



Awakened to His Indwelling Spirit

Message Notes, October 22, 2017

Acts 8:14-17, 19:1-7

We are walking through the Book of Acts to celebrate the many awakening moves of the Holy Spirit in and through the early followers of Jesus. The latest message examines how they were awakened to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

God chose to fulfill the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29 on the day of Pentecost when “He poured out His Spirit on all flesh” – beginning with the 12 apostles and flowing forth to all who came to faith in Jesus. This ushered in a new movement in the kingdom of God. Now God’s Spirit would permanently dwell in every believer (Acts 2:38), thereby transforming and empowering the people of God to extend the ministry (and life) of Jesus throughout the world.

The two Acts passages cited at the top give us two different accounts of believers and their experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit. These passages have tended to create confusion among Christians about how one “receives” the Holy Spirit. In these early days of the church, people were being exposed to different parts of the Gospel at different times: There was the “baptism of John calling for repentance,” the message of salvation through the cross of Jesus (baptism in the name of Jesus) and the baptism/indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the Acts 8 passage, Samaritan believers had believed in Jesus but had not received the Holy Spirit. In the Acts 19 passage, the Ephesian believers had only responded to the baptism of John for repentance but had not surrendered to Jesus (and his baptism). They did this and also received the Holy Spirit (manifested by tongues and prophesy).

The whole gospel: We repent of our sins, trust in Jesus and his work on the cross for salvation, surrender to Him as Lord, and receive the Holy Spirit into our own spirit. This sometimes happens all in one moment or it may involve a process of increasing understanding and trust, but when we come to the final place of trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we then receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes into my spirit at conversion, but He desires to fill “the whole house” – my soul (mind will, emotions) and even my body. He wants to transform me and grow in me His purity (fruit), His power and His passion (for the lost). This is the essence of the Christian life, the process of “sanctification,” as I continually surrender to the Lordship of Jesus and the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit.

“Receiving” the Holy Spirit is more than simply acknowledging He has come; it means welcoming Him into “all of my house” and surrendering to His Lordship. This is a continual posture, not a one-time event. It is a dynamic, transforming, life-giving relationship. God wants to awaken us to the fullness of His indwelling Spirit.

- Mark 12:30 – Loving God with all our being
- Romans 8:15-16 – Holy Spirit testifying that we are “children of God our Father (Abba)”
- Galatians 5:22 – “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness ...”



Obstacles that impede our experience of His indwelling Spirit:

1. Not being saved. Salvation is not just cognitive belief, religious practices and good behavior. It is a personal relationship with God through faith in the saving work of Jesus and surrender to Him as Lord. If I have not come to this place of surrender, I can't experience the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
2. Unconfessed sin. God does not abandon us when we fail, but unconfessed sin (sin we try to hide and hold onto) will choke the life of His Spirit in us. Forgiveness is readily available – God is ready to forgive, if we will bring our sin to Him. See Psalm 51, David's song of forgiveness and restoration.
3. Damaged love receptors. Painful experiences (arrows) wound our hearts and damage our capacity to feel and experience love, joy, etc. Healing and wholeness are available to us as we bring our wounds to Him (rather than shutting down our hearts).
4. Skepticism about emotions/experiences. We are reluctant to express joy, delight, and enthusiasm. We are also afraid to express our painful emotions – fear, anger, sorrow, etc. Emotions and experiences are not the foundation of our faith, but these are definitely a part of our relationship with God. We experience and respond to Him through our God-given emotions. God wants us to express our emotions. He will meet us in them and bring clarity, freedom, wholeness into our lives.
 - Psalm 27:4
 - Psalm 35:9-10
 - Psalm 37:4
 - Psalm 59
 - Psalm 43
5. A distorted view of God. We often formulate views of God from our experiences (esp. painful ones) that are incomplete or are distorted by our enemy. Satan is always feeding us narratives that fuel doubt, suspicion, and distrust of God's goodness and love for us. His objective is to separate us from God's love and grace. God truly treasures and delights in us.
 - Psalm 18:19
 - Psalm 47:10-11
 - Zechariah 2:8
 - Isaiah 49:15-16
 - Zephaniah 3:17
6. Distractions. Worldly pleasures, busy-ness, drivenness, etc. God created our souls to be satisfied outside ourselves – actually with His own love and presence. If we do not turn to God to satisfy our souls, then we will look to other things. When we cease to look to Christ as our true bread of life, "our souls will go in search of other (completely inadequate) lovers." Distractions can become obsessions, then addictions, then bondage – all leading to destruction.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you experiencing the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. If not at all or not in a while, are any of the "obstacles" above impeding your experience of His indwelling presence?
3. What is one tangible step you can take to begin to overcome these obstacles?
4. Do you find it difficult to embrace the reality that God delights in you? Why is this?