

Who/what are we waiting for?

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You know in that last song we sang, it talked about that Christ is risen and yet right before he rose, Jesus made this statement, he said, "I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you." Now that sounds kind of like a contradiction, "I'm not going to leave you yet I'm about to leave you," but earlier he had spoken these words of truth, he said, "Don't worry, I will send you a Comforter. I will send you the Holy Spirit. I will send you the Holy Ghost who will empower you to live the life you've always desired to live." Today we get to celebrate that fact. We get to study that fact. We get to realize the fact that we have not been left to our own devices but that we actually have he, as Scripture says, that is within us is greater than he who is in the world.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we come to this time of study, Lord, as you challenge us with your word, Lord, we know that oftentimes we struggle, oftentimes we doubt, oftentimes, Lord, we just question about what we're going to address today. Lord, I pray that you would take the words off the pages and you would make them clear, you would make them simple, and God, in a few moments when we depart from this place, we can know for a fact that you have empowered us to live a life that we could not live otherwise. Help us, O God, to be where you've called us to be. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning I want to encourage you open your Bibles to the book of Acts 1 and 2. As you turn to Acts 1 and 2, it is typically at this time during the service where I take a moment to welcome those that are guests and visitors and just grateful that you're here and also to share with you kind of where we are kind of on our journey of faith as a church and kind of what we're studying and such, but today it's really introduction more for guests than for guest or visitors but for every single one of us, for today is kind of day 1 of a summer series or a summer study where we're going to go where few Baptists have ever gone. Now some of you may be getting a little nervous because what we're going to do this summer is we're going to study the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. Now I know there are some of you, you've been Baptists longer than you've been alive and that just made you nervous because you said, "Does that mean that by the end of the summer that we're to become Pentecostal?" Now we're not going to become Pentecostal but would it hurt us if we became Bapticostal?

And so what we're going to do this summer is we're going to study the person, the role, the work, the fruit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and as we turn to Acts 1, I've entitled this series "Wait for it." Why? Because that's what Jesus told his apostles. As he gathered them, as he prepared to ascend on high, he said, "Don't take off. Wait here in Jerusalem and when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you will be empowered to do all that I've called you to do."

Now you and I have a distinct advantage today. We don't have to do what these folks did. We don't have to go into the Upper Room and pray and wait for seven days, not knowing when it will happen, we find ourselves two millennia on the other side. So when we say wait for it, honestly there's nothing for us to wait for, we just have the privilege of living what they were waiting for.

So today as we turn to Acts 1:8, I want you to hear the words of Jesus. He said,

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:
and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and
in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Then we have the seven day waiting period where they huddle up together in the Upper Room, they take that moment to take Judas who obviously betrayed the Lord and replace him with a man whom we know as Matthias, but then we get to chapter 2 a week later. It says,

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one
accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of
a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat
upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and
began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5
And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every
nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude
came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them
speak in his own language.

What we've just read is the account of what Jesus said was going to take place. This is the full-blown physical manifestation of what we know as the church of Jesus Christ and what was its embodiment? It was the movement, the activity and the person of the Holy Spirit.

Now as we go through this entire summer studying the person and the role of the Holy Spirit, today is just kind of an introductory message and there are two subjects or two areas that I want to address: who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? I mean, it's pretty basic commentary there but who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do and I think this will help us better understand when we talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the

fruit of the Holy Spirit, what does it mean to quench the Holy Spirit, if we first understand who he is and what he does.

Now the first thing that we've got to grasp today on who he is, is that he was actually prophesied. Now I'm going to encourage you to turn back to the Gospel of John today in chapter 14. In John 14 in a few moments and John 16, we're going to read the actual words of Jesus about who the Holy Spirit would be and what he would do.

Now let me give you kind of a time frame here. John 14 and chapter 16 take place just a few hours before Judas would betray the Lord. This is what we know: they're in the Upper Room, they've just celebrated what we call the last supper, Jesus has washed their feet and he begins to teach them. We formerly call this the farewell discourse and our terminology today, this is Jesus' last will and testament. This is the last message he's going to share with his apostles and in this last will and testament, two times he very specifically communicates about the Holy Spirit. In chapter 14, he tells us who the Holy Spirit will be, and then in chapter 16, he tells us what the Holy Spirit will do or can do or how he can operate in our lives.

So in chapter 14, the Gospel of John beginning in verse 16, I want you to hear the words of Jesus. It says,

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Now the first thing we see about who the person of the Holy Spirit is, is that he is actually prophesied. Jesus speaks in advance, he says he is going to come and this is how he is going to operate. Now this is critical on two levels. 1. Jesus' entire life and ministry was based on prophesy. In fact, we find in Revelation 19:10 it is the testimony of prophesy that is the spirit of Jesus. In other words, everything that was prophesied thousands of years in advance came true in his life, his death, his resurrection, and eventually his ascension and soon coming return. So it only makes sense that the one who said that he would raise from the dead would also tell us about the Holy Spirit.

Now the second reason that this is important is because I believe that there are two errors that humanity can fall into when it comes to an understanding of the Holy Spirit. There are some who want to make too much of the Holy Spirit and there are oftentimes many who want to make too little of the Holy Spirit. What we see is that Jesus has given us very specific directions on who he will be, what he will do and how he will operate. So we do not need to come up with our own ideology of, "This is what I think the Holy Spirit is." No, because Jesus has already shared, but at the same time we cannot neglect who the Holy Spirit is because Jesus said, "He will come." But when he prophesied him, he made it very clear that he would be a person, a persona. In fact, today is not the day to study what we know as the doctrine of the Trinity but we know the Bible makes it clear

in Deuteronomy 6, there is one God but we see him displayed in Father, in Son, in Holy Spirit.

Notice what he says here in verse 16, I will "send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, Even the Spirit of truth." There are two descriptions, there are two titles that Jesus Christ gives the Holy Spirit that we need to heed today. First off, he calls him "another Comforter." Now that concept or that idea of a comforter, you have to go into like 1 John 2:1 where it says, "If we sin, don't worry about it," when I say don't worry about it, don't take it lightly, he says, "we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus." In other words, we cannot rectify, we cannot do restitution for our own sin, Jesus Christ is our advocate. It's the same concept, the same word where we get "comforter," and what Jesus is saying is that the person of the Holy Spirit will be our advocate. He will be our mediator. He will be the one who speaks on behalf of and in between us and the Lord himself.

But he uses the phrase, the word "another." Let me share with you what Jesus is saying about the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit will be of the same substance as Jesus. Now this is critical. The Holy Spirit is not a spark. The Holy Spirit is not a feeling. The Holy Spirit is not in my gut. That may be Italian food from last night, okay? And so when we talk about who the Holy Spirit is, what Jesus Christ is saying is the Holy Spirit is the same substance, the same make-up and the same as he is.

Now we the church struggle with this. In fact, give you a little history here, it took us almost 400 years to officially adopt that biblical concept. Now for those of you that want to throw stones at history, communication wasn't as quick back then as it is today and it took a lot of time to get together and to communicate and to write letters and such but we struggled with this over time because we're dealing with the Lord himself and what Jesus said is, "If you want to know who the Holy Spirit is," he's saying, "he's made of the same substance. He is God. Period. No more, no less." That's critical. He's not a spark. He's not a this. He's not a that. He's not a thing. He is God himself. He's another Comforter.

He also calls him the "Spirit of truth." What that means is the Holy Spirit will never lead you, guide you or direct you to anything but truth. That's it. He will not lead you astray. He will not take you down the wrong path. In fact, Jesus himself in John 14 when Thomas and the apostles gathered up and they were worried about, they were curious about their future, do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "Don't worry. I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by me." Not only would Jesus describe the fact that the Holy Spirit would lead us into truth, but he calls him the "Spirit of truth" of which he used that phrase for himself as one who was true.

So when we talk about the person of the Holy Spirit, don't think of it as some other thing or some concept, we're talking about God himself here. This is critical to the next aspect of who he is because not only did Jesus prophesy him, not only did Jesus say that he would be of the same substance and of the same concept, but notice what he says about his presence. Notice at the end of verse 17, "he dwells with you, he shall be in you."

Two aspects here. The first thing he says is he will dwell with you. Now as we read the passages today and as you read in your copy of God's word, there is this phrase for the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the words are used together, sometimes they're used within the same sentence, but some of your translations, particularly what we know as the old King James, uses the phrase Holy Ghost and some of you hear that phrase and you think, "Man, that just sounds archaic. It sounds out-of-date. It sounds like something somebody from a long time ago would say. Why can't we just say Holy Spirit?" What's interesting to me, though, is that the phrase or the word Holy Spirit when referencing the third part of the Godhead whom we know as the Holy Spirit, every time it's used, and by the way, you know, when it's used two words together or two words apart in the same sentence, that out of every 10 times that it's used in the old King James Bible, it refers to it as Holy Ghost 9 out of 10 times.

Now I want you to think about a ghost for just a moment, the definitions thereof and the reality tv shows. What is a ghost? A ghost is the representation of something that has already gone on and so when the Bible uses the phrase Holy Ghost, what it's saying is that the Lord is moving in your life just as if Jesus himself had never left. That's critical for our understanding because when we talk about that Jesus has ascended on high, that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, and that Jesus ever makes intercession for us, we love that, right? The problem is, "But I'm here and I'm dealing with this." And when you look at those passages where it says that he, the Holy Ghost, will give you power, what the Lord is communicating, it's as if he never left us. He's right there.

Then it says that he shall be in you. For those of you that have the privilege whether this past semester, in time's past to go through the Master Life Bible Study, one of the key verses was 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20 where it says that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwells within us. We have been bought with a price therefore glorify God with our body and our spirit which is his. What that means is that who Jesus said the Holy Spirit is, God, not only dwells as if Jesus never left but actually resides in each and every one of us who have come to an understanding that we have sinned and we need Jesus to save us.

Let me tell you what this means for everyday living. I hope I'm not the only one in the room, by the way at the first service, I wasn't the only one. Have you ever had one of those Job moments? Let me tell you what a Job moment is. Have you ever been in a situation, have you ever been in a set of circumstances where you've made this statement to God? I hope I'm not the only one in the room who said, "Hey, God, are you even around? Where are you? I don't see you." Am I the only one? Please tell me I'm not because that's kind of embarrassing. But we've all had those moments, right? We're like, "I just don't get it. Where is God? Why hasn't he shown up? Why is he not moving?" I've got news for you: we can get all upset and say, "But God, I don't see, I don't feel, I don't this, I don't that," but according to his word, Jesus said, "Hey, it doesn't matter where you are, what you're going through, he's inside of you." So that means for Paul and Barnabas who are tethered together in a jail in Acts 16, the Holy Spirit is there. That means an entire city in Acts 17 that gets saved in one day, the Holy Spirit is there. Which means that when we're all alone, all by ourselves and feel isolated on an island like the Apostle

John on Patmos, the Holy Spirit though we may not see or may not sense he is with us, he is within us.

So when we talk about the Holy Spirit, this is more than just a spark or a feeling, this is God himself dwelling with us as if Jesus never left us and inside of us to empower us to be the people that we've always desired to be. That's the who, now what about the what? Now go a few pages to the right to John 16 and I never want to make the Bible say more than it does, but I kind of get the idea that Jesus has shared with them about the Holy Spirit and they're giving him kind of that look. Now I'm fixing to date myself as a child of the 80's here, but do you remember the phrase on tv, "Whatchu talkin' 'bout, Willis?" That's exactly what's happening here. They're going, "Huh? How are you going to go away and get inside of me? Notice what happens in verse 7 of John 16,

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient [it is beneficial] for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

What we see in this very simple passage is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives, not only as a community and a culture but as an individual. What is his role? What does he do? How does he operate?

Well, the first thing it says that it is his job, it is his role to reprove us or to show us what sin is. Now this is critical to our society and our culture today because we live in a world where everybody wants to try to tell everybody else who's right and who's wrong and who's this and who's that. Everybody's got an opinion, an ideology and a platform by which they want to communicate, alright? But understand the only entity, the only person who can show us that we've messed up is the Holy Spirit himself. Now where I come from, they make this statement, "You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink." The same thing. You can talk somebody's ear off, you can show them every piece of evidence you've got, but unless they listen to the Holy Spirit, they won't realize how depraved they are.

This last week, I was reading through some of C. S. Lewis' works. If you're not familiar with C. S. Lewis, the 20th century apologist from England, the majority of his works from a Christian perspective actually came during or right after what we know as WWII, "The Screwtape Letters, Mere Christianity," all those famous pieces of literature, but in his beginning part of "Mere Christianity," now understand we're in the context of WWII here, he made this very unique illustration about sin. He said that when a man makes an agreement with another man or an entity makes an agreement with another entity, as long as the conditions are favorable to them, it's a good agreement, but as soon as it's not advantageous to them, they cry, "This isn't fair!"

What an illustration of the sinfulness of humanity, that it always boils down to what's best for me? You know that's what got us in trouble in the first place in the garden of Eden, right? What's best for me? What can further me? What can do more for me? Only the Holy Spirit can show us that we've sinned. Only the Holy Spirit can show us that we have rebelled against our holy Creator and God and soon-coming King. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

The second thing is this: to reprove them, "of righteousness," notice what Jesus says, "because I go to my Father." Now in our world today, we love to use these expressions and particularly down here in the south where they're just a good person, or that was just a good deed, or that was a good work. You do understand that apart from Jesus Christ, there is nothing that can be called good in this world? Nothing. In fact, the Bible says all of our works are as dirty filthy rags. Do you know what we say when we say, "Well, that was a good deed"? What we're really saying is, "That was less evil than the other one," is what we're saying. Jesus says "of righteousness because I go to the Father." The only way that we could do anything that could be called good or be called righteous is through the person of Jesus Christ and that is the Holy Spirit not just going with us but in us. In other words, no matter what the world says, no matter what the opinions say, if the Holy Spirit is not dwelling in you, nothing you can do can be declared righteous. Nothing. Only because he said "because I go to my Father."

What's the third purpose? It says "the prince of this world is judged." You know, there's a big difference between judgment and sentencing, correct? And sometimes the sentencing in a case comes up an hour later or after recess, oftentimes it comes the next week or the next month. You know, the Bible makes it really clear there is coming a day where whom we know as the devil himself is going to be sentenced. The Bible says in Matthew 25 and in Revelation 20 that one day he is going to be cast into the lake of fire for all of eternity. That's the sentencing part, but you know at the cross he was judged. In fact, there the Bible records that from what we know as 12 noon to 3 o'clock in the afternoon it was total pitch blackness. Jesus makes this incredible statement immediately thereafter and some people struggle with it. He says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You know that's an exact quotation from Psalm 22:1. It's the most messianic Psalm that we've got. It talks about the dogs around him, piercing him and such, all the imagery of the cross is there. Here's the thing about Psalm 22, it's not a Psalm of defeat, it's a Psalm of victory because in the very end it says that "even though they do this, one day all people will come and bow down and worship me." You see, when Jesus Christ declared on Golgotha, "It is finished!" was he declaring that we could be forgiven? Yes. Was he declaring that we could be saved? Absolutely. Was he declaring that we could have an eternity in heaven and not just hell? Of course. But he was also saying that the prince of this world had been forever judged. It is finished.

So the purpose of the Holy Spirit in our life is to show us the sin in our life, to empower us to actually live a life that could be called good or righteous, and to let us know that the prince of this world has been judged. You know, I heard a wise statement years ago, someone shared this with me, they said if the devil reminds you of your past, you need to remind him of his future. That's the purpose.

Now let's go back to Acts 1 and talk about the power of the Holy Spirit. We know what his purpose is in our life, what about the power that he gives us access to? Verse 8 of Acts 1, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Now you go into chapter 2 and we read that passage and we know about Pentecost, this famous scene with the speaking and the hearing and all those things that are happening, and I think herein lies one of the struggles that oftentimes people have, that there are some that when we look at the power and the movement of the Holy Spirit, some people think that if you're not walking on water and you're not seeing a dramatic physical healing, then the Holy Spirit hasn't moved at all. There are other people who say, well, I haven't seen anybody walk on water or be healed and so maybe the Holy Spirit isn't working at all.

Some years ago, I had the privilege, I was doing a youth camp and I was the morning Bible Study guy and then at night there was a well-known guy that was doing the proclamation or the preaching, and I'll never forget, this is probably 20 years ago, he made this statement and he was talking about how we respond to the Holy Spirit, how we live in the power of the Holy Spirit. He said, "You know that anybody can get knocked down, it takes the Holy Spirit to get us back up." So when it talks about that you shall receive power, yes, there are miraculous things in Scripture, yes, there are supernatural things that happen, but there's also Monday morning that happens, and Tuesday afternoon in a meeting that we never saw, and a phone call or a text that we never dreamed we'd get. What does it mean to live in that power?

In the book of 1 Thessalonians 1, this is the first letter of Paul chronologically that we have. In other words, this is really the first communication to the church of Jesus Christ since the ascension of Jesus Christ minus the Gospels, and there in the very first paragraph, I want you to hear what the Apostle Paul says. He says the Gospel came to you not in word but in power, and that's where some people say, that's right, the supernatural, the miraculous which can occur, yes, but four verses later, listen to what it says, that you turn from your idols to serve the living God. When it talks about that what the Holy Spirit does, it empowers us, it empowers us to live a life of righteousness, it empowers us to say no to sin and temptation, it empowers us to turn from the ways of this world to serve the one, true, living God.

And finally, there's a promise. It's not found in the passages that we read. In fact, allow me to close by referring back to Matthew 16. It's the very first time that the apostles publicly proclaimed Jesus as Messiah. They're gathered at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asks a question, "Who do men say that I am?" They share, "Well, some say you're this guy. Some say you're that guy." He said, "Who do you say I am?" They said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father which is in heaven." Then Jesus goes on to make this statement, that "the gates of hell should not prevail." Over the last 2,000 years, the devil himself and all of his minions and a lot of conglomerates have done everything they can do to squash, marginalize or discredit what we know as the church of Jesus Christ and I've got news, we're still here. Why are we still here? Because he promised us the gates of hell would not prevail. Why? Because the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, dwells with us and dwells

inside of us and he has empowered us to live the life that we cannot live otherwise. The Holy Spirit is nothing less than God himself moving in your life as only God can. May we, not just this day but from this point forward, may we yield not just to his presence but to his power in our life.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, we talk about the presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, you know, you may be here this morning in person, you may be on the other side of the cameras and you may be thinking to yourself, "How does that take place in my life? I need it. I want it. I just don't get it." Well, I've got good news for you. You don't have to sign up for a series of classes, you don't have to check off a bunch of boxes, and please hear me clearly, you don't need to become religious. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe this is your first time in a setting like this or maybe it's your 10,000th time, but maybe the lightbulb finally turned on and finally you got it and said, "Boy, I understand now." Let me encourage you to call upon the Lord. You don't have to talk out loud. You don't even have to say the same words that I might say but maybe your conversation with the Lord would go a little something like this. You say, "God, today I realized, I realized something, I'm the problem and I realized that Jesus is the answer. So God, today I believe, Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sins on the cross and when he rose three days later, he made it possible for me to be forgiven and for me to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me and I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed. Maybe that's the conversation you had with the Lord this morning. We'd love to have a conversation with you. Just talk about what the Lord is doing however that you see fit. Or maybe today, maybe today you've had the Holy Spirit for years, maybe even decades, maybe today for the very first time you realized the power that he desires to live through your life. Maybe today it's not about coming and having a conversation with one of us, it's about walking off of this property in a few moments and living a life completely surrendered and yielded to his movement and not that of your own desires.

Lord, as we come to this time in our service, thank you. Thank you that you're a God of second chances. Thank you that when we woke up this morning you had a plan and you had a purpose to invade our lives and to radically change us and to put us on the course that is best for us. God, I pray we wouldn't take this time for granted but we'd simply yield to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask that you stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be here at the front.

"Are you hurting and broken within?
Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin?
Jesus is calling
Have you come to the end of yourself
Do you thirst for a drink from the well?
Jesus is calling

O come to the altar
The Father's arms are open wide
Forgiveness was bought with
The precious blood of Jesus Christ"

You know, I mentioned earlier that when it came to the message, that all of us were in the same position as we began this study together this summer, but maybe you're a guest or visitor with us. I want you to be assured that the time to respond, to make a decision has not come to a close. In fact, in just a moment, a friend of mine is going to come and pray for us and we're going to be seated and we're going to have the opportunity to give of our tithes and our offerings and maybe you're that guest and we'd encourage you if not able to come to the guest reception, you place that card in the plate and just let us know how you came to First Baptist. But as we're seated, in just a moment if you need to talk with somebody, pray with somebody, we're still here and we're still available. I'm going to ask my friend David Warren to come and pray for us and then we'll give.

David Warren. *Let us pray. Lord, I first want to just take this opportunity to pray for the students this week that have just obeyed you and just to go, Lord, and speak the truth to the people over in Georgia. Lord, I pray for the strength they need, the courage they need to speak truth this week. And as I came to this place this morning, I couldn't help but think how truly blessed we are, Lord. Now I just ask that you will just bless these tithes and offerings, Lord, that we will be generous, we will be cheerful givers, and that these gifts will be used to spread the Gospel here in Opelika and Auburn in Georgia this week, Lord, with the students and around the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.*