

**Acts 1: 1-5; “The Holy Spirit in the Church”, Sermon # 1 in a series called –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
January 11th, 2015 in the Morning Worship Service.**

The Acts of the Apostles is a book which probably should have been called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. For it is very obvious when you read this book that the Lord the Holy Spirit was behind all that was being done by the Apostles to lay the foundations of the New Testament Church. He was very much the prime mover in the early Church's establishment and growth. And I want you to see that He is also the prime mover in our church's establishment and growth. Let us think about this truth this morning; that Christ is building His Church, and He is building it by and through the power of His Spirit. The reason that this church shall live and flourish in a greater sense, if she does, is because we will have come to know the blessing of the Holy Spirit on our labors here.

What I would like to do this morning is to open up to you the Mission and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Church which Christ is building. I would like us to think together of these 3 truths. 1st – It is the Mission and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit to establish Christ's word to the hearts of the hearers. 2nd – It is the Mission and Ministry of the Holy Spirit, both Old Testament and New, to regenerate the hearts of believers, and to give them the gift of Christ. And 3rd – It is the Mission and Ministry of the Holy Spirit to baptize Christ's followers, and to form them into one Church. Let us now prayerfully consider this blessed work of the third Person of the Divine Trinity; He who was sent by the Father and the Son, to work in the building of Christ's Church and be our helper in that same regard.

1st – It is the Mission and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit to establish Christ's word to the hearers. (verses 1 and 2)

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the Apostles whom He had chosen...” The former account which Luke wrote, is of all that Jesus began to do and to teach. That is; Luke wrote down those things which give us vital information on Jesus' birth, selective things concerning the days of His childhood, but more especially, those things related to His earthly ministry and teaching. In that account, Luke takes us in his sacred history to the place where Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended on high.

But notice that our text says that just before that time of His ascension, He gave commandments “by the Holy Spirit,” to the apostles who He had chosen. The ministry of the Holy Spirit was very active in and with our Lord Jesus Christ during this time before His ascension and before the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was right there with the Lord Jesus to establish His word to His hearers; in this case, Christ's apostles. He gave them certain commandments at that time which we as a church should remember also. Turn with me over to Luke Chapter 24. The Lord Jesus is getting ready to ascend to the Father; to ascend to heaven and to sit at the Father's right hand.

Now look at verse 44. “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” “Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” “And you are witnesses of these things.” “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

These are some of the commandments given by Jesus at that hour. What I want you to see from these verses is what the Lord Jesus did for these Apostles by the power of the Spirit. He

gave them the command that they were to keep; that they and the Church which He had founded upon His own finished work, were to obey. It was that they preach the gospel; that glorious gospel of repentance and remission of sins. That glorious gospel of grace and power, He commanded that it should be preached to all nations. But here He does not simply give them their duty. He also “opens their understanding so that they might comprehend the Scriptures”.

O what a marvelous and needful word for today. Jesus gave this command through the Holy Spirit that the preaching of the gospel and the preaching of the Word would go to all the nations. But He knew that the Word must be accompanied with power, so that the Word would be established in their own hearts and minds first. And then it could come with power to the hearts of their hearers. Let me ask you if you know that your understanding must be opened by Christ to comprehend the Scriptures? Whether it is the simplicity of the gospel, or whether it is the deepest things of Scripture, you cannot understand these things as you should, unless Christ first gives you the ability to comprehend them.

This should show each of us just how much we need to pray to Christ for more of the influences of the blessed Holy Spirit upon our minds and hearts. If the Apostles who were with the Lord Jesus for three and a half years needed to know the power of Christ opening their understanding to comprehend the Scriptures, will it be any different for us here in this church? He gave them command by the Holy Spirit. They received His words by the working of the Holy Spirit. This is what convinced them in their hearts to continue to abide together as a band of brothers after Christ died on the cross. They had been called by Christ to this good work of preaching and teaching, but they needed the Promise of the Father to be given to them before the commands which Jesus had given them could be fulfilled by them, in that day.

You and I are in the same position today. Those of us who are Christians know that we have been called to follow Him. And we have been called to keep all of the moral and ethical commandments of His Word. We have been called to place ourselves regularly under the preaching of the Word so we might know the truth of what God is asking us to do, and then go about to do it. But we very much need the power and wisdom and grace of the Holy Spirit to work in us all here; the one who preaches and those who are listening, so that God would establish His word to us; that word which is regularly preached.

Do you pray for this dear believer? It is very necessary for you to pray if you want to see the work of the Lord flourish in your own heart and in the hearts of others. Psalm 119, verse 38 shows us how to pray. It says – “Establish Your Word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You.” (as that which makes you devoted to fearing God.) Then you will love your Lord Jesus Christ and His Word more than all, and go about to do it. Then you will worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Jesus spoke with authority in His earthly ministry when He preached; not like the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. No preacher has the authority within himself to speak as Jesus spoke; for His was inherent Divine Authority. “Never a man spoke as this man”, said one of the officers who came to take Jesus while He was teaching in the temple. (John 7: 46)

But as the God-man, even He submitted His authority to the Father. The preacher is one who is, or should be, submissive to the authority of the Scriptures himself. He should also recognize that it is the Holy Spirit who establishes Christ’s authority, and God the Father’s authority in the hearts of the hearers as he preaches to them the word. But the preacher should also realize and believe that when he is speaking in the sight of God, God is right there with Him to accompany his words. It is ministry of the Spirit of God to illumine and bless in relation to the delivery of the Word to the people gathered. Knowing this, the preacher should be both emboldened and made humble by such a thought.

Psalm 138, verse 2 says, “I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.”

And Romans 1: 16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation, for everyone who believes.” The gospel has power itself, but it is God the Holy Spirit who brings the true conviction of sin. It is God who convinces a person of their need of Christ’s righteousness. It is God who makes it plain to us that only Christ has been victorious over sin and death, and Satan, at the cross.

John Chapter 16 and verse 5. “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ “But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.” “Nevertheless I tell you the truth.” “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged.” This is how I pray to be able to preach to you here in this place; not with my own authority, but with the authority of the Scripture; God speaking to you through the preaching of its very words.

This is what Jesus commanded the Apostles to do. I believe that it is what God has commanded us to do. The power to build the church is right there. It is not in charismatic gifts. It is not in contemporary music. It is by the preaching of the word primarily. But in saying this I hope that you will understand that we very much need the Holy Spirit’s wisdom to help us to understand how we should live to God, and how we can together really glorify God through our worship of Him, as we are conducting it. God will be glorified if only we have the power of the Holy Spirit to establish every good thing to our hearts and every true thing to our minds. What Christ did for those original Apostles by giving them His Spirit, was the basis for what He by the Holy Spirit does for us today in this church. .

2nd – It is the Mission and Ministry of the Holy Spirit in both Old and New Testaments to regenerate the heart, and to give the gift of Christ. (verse 3)

“He (that is Jesus) presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me.’” Here we find our Lord speaking to His Apostles of the things pertaining the kingdom of God. I want to speak to you about the Promise of the Father, but first I need to speak to you about regeneration.

The Promise of the Father is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church; He who would proceed from the Father, and be given by the Son, to His gathered Church on the Day of Pentecost. We need, however, to ask another question. Didn’t the chosen Apostles of our Lord and a number of the disciples following our Lord already have the Holy Spirit? Why did they need to be baptized with the Spirit then? Weren’t they saved men and women? Were they not those who had regenerate hearts before the Day of Pentecost? And the answer of the Scriptures is, that they were. Judas is the obvious exception in this group of the Apostles.

Those believers who had faith had already been given the gift of the work of regeneration, which was performed by the Holy Spirit on their hearts. They who had true and saving faith in Jesus Christ had that faith because their hearts had had this essential spiritual operation performed upon them by the work of the Spirit. Jesus said to Nicodemus: You must be born again, or you cannot enter or see the kingdom of God. But even those who did see, and did enter the kingdom at that time, did not have a very clear theological understanding of regeneration, then, nor of the Church in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

That was because the Spirit had not yet been given to the whole Church. Christ was building His Church, but The Church had not yet been given the gifts that she would need to see local churches raised up, and the work of spiritual building by the Apostles go forward. And even

then, as the Lord Jesus was getting ready to leave to return to sit at the right hand of the Father, He had not yet revealed, extensively to the Apostles, all of these wonderful doctrinal truths of His fuller revelation of Himself to the believers who comprised the New Testament Church. That would come by the Spirit's ministry through the Apostles themselves.

The Lord Jesus had saved the best wine until last. John 14: 15 – “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. In regeneration He was dwelling with them already, but in His work of baptizing them into the body of Christ; this was yet to come. Before we speak more of the Baptism of the Spirit, let's take a closer look at the individual believer's experience of regeneration and the ministry of the Spirit before Christ's ascension.

Turn with me to John Chapter 4, verse 4. “But Jesus needed to go through Samaria.” “So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.” “Now Jacob's well was there.” “Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well.” “It was about the sixth hour.” “A woman of Samaria came to draw water.” “Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink.” “For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.” “Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ “For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”

“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.’ “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.’ “Where then do You get that living water?’ “Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?’ “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst.’ “But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The gift of God that is mentioned here is Christ giving of Himself in salvation. Salvation from sin comes by faith; it comes by your asking for this gift of life everlasting, and Christ's giving it. In the giving of the gift, Christ gives the Holy Spirit. But here it is represented by the spiritual picture of living water in the heart of the person drinking it. The living water is a picture of the Holy Spirit's work in this woman's heart when she would drink in the words of Christ concerning how she could obtain it. She would drink in, and not only be washed and cleansed from her sin, but she would be continually blessed, refreshed, satisfied, and given spiritual life and strength through this same means.

This is, I say, is how all Old Testament believers were saved. They drank in the words of the promises that were given to them concerning Christ, as these words were preached to them by God's own prophets. Isaiah 55: 1 – “Ho!” “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat.” What are the waters? They are the waters of the promises of God to the thirsting soul. Those waters are the gift of God found in Jesus Christ our Lord, that He would come to live and die, and that He would rise again, and ascend to heaven on their behalf. They looked forward by faith to the Coming of their Savior, and the mighty work of redemption that He would do.

Those who believed were indeed regenerated, and they were given the gift of the Spirit's working in them and dwelling in them, as living waters. This gift came to them by the Holy Spirit's working even then; giving them life and hope, and salvation and blessing. Turn with me now over to John Chapter 7, and verse 37. “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’ “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” “But this He

spoke concerning the Spirit whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Scripture that is being mentioned here is probably Isaiah 12: 3. “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

And Isaiah 44: 3 – “For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring.” When it says, that “the Spirit was not yet given”, it does not mean that there were Old Testament saints that had not received the Spirit’s working in regeneration. It is true that they did not experience all of the fullness of Spirit’s ministry of giving spiritual understanding and power because Christ had not come yet, neither had He yet been glorified, neither had He and the Father given the Spirit, as a Person to the Church yet, but nevertheless they knew a great deal of the reality of these things; having a real assurance and appreciation of them in their hearts.

The word “given” is not in the original Greek. It simply says that “the Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified. When Christ was glorified the New Testament Church and every individual member in would have a better understanding of the Spirit’s work because Jesus would send Him and give Him to them to dwell with them forever.

3rd – We need to conclude this study by understanding that it is the Mission and Ministry of the Holy Spirit to baptize Christ’s followers, and to form them into one Church. (verse 5)

“For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” I hope that you can now see that it was because God the Father and God the Son wanted this fuller teaching and understanding of the God the Holy Spirit’s work in the Church to be linked to our Savior and Lord’s glorification and Ascension, that the Father waited until the Day of Pentecost to fulfill His promise. It was Christ who laid down His life and purchased the Church with His own blood. It was He who had paid the purchase price in His sufferings and thereby was given all authority in heaven and earth to build His Church.

It is He who had purchased the gift of God for all of God’s Elect, Old Testament and New, when He went to the cross. He bought you, dear believer, so that the work of regeneration could be performed upon your heart before you really knew what it meant believe in Him. It is also Christ, who because of His sufferings for you, had the right and the authority in connection with the Promise of the Father to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and place you into His own spiritual mystical body, the Church.

But let us understand that regeneration and the Baptism of the Spirit, as acts of the Spirit, are not identical acts. In the conversion of an individual person they are done together, in connection with each other, in Father’s time. They are done according to the Spirit’s working, in succession, but they are not identical acts. First comes regeneration, the sovereign work of the Spirit opening the heart, and giving New Life; His taking away the heart of stone, and circumcising the heart so that the sinner is receptive to the word of the gospel preached. He is given ears to hear and eyes to see.

Then comes the Spirit’s sovereignly giving of the gift of life so that faith is created there where before was only skepticism and unbelief. Then comes the believer exercising their faith in Christ, and their being saved from all of their sins, and their being “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”, as it says in Ephesians 1: 13. Then comes the believer’s placement into the body of Christ described in 1st Corinthians 12: 13 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” The Spirit being given, in relation to Christ’s Church, proceeded from His being sent by the Father and the Son on the Day of Pentecost after Christ’s work was completed. It was in this sense that the Spirit was given on that glorious Day; He was given to Christ’s gathered Church. But those who gathered in that upper room that day already knew the Lord; they already had regenerate hearts.

And so it is on this basis that we can say that God's Elect in the Old Testament times were regenerated by God the Spirit when they believed the promises given to them; the revelation concerning the Christ who was coming, but they did not know the baptism of the Spirit as New Testament believers do in this age of the Spirit. But that those Elect people were regenerated before the coming of Christ, in Old Testament times, and in the times of the New Testament before Christ's ascension; of this there can be no doubt. The Apostles had the Spirit before Pentecost, but they needed more of the Spirit, and distinct works of the Spirit, taking place in their lives to bring them together and to make them a Church.

Let me show you one of those distinct acts done by Christ, in His giving the Holy Spirit, before the Day of Pentecost, before He ascended to heaven. Turn with me to John Chapter 20, and verse 19. "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" "When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side." "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you!'" "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Here we see that it was this act of the Lord Jesus which actually gave the Apostles their authority to begin building Christ's Church on the foundation which He had laid. His finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead were His laying the foundation. His breathing on them was the formation His spiritual body the Church just as the Triune God breathed into Adam the breath of life at the beginning, in his creation. Let us understand as we close this sermon, that the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of the many, many people who because they received grace, they would be called out of sin and darkness, and brought into God's marvelous light, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

All Christians are persons whose hearts and minds have been savingly wrought upon by the Spirit, and because of this gracious and powerful work, they have received the message of the gospel, and they were saved by believing in that good word concerning Christ. They saw that they had been ruined in the Fall; they saw their need a Savior, and so they believed in the gospel and they were saved; not by a faith that they previously had, but by a faith which was created in their heart by the Spirit's working. Let us also understand further that by the preaching of the Word, and the working of the Spirit in accordance with that word preached, that all believers begin to understand how they can grow up into Christ and become useful in service and obedience to Him in connection with a church which they will join.

Those who are learning about this work of the Holy Spirit realize their need every day, for more of His blessed influences and power to do God's will. Have you come to this blessed realization? The Apostles, we should understand, needed to have an exalted bestowal of the power of the Holy Spirit, given to them by Christ. Through the Spirit's working, they would be able to speak in tongues and to prophesy on the Day of Pentecost. They would be able to see their preached words being confirmed by signs and wonders and the conversion of many who heard the Word preached. Churches, in time, would be raised up, beginning at Jerusalem.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the answer to Christ's prayer to the Father, and the prayers of the Apostles and disciples gathered, to have the power to become witnesses to His resurrection and to preach the gospel. He was most certainly given at just the right time. Let us not think that we in our days need the Charismatic movement, or the re-establishment of the revelatory gifts, in order to see sinners converted and churches built up and become strong. We do not need these revelatory gifts any longer because we have the completed canon of Scripture. But what we very much need is the power of the Holy Spirit to attend the preaching of the Word Sunday by Sunday, so that the truth of the Bible, the faith which has once for all been

delivered to the saints, might be established and Christ's kingdom might come; that it would grow and flourish because He has given it. Let us pray to that end.