

# Walking in the Comfort of the Holy Spirit

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Date: 24 November 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome here for this Sunday, November 24th. My name is Kent Dixon. It's my joy to be the pastor here. This morning, we're picking up again in our ongoing sermon series, Acts to All the World.

And through this series, we've been exploring the New Testament book of Acts. So this will be our last sermon in this series, not forever, until the new year, because we're going to now break for Advent and Christmas.

We're going to be starting Arrival, our four-week Advent sermon series. We're starting that next week. So you'll see there on the dates, we start next Sunday and continue for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

So this is a perfect opportunity for you to bring a friend. You hear me say bring, not invite. Invite is passive. Invite is like, nah, I got plans. Bring is like, hey, come on, I'll drive you.

Bring a friend, a family member, a neighbor, deliver someone else who's important to you in your life. Bring them to church with you starting next week to learn more about the reason for the season.

[ 1 : 07 ] So I'm already listening to Christmas carols. I'm getting a toe in the water at home because I think I've maybe talked about this before. That's a challenge for pastors, especially pastors.

Hopefully all pastors love Christmas for lots of reasons. But for someone who loves Christmas as much as I do, everything that surrounds it as well as the birth of Christ, I feel like it gets busy.

And then I blink and it's the new year and I missed it. I missed really enjoying it. So I'm trying to steep myself in it a little bit earlier. Our focus passage this morning is Acts 9 31.

So you can turn there in your Bible or flip there on your Bible app or whatever you do. And I'll read it for us. Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened.

Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. So you might hear that passage and think, okay, wait a minute, that sounds really familiar.

[ 2 : 07 ] Well, you're not wrong. This was the passage, the same passage that we reflected on in our sermon on November 3rd. And you can listen to that one on our website.

Right. That sermon was titled, Walking in the Fear of the Lord. And you heard that phrase in this passage as well. So in that sermon, we sought to accomplish a few things.

And I think we made it. We sought to properly define what's meant by the phrase, the fear of the Lord. We sought to identify why this idea, this concept, the fear of the Lord, should be important to followers of Jesus.

And then we also looked at suggesting how we can develop a healthy fear of the Lord. One that's balanced and reasonable. One that doesn't go to either extreme of being in constant fear and anxiety.

Remember we talked about that. Being in total paralysis before the living God. Or being too far the other way. Remember we talked about the pendulum swinging in that sermon.

[ 3 : 08 ] Being largely apathetic about it. Right. And I talked about those Jesus is my boyfriend kind of worship songs. Jesus and I are pals. Well, what about the living God?

How does that fit into you and Jesus hanging out after school? Right. So there's a balance there. There's a critical balance there. So does that ring a bell? That concept that we talked about?

So our sermon this morning is titled Walking in the Comfort of the Holy Spirit. And as Luke suggests in our passage this morning from Acts 9 verse 31, walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit certainly seems to be a companion concept to walking in the fear of the Lord.

And if you notice the teaser in the newsletter from this week, this is kind of a part two of sorts. It's not intended to be, but it kind of, these two concepts go together. So this morning we're going to consider what the concept of walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit may have meant to the apostles, to the early church, and then as well as what it likely means for us today, could or should mean for us today.

So what do you think of, and you can say things out loud if you want or I'll just keep going. When you hear that word comfort, not just in a churchy sense, right? When you've all heard the joke about the Sunday school teacher who's got kids at the front and saying, I'm going to tell you a story about a squirrel and the squirrel is in, he gathered and blah, blah, blah.

[ 4 : 35 ] And everybody says, so the teacher says, so what's the squirrel? And somebody goes, Jesus. So you don't have to naturally go to a churchy kind of comfort. But what are the things that give you comfort?

And you can just think about them. Different things certainly bring comfort to different people in different ways, don't they? I know someone in my life who comforting is spending an evening around a table playing games with a whole bunch of loud relatives.

Not my idea of comforting. I begin to shake and feel panicky. So also, as we're heading into the winter season, we experienced it over this weekend, you may think of a nice warm jacket or gloves or a hat, something like that as comfort.

Maybe your favorite drink or chair or book, your favorite TV show or movie, maybe these things bring comfort to you. They are familiar. They are like a warm embrace.

So maybe it's easy for you to think of God the Father as being a comfort to you. Hopefully Jesus is likely an easy one too, right? We have the Gospels to thank for a real clear picture of what Jesus was like and is like.

[ 5 : 49 ] But if you don't necessarily fully understand the Holy Spirit or his role, now go onto the website, onto the sermon section, look up Holy Spirit. I did a sermon, it feels like a bajillion years ago, on the Holy Spirit.

So clarification that he is not some sort of force, nebulous and unreachable, not able to connect with. The Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity.

And so there's clarity in that sermon. So maybe you don't fully understand the Holy Spirit. Maybe it's more challenging for you to think of the Holy Spirit, him, as being comforting to you.

We hear it though. The words and descriptions of the Spirit that Jesus gave, the apostles, may also be helpful. So let's look at some of those. These are the words of Jesus and fortunately they're all in John.

So you can flip to John. John 14, 15, 16 is where we'll be. John 14, 16 to 18, Jesus says, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate or helper, some translations say, to help you and be with you forever.

[ 6 : 58 ] The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. So Jesus said the Spirit would comfort the apostles. We see that right there in how he addresses them and speaks of the Spirit.

John 14, verse 26 says, but the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Jesus said the Spirit, said to the apostles, the Spirit would come, would teach them and remind them of what Jesus had said, would emphasize things that Jesus had taught. John 15, 26 and 27 says, when the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. So Jesus says there that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, would join the apostles in their job, in their calling, in their commission to testify, to tell the truth about Jesus himself.

[ 8 : 18 ] John 16, verses 12 and 13 says, I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. That's common, right? Jesus would communicate thanks to the disciples and they'd go, oh, too much, too much, Lord, slow down.

But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Jesus said, clearly, that the Spirit would guide the apostles into what? Into God's truth for them. So that covers some of the things that Jesus told the apostles about what the Holy Spirit would mean to them.

Now, we shouldn't necessarily presume that what was promised to the apostles in context for them would apply to all Christians. So what do I mean there?

Well, let's take a little look. Let's look at some other passages here to consider what the comfort of the Holy Spirit meant to the early church. So you see the passages on the screen.

[ 9 : 25 ] So you can flip as we go and I'll read. John 7, verses 37 to 39 says, On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. So Jesus promised all believers that the Holy Spirit would be someone new who would come to them.

And he would be given to them after Jesus' resurrection. Acts 2, verses 38 and 39, and we've covered that in our series in past weeks. It says, Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the promises for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord will call, our God will call.

[ 10 : 39 ] And in Acts 5, 32, we read, We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

So Jesus promised all believers the Holy Spirit would be a gift to all those who obey God in repentance. Ephesians 1, verses 13 and 14 says, And you were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

To me, that's one of the most exciting things about the presence of the Holy Spirit within a believer. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be given to us as a down payment towards our full inheritance when Christ returns.

So the Holy Spirit clearly plays a vital role and a significant role in the lives of all Christians. Agree? So while the role of the Holy Spirit may have varied in the lives of the apostles and broader disciples, he was certainly a comfort to all Christians.

[ 11 : 58 ] And we hear that. So what did this comfort look like? How did it play out? Let's look at some more passages. Acts 1, verses 4 and 5 says, On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command, Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And then we learn about how and when the Spirit arrived in Acts 2, verses 1 to 4, and this will be familiar. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all gathered in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

So it's really clear there, when does the Spirit come? The Spirit comes when they were in Jerusalem. And Acts 1 to 8, let's move on a little bit here. Acts 1 to 8, 1 verse 8, sorry.

[ 13 : 12 ] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, where he told them to stay, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 2, verses 32 and 33 says, God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. There's that witness piece again.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear.

So the Spirit empowered the apostles to be witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. There's that witness piece again, right? It's a critical part of what the Holy Spirit brought to them and reminded them of.

Hebrews 2, verses 3 and 4 says, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him, right?

[14:15] This is being passed on. God also testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

So the Spirit confirmed the apostles' words, what they were speaking to people as they gathered. He confirmed their words through signs and wonders and miracles and gifts, all of these amazing things that are the power of God at work in the apostles and through them.

Acts 8, verses 14 to 18 says, when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.

Remember this from our series a few weeks ago? When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on them.

They had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So we talked about that during that chunk of Acts that we covered. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

[15:24] Acts 19, verse 6 says, when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. So the apostles passed on what the Spirit had given to them, to some other people through the laying on of hands.

That important touch. I think we forget about the laying on of hands in the modern church sometimes. It's very important. So we've heard there a lot about what it meant for the apostles to receive and walk with the Holy Spirit.

But again, I'm back to this, we shouldn't necessarily presume that what was promised to the apostles, what was their experience, would apply to all Christians.

So let's look at some other passages. How did it play out, walking in the Spirit, for all believers? 1 Corinthians 12, verse 13 says, for we were all baptized by one Spirit to form one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free.

And we were all given the one Spirit to drink. The Holy Spirit came and leveled the playing field. Comfort of the Holy Spirit was given, is given to all believers when they're baptized into one body.

[16:42] And that is the church. Romans 5, verse 5 says, And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul says again in Romans 15, verse 13, May the God of hope, this is a great blessing, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23 says, Let's talk about fruit for a minute. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. The Holy Spirit brings comfort by filling the hearts of believers with love, hope, and other fruits of the Spirit.

How fitting that this is right before we head into the Advent season. For the apostles in the early church, walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit meant experiencing the direct guidance of the Spirit in their lives.

[18:00] We read about that in many places in the book of Acts, as well as in 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy. We hear about the Holy Spirit directly guiding the apostles.

The work of the Holy Spirit was always related to, directly related to, revealing and confirming God's word to them. Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit are intimately connected.

So the early church certainly enjoyed walking in the comfort of the Spirit. He guided them through all the early years, establishing the church and revealing truth to them, the Spirit at work.

So now that we have an appreciation of the Spirit's role in the lives of the apostles in the early church, what does it mean for Christians and the church today to be walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit?

What are the benefits of that to us? Well, it's through the Spirit that we have the benefit of God's word, Scripture, the Bible, completely revealed and confirmed to us.

[19:07] It's our perfect source, I hope we'd all agree, to instruct and to guide us. And the Spirit has an intimate working in that. Scripture really provides all that we need for life and for godliness.

And God's word, we hear it in Scripture, is literally the sword of the Spirit. But Scripture is also a great source of comfort and hope, isn't it?

Each of us are able to enjoy the comforting presence of the Spirit today, right now, because He lives within everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their life.

Do you feel the Spirit within you? Do you experience the working of the Spirit in your life? Scripture takes this a step further, in fact, because it declares that the bodies of all believers are what?

The temple of the Holy Spirit. That's why we're called to live lives that seek after holiness, because God is alive within us through the Spirit.

[ 20 : 16 ] Ephesians 3, verse 16 says, I pray that out of His glorious riches, He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being.

So this isn't just a cute idea, oh, God lives within me, it's a literal fact. So when you get mad in the car, the Holy Spirit is in you.

When you say something unkind, the Holy Spirit is in you. when you care for someone else, the Holy Spirit is in you and celebrates. Ephesians 3, verse 20 and 21 says, another great blessing I love.

You could just end after this, but we won't. Now to Him, say it with me if you want, now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. The Spirit at work within us and through us serves as God's instrumental agent in blessing us. The Spirit empowers and comforts us, also leading us in bearing spiritual fruit in and through our lives.

[ 21 : 44 ] With the Holy Spirit living in and at work through us and God's wisdom and guidance on full display for us in the Bible, we can truly be walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Returning to our text for this morning, Acts 9, 31, we're reminded that churches multiplied when they walked both in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

It's a complete package, folks. I believe that if we truly want to experience that same kind of growth in ourselves, in our church, then we also need to develop a healthy and balanced fear of the Lord and walk in it and experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit as we walk in it.

It's my hope that having explored both of these concepts and all that they mean in these last two sermons in our Acts series before we pause, we'll be encouraged to seek to do both of these things for the glory of God, for the sake of the cause and the church of Jesus Christ.

Amen.