweaty palms, you're going to be compelled and say, "I can do this. I'm going to talk up about Christ today." Conviction, relief, love, service, courage to evangelize.

How about this one, Matthew Chapter 10. A lot of this was going on, we already saw it with Stephen, we saw it with Peter in front of the Supreme Court of the nation of Israel. The Spirit says in verse 20, Matthew 10:16-20, verse 20 says when you're in that tough situation backed against the wall, "It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." When the fishermen from Galilee stood before the Supreme Court of Israel, the Sanhedrin, and stood there when they said, "Shut up about Christ," and he said, "Listen, no other name



under heaven given among men by which you must be saved." And when they said, you can't do this anymore, we're going to beat you. And he said, "See if it's right in your mind to obey you or God," you think about that. "We're going to obey God rather than man." I mean, when he put his head down on the pillow, you know, at the Sheraton in Jerusalem that night, think about it, and he's going asleep, he's got to think to himself, "How did I do that?" An uneducated fisherman. It's like God was doing this work and you're going to have those experiences of you being able to stand up and articulate a defense for the gospel. That's the work of the Spirit, the insight to defend the truth. Conviction, relief, love, service, courage, insight.

How about this one? Romans Chapter 15 verse 13. Romans 15:13. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," you're trusting in him, "so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope." Hope in the book of Romans, which is what I'm quoting from, all about this assurance that I stand right before God. When I die, God is not going to cast me into the outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. I'm going to be accepted. My judge becomes my Savior, and that is hope. That means I can look at death and go, I'm not afraid to die because I know where I'm going. I've seen Christians die who have the Spirit in their life and non-Christians die, who don't have the Spirit. They die differently.

Like Herbert Lockyer in his book "Last Words of Saints and Sinners," he just catalogs the two ways people die. And you can see it in his research and you can see it in your own life. You should be asking your pastors how they see it in people who die. It's night and day because one dies and says, "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." And others without the Spirit are grasping, as it says in Hebrews, they're enslaved to the fear of death for their whole life. They think we're crazy, like we have a death wish. But if I really have that hope, then I realize this, like it says in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, I have this tent and it's going to go away and it's earthly and all that, but I know this, "I have a building from God not made with hands," and I just long, not to be unclothed, not that I want to die, but it's that I want to die because I want to be clothed in my eternal dwelling.

As it says in Romans 8, let's just look at that, because I haven't taken you to very many cross-references, I quoted a bunch. But let's go to Romans Chapter 8 verse 23. "Not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit," presence, "we groan inward," the Spirit makes us groan. For what? "As we wait," look at this word, "eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." What does that spell? Death. You got to die to get the redemption of your body. See Christian should be able to say, I'm not afraid of death. Matter of fact, to die is gain. When I'm dead and you come to my funeral if you outlive me, just know my tongue is going to be sticking out at you like 'sorry,' I'm done. I'm done. Do you want to cry? Cry, I don't know, for yourselves, but don't cry for me. Right? Because I'm glad to be gone. A lot of good things here. Fine. Great. Yeah. I want to go. I can't wait to go. Now, Paul says you can't be suicidal because you have to stay on in the flesh so you'll have fruitful ministry as long as you're here on the planet. But real Christians, this is their hope to see Christ face-to-face, to be done with the struggles of this world, to be on to a place where



Christ is reigning, where the will of God is done in heaven. I'd like to be there. And that is a work, the Bible says, of the Holy Spirit. So important that we have that.

Now, speaking of Romans, and I think I threw this out there first. Verse 16, I can have this internally, it's subjective. No one can even figure out quite how this works, but the Spirit himself somehow bears witness, gives me confidence and assurance of this joyful, peaceful hope. "It bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." That's why I'm not afraid to die. That's why I know I'm in Christ. And as long as we're in the passage and going backwards, go all the way up to verse 13. There's an objective sense too when you look in the mirror, when you keep your journal, as you watch the victories and moving forward in your sanctification. "If you live according to the flesh you're going to die, but if by the Spirit," the Spirit in your life, you're following his lead, "you put to death the deeds of the body, then you live." That's a sign of your life. "For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God." So if you're having this experience of the Spirit of God helping you say no to sin, putting to death these temptations and you're battling and fighting, you're saying, "Well, my sanctification now is a lot better than it was five years ago. Look at the progress I'm making." That is a picture of the objective assurance that I can have peaceful hope, joyful peaceful hope, that I know I'm his.

Holy Spirit. Not a spooky, scary topic. The only spooky or scary thing is you trying to live life or advance the gospel without the Spirit actively involved in your life. That's the goal. And it's not about the magic shows, which had very specific, intended, redemptive historical purposes within the text of Scripture. It's about me having these kinds of things work in my life. Conviction of sin, right? The relief of forgiveness, love for the people in the church, service for the good of the church, courage to share the gospel, insight to defend the gospel and assurance that I'm his, in his grip, from here until I reach my final destination.

People can look at the passage and be all sidetracked by the delay and the magic, the miracles. What I'm saying, the most important part of this text is they received the Holy Spirit. It happened to you, I hope, and if it has, I mean, this is seven things. If you want more, I got 15 hours of lecturing on our website. If you just search on, you go to PastorMike.com and put in the search bar "13-51." That's the beginning of a ten-part series, 90-minute lectures, all about the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the world. And that would be a good study if you don't have anything to listen to on the treadmill this week. But that's a short little version of it, and I hope this gives you something to aim at. I know to identify it, aimed at it in my mind, and I want to cooperate with it. I want to work in sync with it. I want that work to be done in me. Let's make that happen. Let's pray for God to make it happen.

Let's pray. God help us to be good followers of the Spirit who's not just trying to get us to advance the gospel, that's key and major and always we see it in Scripture to have the courage to share the gospel and the insight to defend the gospel, but it's to know we're yours, that's a big, big part of it. And that takes me back to feeling the conviction of sin and unworthiness before a holy standard, being convicted of sin and righteousness and knowing that I deserve judgment, but then having the relief that my sins are removed from me as far as the east is from the west. How good that is, God, how great that is, that your Spirit can bring us that sense of being washed and cleaned and renewed. And then, God, we've got work to



do as a team, we're not individuals in this, we're not individual evangelists going out and sharing the gospel. We're a team, loving each other, caring for each other, doing things for the good of this organization called the Church, the organism of the body of Christ. Speaking up, defending and always resting in the fact that we have this treasure in earthen vessels and broken pots of clay, we can't wait for the redemption of these pots of clay. We've got hope. We know where we're going. No fear in death and courage in life because the presence of the Spirit.

In Jesus name. Amen.