

The Giving of the Spirit of Promise

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[0:00] Let's turn now to the book of Acts, and we're going to take our reading in chapter 2, and we may just read from verse 22.

Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.

Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death, whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.

For David says concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad. Moreover, my flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption.

[1:37] You have made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of joy in your presence. Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne.

He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah, that his soul was not left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses, therefore being exalted to the right hand of God.

And having received from the Father the promise of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see and hear.

[2:52] For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself, the Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

[4:01] Our text is found in verse 33 of this passage. Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he poured out this which you now see and hear.

I want us just to think this evening on this subject. The last Lord's Day we were considering the ascension of Jesus, and I want us to consider now the giving of the promised Holy Spirit.

And to think about the promised Holy Spirit in terms of the implications of his coming for the Church, not only in the apostolic era proper, but for ourselves too.

And we just remind ourselves that it was forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, having been seen and having given many infallible proofs to his disciples of the reality of his resurrection body, and he ascended upon high.

And then ten days after that, from his place of power at the right hand of the Father, the Holy Spirit is sent forth, or as it is here, he poured out this which you now see and hear.

[5 : 40] In other words, the mighty power of the Holy Spirit was given to the Church of God, and the Holy Spirit, when he came at that Pentecost, filled the Church with new life and spiritual power and gifts.

And all this so that the Church could expand rapidly. And of course that's what happened. Not only among the Jewish people, but out into the Gentile nations too.

We read there, the promises to you and to your children, that's the Israelites, and then, and to all who are afar off, that's the Gentiles, the nations who knew not the Lord, as many as the Lord our God would call.

So the Spirit came to equip and empower the Church, to give it new life and direction and enabling to go forward and to expand.

Now, we read that there were many visible signs of his coming on that day, and for a long season after it, you only need to go back to the beginning of Acts 2, and you get some of those signs mentioned.

[7 : 01] There was a rushing mighty wind, there were the cloven tongues that descended upon the apostles, and the marvellous ability given to them to speak and to be understood in the languages of all the people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Shavuot, the festival of weeks, which we call, of course, Pentecost, being the 50 days.

And these folks heard what they never heard in their lives before. They heard about the wonderful works of God in relation to Jesus, and they marvelled that they were hearing all this in their language, their mamaloshah, their mother tongue.

They could hear and understand what the apostles were saying as they preached the word. And they never heard the light. They were astounded. And they were impressed with the authority by which these men spoke.

But the explanation for what they were seeing and hearing lay not in the supposed view that these men were drunk.

Back at verse 15 of chapter 2, these men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

[8 : 41] The explanation for what was going on was not something as a result of a drunken stupor or even of people who were freed from their inhibitions, but rather the coming of the Holy Spirit of promise in great power and effectiveness.

And they were to understand this and they were to appreciate it. And one of the things about the coming of the Spirit at that time was that people began to understand something marvelous had happened and was happening in their experience.

God was touching their lives. God was saying, this is all history now.

But I want to suggest to you that we should cultivate an attitude towards the Holy Spirit that makes us want to experience his power and his gracious influence day by day.

We want this as a daily feature of our lives, not simply something extraordinary. Now I'm not saying that we ought not to look for the extraordinary.

[10:33] Of course we should. A mighty demonstration of the Spirit and the power. That's true. But we ought to look for his ministry in us as a daily feature of our lives.

You see, I'm saying that because he is still the Spirit of love, the Spirit of power, and the Spirit of a disciplined mind, or of a sound mind, of an ordered, a disciplined mind.

And that is precisely what Paul said to Timothy, the fearful, the timid. The Spirit you've received, the Spirit of love and of power, and of a disciplined mind.

And we ought to look for his ministry in us, in that way, as evidence that we are indeed in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit. And the obvious is stated in this, we ought to be aware that without the Spirit of God, we're not really Christians at all.

If it wasn't that we're indwelt by the Spirit, then we're not Christ's. The key mark of us being Christ's is that we're indwelt by Christ's Spirit.

[11:54] Now, of course, it's a subject on its own as to what are the marks of the Spirit indwelling. But I'm asserting the truth that the first thing we have to say is a Christian is a person who is indwelt by the Spirit of God, of Christ.

If anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit that is, he is none of his. Romans 8. So it matters that we think about the Spirit of God as the one who dwells in us if we are indeed really Christian believers in the strict sense.

And, you see, what is true and what was true at the time of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost in that special way is that the Spirit taught the people.

The Spirit witnessed to the people and the Spirit guided the people. And these are the three things I want to look at with you for a wee while tonight.

I want to think about the Holy Spirit as a teacher or as teacher. Some of us were studying the work of the Spirit in the prayer meeting some time ago but notwithstanding we are going to think about the Holy Spirit as teacher.

[13:31] And no one emphasized this more than the Saviour himself. We ought to lay that to heart. This is not a hobby horse of mine.

This is the Saviour's own emphasis. And the Spirit is the Spirit of promise. And the promise has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled wherever he comes to us as our teacher.

And the first thing that flags up for us is that the Spirit is no mere impersonal force. Not even an infinite impersonal force.

The Spirit is personal. The Spirit has a personality. He's not floating around there in the ether in the space in the firmament.

The Spirit is a personal Spirit. He has a life of his own so to speak. He is distinguished as the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise.

[14:49] And the Lord Jesus emphasized the personalness of the Spirit of God. Actually, you may recall that the word in the original Pneuma for Spirit is not masculine and it's not feminine, it's neuter.

But Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit not as it, but as he. He uses the masculine personal pronoun he.

For example, he says, when he is come, that one masculine will teach you, John 14, 26, when he is come.

And there are many references we could give from our Lord's own lips that emphasize the personalness of the Spirit of God.

And as a person, as a divine person, as the Spirit of God, he is one who thinks and feels, he is one who has knowledge, and he imparts that knowledge.

[16:13] He teaches us the way of God in truth. He communicates the truth.

and in all the to-ing and fro-ing of discussion on religion, and which is the true religion, and all that, there is one area, it is not the only area, but there is one strategic area that is not looked at, and that is the person and the work of the Spirit of God.

It is the Spirit of God who confirms the truth as it is in Jesus, and distinguishes that from error. That is no small matter.

That is a weighty thing. And the Spirit, you see, convinced that crowd on the day when Peter preached.

He convinced them of many things, but Jesus himself said, when I leave you, the Spirit will come, and he will come, John 16, verse 8, I am thinking about, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

[17:42] And to convince, you have got to teach, you have got to impart the knowledge in a convincing way. And that was the role of the Spirit of God.

He enlightened people on certain aspects of knowledge that are important to us of great weight and moment. Of course, the Bible teaches us that the Spirit of God imparts knowledge even to those who have no real belief in God at all.

that's why sometimes when you're listening to these excellent programs on the television about this researcher in some area of learning, they'll talk quite, almost quite naturally, about giftedness.

They recognize there's something there that they have that is a gift. But a gift implies a giver. And there is a giver.

And it's the Spirit of God and of Christ who gives. He imparts knowledge. Even to those who don't recognize him and God as a living God and so on.

[19:05] But our business tonight is not about common grace, but of saving grace. grace. He imparts knowledge to those he brings to Christ and unites to Christ.

And he does this in such an effective way that whereas once they were unbelieving, they become believers. Whereas once they resisted the knowledge of Christ and their need of Christ, they come to accept him.

And you see, it doesn't matter that we can't see this great teacher. Whether it's a teacher in a school or a university or a college or in this pulpit, that you can see.

It matters not that we can't see the Spirit like that. The fact of his being there and his ability to impart knowledge is undeniable and nowhere is it more clearly seen than here in this book of Acts chapter 2.

All that was happening on that day, that first Pentecost after Jesus ascended up on high, all that was happening, staggering tens of thousands that packed Jerusalem for the festival, all that was happening was down to the ministry of the Spirit of God of Christ.

[20:44] That which you see and hear is the promised Holy Spirit's work as teacher.

we don't need to see him to believe in him and to know his teaching ability in our experience.

Elijah the prophet we were thinking on a month or two ago at Mount Sinai when he saw the rocks shattered by the fierce wind and the mountain shook with the earthquake and these visible signs the Lord was not in this that or the other and suddenly there was a small still voice the voice of crash silence you could feel it God the Spirit of God was there and his role is to teach us and his work will be seen in the life of those that he teaches in a saving way.

Wherever he brings people to Christ they will be different and they will be seen to be different. And if we have been convinced that there is no salvation there is no everlasting life in all its blessedness apart from the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we have been taught by the Spirit of God we have had that knowledge imparted be glad God if we are convinced that we will never acquit ourselves in the court of heaven through anything of ourselves but that our refuge and safety are found alone in Christ we are taught by the Spirit of God.

Listen to what I am saying if we are convinced and we close with that conviction we are content that here is our refuge and safety not in anything in ourselves but only in Jesus Christ Jesus the Messiah the truly righteous one it is the Spirit of God that convinces us of the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful person and we'll have him and no one else that's the work of the Spirit and it ought to be taken as an assurance to us when we believe that that we will have no other than Jesus and his death as a death in our room instead our deliverance from the wrath to him and his right standing with

[24:11] God given over to us that's the work of his Spirit he shows us that and enables us to lay hold he imparts knowledge and makes that knowledge saving knowledge to us you see what this is where this is going the Spirit of God is supremely the one who glorifies Christ he is a Christ centered spirit he wants no credit he wants no glory it's his delight to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ and he brings before our minds and our hearts the loveliness and suitableness of Jesus of him being the divine redeemer uniquely the son of God in power the only mediator between

God and man and so on and he imparts that knowledge in a way that we receive it and rest on it and we look back and we say well I heard all this and I kind of believed it before but this is different many of those folk who came into Jerusalem at the festival of Shavuot the festival of weeks they had never heard such things but the spirit convinced them and he converted them there and then the many who received the word gladly and so you see there are things there in what we've said that we can thank God for that we receive the truth that we see these scriptures of the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus because the heavenly teacher has convinced us of them and settled our minds on them and from there we go on we want them to teach us more and more to impart that knowledge a deeper and growing knowledge of our relationship to

Christ and of Christ himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge the Holy Spirit then is teacher but the second thing is the Holy Spirit as witness because he says this too in the passage he witnesses you see the Holy Spirit is the one who witnesses to the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ the whole of this account in Acts chapter 2 is to do with the fulfillment of prophecy not only the suffering and the death and the rising again of Jesus from the dead and his ascending upon high into heaven to rule over all these things are seen as fulfilled but the

Spirit of God is seen as coming as part of the fulfillment if you look up John chapter 15 and verse 26 you read Jesus words when the Spirit or the Comfort or the Paracletus is come he will testify he will witness concerning me John 15 26 he will testify of me that means concerning me and his testimony is an infallible testimony he knows you know he knows as only God knows and his testimony is the testimony of the unlying Spirit of God and one thing Jesus warned the

Jewish authorities of his own people was the danger of committing the unpardonable sin not against Christ but against the Spirit of God against the Spirit of promise the Spirit of truth the Holy Spirit watch out he says what you say about his work his witness is to the truth he is the spirit of truth and not error he is Christ's vicar on earth it's his business to testify we quoted earlier on to testify concerning sin and righteousness and judgment sometimes his witness or his testimony is rejected and other times it's received with joy and gladness and this context is all about the way that people received the testimony of the

[29:54] Spirit of God they received his witness and you see the people who received the witness of the Spirit to the scriptures fulfilled in Jesus went on to be witnesses and that's what we are to be we're to go on and to be witnesses Christ Spirit witnesses not only to the believing people Christian believers but Christ Spirit witnesses through them they become witnesses remember when we were looking at the passage on the ascension Acts chapter 1 verse 8 you shall be my witnesses there's an echo there of Isaiah 43 verses 10 and 12 you shall be my witnesses but we witness because we've received the witness of the

Spirit of God to the truth in Jesus and that ought to grip us our readiness to witness is on the basis of having received the witness of the Spirit of God in 1 John 2 we see that we receive an anointing from the Holy One and the anointing is the Spirit of God in order to witness and we need to ask for that we need to ask that the Spirit will work through us give us opportunities that we will take if there's one thing that we should lament as Christian believers is our wasted opportunities times when we ought to have and often it is that we've not relied on the

Spirit to witness through us we've been turning it over now how am I going to do this how am I going to do that how am I going to say this and we're not relied on the Spirit to simply witness through us to give us boldness to speak as we ought to speak and it's important therefore you see to rely on the Spirit in his witness to us and through us to others take a slightly different angle here but the point is the same relying on the Spirit in his witness Romans 8 16 says that the Spirit that is the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of

God if I asked for a show of hands tonight how many hands would go up to this the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God how many think about it think about it that's what Paul says this is apostolic doctrine this is about the work of the Spirit as witness the Spirit witnesses with our Spirit that we are the children of God now I'm very aware that in churches of the Reformation and in our own free church tradition we've played that down we've played it down over much and to an extent we've neglected that area of the Spirit's work he bears witness I sometimes come across people who say to me so and so is supposed to be a

Christian but and what they mean is but there doesn't seem that connection when you're talking to them about Christ's things you don't want to say they're not converted it's just they're not that something I submit to you the something is the witness of the Spirit the Spirit witnesses and we probably need to think more about that and how it applies but for sure we ought to ask in prayer for the witness of the Spirit to be apparent to us in our experience well I know more could be said about that and time certainly doesn't permit it tonight but we're to be sensitive to the work and the ministry of the Spirit as not only teacher but as witness to the truth to ourselves and through us to others confirming the infallible truth of the gospel of the good news in

[35:33] Jesus well the last thing we want to think about is the Holy Spirit as guide now all this can be found in the passage that is before us Acts chapter 2 he is the Holy Spirit who guides us and the context here amply shows us how he guided the church if you look at the last part of this as a result of Peter's sermon in the power of the Spirit verse 41 3,000 souls were added to the church wow what a sermon under the power of the Spirit poured forth but you see the Spirit guided the church look what it says in verse 42 and they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine the

Spirit guided them in what to believe and in fellowship they worshipped together and in the breaking of bread and in prayers the Spirit guided them in those essential things in the faith as a worshipping community in our language in doctrine worship and practice you see he guided them they had a sense of togetherness and all things in common because the Spirit guided them it wasn't human nature that made them generous in the work of Christ that made them fund projects in mission it's the work of the Spirit he guided them the classic example of those who were motivated by human nature is found in

Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira they wanted to be seen to be good givers that they were cheating but the people who gave freely and generously were people guided by the Spirit this is the way I should be having given myself to the Lord I'm giving of my means to his cause and often in the church's life what governs the church is too much of self and self interest we're seeing that around and about in these days self interest empire building trampling people down crushing their spirits that's not the work of the Spirit of God I don't care what people say about principle this is the principle the Spirit guided them they were marked by peace and togetherness the

Spirit guided them in the way and Jesus says of the Spirit he shall guide you in all the truth John 16 and verse 13 and first and foremostly he guides us in the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ it's interesting that when Peter is encouraging the Christians of the dispersion in his first letter he tells them that they are to seek peace and to pursue eternously they're to be marked by living in peace and doing things in a way that brings about peace not disruption and disharmony and hurt but peace pursue it earnestly that doesn't mean it's peace at any price if not of course not but it is the emphasis that should characterize us sometimes in prayer we need guidance we need to know the mind of the spirit in what we pray for we don't know what to pray for as we ought to there are times in providence we're not sure we're edging our way forward we know the general principles of course but on a specific matter we don't know and we need the spirit to guide us to pray and sometimes we end up just sighing and

Paul tells us the spirit himself makes intercession with groanings which can't be uttered we need him to guide us as to how best to serve him we need his guidance if you think about it when you go on holiday perhaps to some place of interest it's great to have a guide because no matter how well equipped you are no matter how much you've read a tour book on this area or that a guide is great because the guide has been there the guide is actually paid to know he's paid to be an expert if you think about Israel for example since we're in the Bible although the tour guides are many of them I don't say all of them but many are secular they're superbly well trained in the subject of being tour guides and they'll use the

[41 : 54] Bible quite freely because Israel is the land where it all happened and they're well acquainted with the historical stuff of the Bible and the life of Jesus and so on and they can point to this and that the next thing a guide is important if you're going on a good holiday that you're going to maximize and we're traveling through life it's no holiday there are many difficulties and many unknowns and who better to guide us in the path of life than the Spirit of God he will guide you let us confess our need of being guided in the truth as it is in Jesus of being guided in the ways of peace and wisdom and knowledge let us entrust ourselves to the

Spirit of Christ as teacher witness and guide he guides us always through the truth of the Bible the word of God and the more we see that the more we will ask him day by day to teach us to guide us to witness to the truth in the Son of God you remember in John chapter 6 Jesus had taught very difficult sayings to the people taught he was the bread of life that came down from heaven he taught that except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you and they balked at that how can he do this how can he say this and he said nobody comes to me except he is drawn by the father who sent me and all these things were hard sayings and we are told in that passage in

John 6 from that time forward many people went back from following actually it says many disciples and Jesus turned to the disciples the apostles and he said will you also go back from following me you remember Peter's wonderful words in verse 69 of John 6 Lord to whom else shall we go you alone have the words of eternal life but then he said this and we have come to know for sure and to believe certainly that you are the Messiah the Son of the living God who taught them who witnessed to them who guided them listen as we leave it therefore being exalted to the right hand of

God that's Jesus the Messiah and having received from the Father the promise of the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this which you now see and hear may we ask the Spirit to teach us and to witness to us and to guide us in all truth Amen