

The Wonderful, Powerful Gift Of God's Holy Spirit

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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It was 31 AD, Jesus had been crucified and now He appeared before His disciples. After being with them awhile, He breathed on them, stating, "Receive you the Holy Spirit." He told them that it was a gift from their Father for them, and that they should wait in Jerusalem that they might receive it.

Acts 1:4-14 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; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Verse 8 shows we are not to just receive God's Spirit and do nothing with it. It may not be for us to go into all the world to witness, but it is our work to be a light to the world in the correct way of living. That is one of the responsibilities that come with receiving of the Spirit. If God's people did not do this, Jesus would have no reason to save this world. But He says, 'for the elect or chosen's sake I will cut the days short, or no flesh would be saved alive.'

It is interesting to consider that with the receiving of the Holy Spirit comes the responsibility being placed upon us of living in such a manner, that Jesus Christ will save the world because of us. We are to work to fully use this Spirit that is given to us.

The disciples continued in prayer and supplication and selected Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot and they waited for Pentecost.

When Pentecost was come they were all assembled in unity in one place, and then as Albert Barnes stated, the Day of Pentecost came with the most remarkable displays of divine power and mercy that the world has ever seen.

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Now, just a little digression on the house. Some thought it might be Mark's father's house where they were all staying. Others thought it might be a house right by the temple, or in the temple. Wherever it was they were all staying in the house, and though the world was not expecting this awesome gift, God was seeing to it that it would be ushered in this spectacular fashion. It was so spectacular that it would stun all present, and it would not be forgotten. When we read of the crowd that eventually assembled—they perhaps had a large courtyard available out in the front of the house, and they spoke from the balcony. Perhaps they moved to the Temple steps; no one really knows. Though they were watching for the Holy Spirit, they had no idea how it would come. The intensity of what was taking place was the last thing that they expected.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

This was like a huge storm that was coming upon them. A wind such as this can be so strong and so noisy that one cannot hear himself talk. But, the remarkable thing about this was that there did not appear to be any movement of air, just the sound of the storm, just the violent sound of a strong wind. They fully expected to feel the wind, but all they experienced was the sound of the mighty wind, and the noise of it filled the house. The miracle was more striking than one would tend to believe. A gale wind might have been frightening, but there would have been nothing unusual about that. But to have all dead still when there was no storm, no wind to be felt, nor thunder, would probably cause the hair to rise on the back of their necks.

Acts 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

Along with the wind, they noticed that the area above them began to fill with fire, and it gave the appearance of pointed tongue-shaped flames that were cloven or divided, but yet each flame was separate from the other, and they came and rested on each of them. As with the wind, they expected to feel heat, but it was absent.

Acts 2:4-5 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

Now they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the power of God could be seen in an awesome miracle. Immediately all the men began to communicate in languages they were not familiar with, and they marveled. What would we think if all of a sudden we could communicate in fluent German, Japanese, or French? We too would be astounded.

Acts 2:6-11 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, "Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

There were people there from every country, and these were not casual visitors, or workers, but devout, religious men.

The miracle continued because this sound was noised or traveled abroad. For how long it does not say, but could it have been an hour or more, so that many might gather. Acts 2:4 states that about three thousand repented—no small number!

When the multitude gathered, God's Spirit caused another astounding miracle to take place. Every man could understand what was being said in his own language and dialect. And to top it off they heard it perfectly from the Galileans who had the reputation of having a crude language, and were considered rude and uncivilized, while here they were addressing the crowd in the refined languages of other peoples.

Here the miracle was now in the hearing, not in the speaking, and the message being given was of the wonderful works of God.

Acts 2:12-18 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.'

Brethren, this is how God first introduced His Holy Spirit to the world. Yes, it indeed had been given selectively before, but now it was made available to mankind upon their being called by God the Father.

What is the simple definition of God's Spirit? God's Holy Spirit would be the power of God in action!

In the booklet "Preparing the Bride," the definition here adds more of an overview:

The Holy Spirit is the power of God—not a personage, consciousness, entity, or part of the godhead, or part of a trinity. It is the mind and essence of the divine nature and spiritual extension of God through which He carries out his will. Bestowed upon, or poured upon individuals, it imparts begettal by God as His children. God's Spirit empowers the mind to comprehend spiritual matters producing conversion.

The Holy Spirit is a gigantic gift that God has given us. We will see, here, some of the power that God exhibits through His Spirit.

Genesis 1:1-3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. . . Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. . . Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. . . Thus God made the firmament,

and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. . . Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. . . Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth; and it was so.

This is the tremendous power of the Spirit of God. God commands and it is done. God uses His Spirit, also, to inspire, and to accomplish things through individuals.

Judges 14:5-6 So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

God's Spirit not only filled him with superhuman strength, but also gave him great courage.

Judges 15:12-16 But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines. Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves. So they spoke to him, saying, "No, we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you. And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. Then Samson said: With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!

That is impossible to do, but with the Spirit of God it did take place.

In II Samuel we read of David's mighty men. They did feats of courage, accepted danger, feats that were impossible to do because God had His Spirit upon them. You can almost picture the encouragement it gave to the rest of the army, to just watch these men achieve what they did.

II Samuel 23:8-22 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. Then the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. And the LORD brought about a great victory. Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in

Bethlehem. And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men. Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of another three. He lifted his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name among these three. Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three. Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men.

Does God work in Israel's behalf today? He certainly does. I am sure that many times that during World War I and II, God intervened. I remember seeing the movie entitled *Midway*, and in the crucial battle where both the Japanese aircraft carriers and the American aircraft carriers had expended all of their airplanes and all of their torpedoes and there was one battleship left on the Japanese side, the *Yamato*. This battleship could have sailed into the range of our aircraft carriers and destroyed them totally, and yet I am sure it was God that put it into the captain's mind to be afraid and he turned the *Yamato* around and left us safe and sound.

I think that God does this quite readily to shore up His people.

Luke 1:26-35, 41-43 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Here God showed Elizabeth what was taking place.

Luke 1:67-69 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David."

Here we see that the Holy Spirit has many facets and does many things.

We could continue throughout the whole Bible, seeing example after example of God's Holy Spirit in action.

We could see the ax head float by God's Spirit, the sundial showing the sun, or earth moved backward to prove that God would keep His Word and heal Hezekiah, days staying light longer than normal, rain withheld, rain given after a drought, the miracles done in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, great waters coming from a stone, etc., all done by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

The Passover reminds us of the great sacrifice that has been made for each of us. The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us of the need to truly put sin behind us. And so, this holy day—Pentecost—we now are keeping is to remind us that we have been given an awesome gift to assist us in fulfilling the calling we have been given, and bring us before God as members of His family.

For most of us baptism was a long time ago, and I do not know that we now consider what has been given to us, and the awesome power that is available to us by the Spirit; and the job or the work that God has set for His Holy Spirit to accomplish in us. As time goes on we just let down and relax, many times.

John 14:25-26 These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

It was used in calling us, and is now given to us to complete the work God started in us with His calling. The word "teach" has the sense of teaching by word of mouth, not just general teaching, but specific personal teaching to each of us on a personal level as it applies to us individually. In short, God's Holy Spirit will teach us what we specifically need to grow and overcome.

Just as we study, God's Word talks to us, and it talks to us personally. Something that might not mean anything to somebody else means a lot to the individual who is studying. It is the same with God's Spirit. Its design is to shape the will of the one being taught by the communication of righteous knowledge.

The sense of the verse is that just as Jesus revealed His personality, and His right way of living to the men while He was living, the Holy Spirit would function in the same manner to remind those to whom it was given, all that Jesus was, His obedience to His Father, His faith, and His righteous character to us today. The Spirit reveals all of this to us so that we might imitate it.

Expositor's Commentary: The function of the Holy Spirit is teaching! It will therefore impress the commandments of Jesus on the minds of His disciples and thus prompt (or urge) them to obey.

John 15:26-27 But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

The Holy Spirit was sent that it might bear witness, or testify of the way Christ lived, the way He amplified the laws of God, His love and concern for others, and the absolute truth regarding God's Kingdom. Truth is something that is not very readily available today, and yet the Holy Spirit will amplify that truth so that we might have a foundation to stand on, and to be living correctly while the world goes the other way.

He warned that the attitude that He faced was one of persecution and hatred, and in response to that, there must be a witness of the truth that we must make by what we stand for and by the way we live our obedience to God's laws, by the love, kindness, and service we show those in and out of the church.

God said that we are to love one another, and this is what God is all about. God is love, and we are to show this love and kindness in a proper way to others.

We should be noticed by those we work with as being honest; not gossiping; and going the extra mile. Our homes, as much as possible should reflect good care. Our children should be wondered at for their obedience, good manners, and politeness. I remember when we would go to the Feast and take our children into a restaurant. People would say, "How do you have your children sit in their seats, why are they not playing with the silverware or beating on the glass?" I told them that we just taught them not to. In other words in this society, by the way that we live, we should stand out as being different in a right way. I think that you all realize this, that by living God's way we stand out as a wonderful example.

One would think that with all the power that God possesses, in being able to create the world, the heavens with all the stars, the oceans, the fish, the animals, and all else that He brought into being with His Holy Spirit, that He would be able to, with the same Spirit, bring us to perfection or holiness instantly.

Mr. Armstrong stated that was the one thing that God could not do. He could not create a perfect God being by fiat. It was something that had to be accomplished over time and with the help or cooperation of the individual over a long period of time. It takes much time to begin to see the depths of sin and what it does, and to see the soundness and the goodness of God's laws. This is not seen overnight. This comes with practice. This comes with experience.

The whole world is going to be convicted by God's Holy Spirit.

John 16:8-11 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.

As Richard mentioned in a study on the Holy Spirit, in John 16 the Holy Spirit is listed as a prosecutor. It convicts the world of sin, or of not being righteous, and it judges them, and it does so by Jesus Christ being victorious. Righteous living under God's law is triumphant when all is said and done.

The word 'convict' or 'reprove' is a legal term that means to pronounce a judicial verdict by which the guilt of the culprit at the bar of justice is defined and fixed. God's Spirit does not just accuse men of sin; it brings them to an acute sense of guilt, and awareness of sin, so that it cannot just be ignored. God is determined to save mankind, and in this process this is part of it.

They are convicted of sin, and the basis of that conviction is that they did not believe in doing what was correct. The basis for sin is unbelief concerning God and His laws. They rejected God's messenger, and His message, thus God's Spirit will convict them of their error.

The Holy Spirit will convict them of righteousness being the way to live, showing that Jesus was righteous and that they, in their ignoring Him, were wrong. By His resurrection, God the Father put His stamp of approval upon Him. They will then see the necessity of living a righteous life that produces harmony, happiness, and right living by obedience to God. God's Holy Spirit will reveal all of this to them.

The fact that Jesus overcame Satan tells the world that He will condemn and judge all sin. Thus man will be judged based on the laws of God, they once disowned.

The sense is that if those who have followed Satan see that he is overcome, then they will have no one to turn to except Jesus Christ or they will perish.

The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth—in divine truth—and this is #225 in Strong's.

John 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

I do not see how we can ignore this thing of truth. We have the truth. (I think that as time goes on, we could take this fact for granted.) We have the most wonderful gift that God could have given us, and that is His truth, and His mind that we might live correctly. God's Spirit will teach us the right practice of the divine truth that He gives us. He, through His Spirit, will declare His will for us individually. His Holy Spirit will show us the truth, as opposed to the superstitions and lies of this world.

When we first came in the church, I had kept Christmas and Easter my whole life. But, all of a sudden, I had the urge to prove what I was going to keep, and in proving I saw that I had been keeping a lie in a sense, and it did not mean a thing.

His truth sets us free from false justifications that lead to disaster and death. It will speak of what is right for you specifically.

I Corinthians 2:1-2 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. . .

Paul had just finished commenting that God called the weak and foolish. The reason he did that is because they appreciated their calling, they saw their flaws and their weaknesses and they really

appreciated what God had to offer. He was going to explain to them the sacrifice that was made for each one of them. He did not come with flowery statements or jokes. He was dead serious, and he told the truth.

I Corinthians 2:3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

I do not think we begin to understand the ministry. Many times when they first start out, they have to face a large audience, which can be a very difficult thing. Paul did not know how it was going to come out, but he was stepping forth in faith.

I Corinthians 2:4-6 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. [He just trusted God to bring him through this.] However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

In other words, this was not man's wisdom. This was not Christmas, or Easter, or the "I think it is this way" approach. This was the Word of God.

I Corinthians 2:7-11 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory [This wisdom that Paul speaks of was for us, that we might have glory, and prosper and grow.], which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." [I think that we forget that as well.] But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

I think that that should impress us! We can go to the moon, we can go around Jupiter and Mars. Look at the inventions—we say that man is so great! Mankind is great because God gave him the spirit of man.

I Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

You see, God wants us to have them, so that we understand and we can be saved. They are given to us freely, willingly, and with great desire.

I Corinthians 2:13-16 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

What a wonderful thing! The spirit of man is truly an awesome gift. He has been able to invent everything we see today, even going into space, but with all his abilities and intelligence, he cannot understand what God is all about.

The natural man cannot understand what we—the church of God—do, and he sees no reason for us to live as we do. He may admire our attitude, work ethic, family, honesty, faith, and belief; but for him to follow our lead, he just does not see that as being practical.

Mr. Armstrong used to say that trying to explain godly things to an individual who is not called, was like trying to explain mathematics to a cow. It just could not be done. The difference is the Spirit of God.

How special are we who are the called? It is not because we are anything great, but because God has given us the truth and called us.

Luke 10:21-24 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

The great minds of the world have wanted to see and understand what you see and understand, but God has not given it to them to do that.

This scripture has always struck me in that God calls the weak, base, and foolish and gives them understanding that the brilliant minds of those that research these things cannot begin to understand. For those of you who use commentaries, you will see that for yourself.

I Corinthians 1:18-24 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Those that are called have something very special, and I really hope that we cherish that. We must not back down from the calling that we have been given.

The message of Jesus being crucified was more than Jesus dying. It brings out that He is the Savior of mankind, it points to the truth of the gospel of the Kingdom of God, the family of God, the keeping of all of God's laws. But to those not called, it is just foolishness.

But to us who are the called, it is awesome.

I know that early in our church life, we tried to pass on this wonderful truth we had been given to others not called. I can remember my sweet loving mother truly wanted to understand, and asked me to explain why we keep the Sabbath over Sunday. I sat down with her and explained all of the scriptures. She said, "Thank you very much." Three times in one evening she went through her Bible with me, stating that she understood, but in the morning the interest was no longer there. God just was not calling her at this time.

Matthew 13:13-16 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."

Again God shows how selective He is in whom He calls, and it should show us how special we are in His sight, not because of anything we have done, but because He set His eye on us to call us out of this world.

Ephesians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

We have been called that we might become holy!

Many with the doctrine of eternal security—or once saved always saved—feel they can live as they wish and still be saved. But that is not so.

We are called that we might be the first fruits and truly work to become holy and without blame before Him in deep love and respect. We are called to represent God. We must be holy in all that we do.

Ephesians 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will . . .

Predestination means to, "set bounds before," and also be predetermined to perform the action. This was all done prior to the creation of the foundation of the world, which presents the giant scope of what God is doing that we might be a part of His family. He has put so much effort into us being here.

Ephesians 1:6-8 . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,. . .

He has abounded—or liberally made evident—to us the plan of salvation. He has shown us the great wisdom in all He is doing for us and the world by His Spirit! And, He has given us wisdom and prudence—meaning sound thinking—in understanding the wise thinking and planning that has gone into all He is doing for us by His Spirit.

Ephesians 1:9 . . . having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself . . .

And He has made known to us the mystery of His will. The word 'mystery' literally means, "something into which one must be initiated before it can be known." It is something concealed or hidden, or something above our comprehension. But, this is not the meaning in the New Testament. It means some doctrine or fact which has been concealed, or which has never been fully revealed, or which has been set forth only by figures and symbols. When the doctrine is made known it is made understandable. He has revealed the mystery—the unknown—to us.

So it was with those who are called by God the Father.

With the giving of God's Spirit, understanding came with the conversion of the individual, regarding Jesus being their Redeemer, as well as the whole plan of salvation.

Up to this time, as it states in II Corinthians 3, a veil had been over their understanding as to what God was all about. When the veil was removed they could understand the will of God in their lives.

Ephesians 1:10 . . . that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

The word 'dispensation' means literally, "management of household affairs." But in this case, it means, "In the arrangement of things, or of God's plan." When the times set forth by God are completed, He will collect under one Head all things.

Paul is using a word that is neuter in gender. It is not all persons, or all angels, or all human beings, but ALL THINGS—meaning everything.

All things are placed under Christ to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder, not only in the mind, but also in the world. The effects of the transgressing of God's laws are everywhere—the deserts; the rain forest dying; the oceans polluted; and not to mention the bays, lakes, and streams that are corrupt because of what man has done.

The world and universe are not as God had created them, thus the object of putting all things under Jesus Christ is to place all things in a pristine condition. This is the goal of God the Father, and we are going to have a part in it. All will be in love and harmony under Jesus Christ.

Again, we see the scope of what God has planned, and it is awesome.

All of this will be accomplished by the power of God's Holy Spirit. As God guides and hold the universe together by the power of His Holy Spirit, so He guides and operates His church in the same fashion.

I Corinthians 12:1-7 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

Sometimes we do not think that we have great gifts. Maybe some want to be an elder, or a deacon or something else. You would be surprised. Just the people that are steady at church—they come every week to church and just quietly sit—that is a gift from God.

We had an elders' meeting years back, when the church was coming apart, and one of the elders said, "I'm just going to quit." I said, "You can't do that." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Because when you come to church, and you sit in your seat, God is in heaven and all is well, and if you're not there that will disrupt the whole church," and he stayed.

So, when we come every week and we support and fellowship with each other, it gives stability and encouragement to one another—that is a gift from God. We all have gifts, and they are important.

I Corinthians 12:8-10 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

It is all part of the body of Jesus Christ—this is His church.

I Corinthians 12:28-31 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

And that way is to have the love of God, as we are told in chapter 13. If we had this there would be no argument over the gifts.

The subject of this chapter in general is that of *spiritual* gifts, and of the right way to use them, and the degree of respect that was due to those who received them.

One would think that with the gift of God's Holy Spirit that it would be impossible to fail, but with this gift comes the command to use it to overcome, and this is where human nature, and Satan come in to play.

I Thessalonians 5:14-19 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

In these verses it does mention that it is possible to quench, or put out the Holy Spirit. The term quench pictures the putting out of a fire, and thus indicates that by our actions it is possible to push the gift that has been given to us aside.

I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The world we live in has its attractions that pull at us. If we value them more than obedience to God, then indeed the love of God is not in us.

A simple explanation of the 'lust of the flesh' is: That which is motivated by our lower animal nature.

For 'lust of the eyes,' a couple of examples are: David when he looked upon Bathsheba; Eve, when she lusted for the fruit of the tree in the garden—lust for anything produced for the eyes. We with computers have much of that today.

For "pride of life," an example would be of being puffed up as was Satan with his own self-importance.

Matthew 13:22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Another word for 'choke' is 'smother.' This is the Laodicean era that we live in, and this is so true. So many times we think that because we are well off, and we have a great deal, that God is blessing us, but we do not stop to consider how poor we really are.

What he is saying, here, is that the cares of this world can smother us. The bottom line is that this system will pass away, but he that does God's will is going to live forever.

In a very real sense, we can be our own worst enemy when we give in to the pulls of this world inspired by Satan. The power that we have been given, through God's Holy Spirit, is the power to overcome. We must develop, and take on, that character that will enable us to be the very sons of God.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

That is pretty easy to understand. It is simple. It is straightforward. And, if you have the Spirit of God and you are following it you are part of the God family right now. He considers you sons already.

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

We are heirs in wisdom, ability, understanding, knowledge, courage, and right judgment.

God the Father and Jesus Christ understand that we must learn to resist sin, truly overcoming it, that our very nature will be truly changed from that nature we were called with. It must be changed.

In short, we cannot be debtors to the flesh, and be in God's Kingdom.

Romans 8:11-13 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

If you follow the urging and the motivation by God's Spirit to do what is right, you will not be debtors to the flesh, and you will not die.

To ensure that we develop godly character, the kind of character that will last for all eternity, God has seen to it that we have an adversary who works to cause us to want to sin, and not change. That adversary hates God, and us, with every fiber of his being, and who will stop at nothing, and if at all possible will cause us to abort this calling.

Revelation 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

One would think, that if you had a thousand years to think things over that you might decide to change your ways.

Revelation 20:7-10 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are [were]. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The point of this was that Satan shows no repentance, but he still tries to destroy God's people. He has a perfect hatred.

Whom do we really fight against?

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The war, here, is simple to understand—it is between God and Satan, and the battleground, the war that it is waged on, is your mind and mine.

Proverbs 4:23 reminds us to guard our hearts with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life—how we live and what we do. Our mind directs us in what we allow into our thinking, and that in turn directs our actions.

The term 'wiles of the devil' in Ephesians 6:11 means that Satan is no dummy, and he has a well-laid-out method to defeat us. This superior spirit being hates all that God is doing, continually lays out traps to destroy the people of God, and we have to be aware of that.

Ephesians 6:12-13 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

He says that we wrestle. This is hand-to-hand combat with Satan the Devil. It is showing that it is an up close and personal contact fight, not some distant war where the enemy is not seen. It is right in our face and exceedingly personal.

Ephesians 6:14-18 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all the saints.

Verse 16 tells us to take the shield of faith to be able to put out the fiery darts of Satan. I always think flaming arrows and the covered wagon when I think of the fiery darts.

What are these fiery darts? The simple explanation is that they are Satan's lies! This how Satan traps us, with lies. He presents something that looks good and it is not, and it can kill us. Satan is continually placing wrong images of how to live before us!

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there

is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Keep this in the back of your mind, because when he presents things to you that look good, there is no truth in Satan. These are the fiery darts that he is going to be throwing at you.

God tells us to be faithful, kind, and loving to our mate. Satan places images of erotic sex with other individuals on the Internet, in the movies, books, or magazines.

We are told to earn our living by working and looking to God for advancement. Satan plants "Get rich quick schemes," gambling halls and lotteries to waste our time and money on.

God wants us to learn to live within our means. Satan urges us to get all we want now, and live beyond our means, that it might bring tremendous stress to our marriage and home, that we might smother the Spirit of God.

God wants us to have loving order in the home, with the husband rightly leading the wife and family in consideration for his wife, and the wife in turn submitting to her husband in appreciation of his role.

Satan then promotes women's rights, where being a housewife and mother is now viewed by the world around us as stifling one's potential.

Satan injects thoughts into men's minds to ignore their wives, thus men do not lead correctly, having patience, and loving their wives, deeply and appreciating the wonderful gift that God has given them.

God wants us to be obedient to His laws. Satan subtly suggests that law keeping is not that important (especially in this age), and that God will understand if we break them. Just have a right heart. Many letters come in against law keeping. One person said, "All you have to do is be a good person." We replied, "Yes, that's right, but what you do not understand is that God defines what is good, and mankind doesn't want that to happen."

Whatever God instructs us to do, Satan offers a counterfeit message that will cause us to sin, losing out on the Kingdom, if we follow it. We must remember that Satan will do anything he can to put one into an attitude of rebellion against God's instruction. This, brethren, is our fight to overcome that, and not to fall for it.

Satan is the father of "the bad attitude," and as we heard in a sermonette from Jack Bulharowski, getting into an attitude that produces a root of bitterness in any relationship can be a one way ticket out of the church. We can never let our attitudes get that way.

Wives have thoughts injected by Satan not to forgive and submit to their husbands, and husbands have thoughts injected by Satan to not be tender, loving, and thoughtful towards their wives. As a husband I would say that we probably all fall short in this at times.

Satan will always insert feelings of resentment and hatred toward another, taking away all desire to forgive, thus placing us at odds with God.

In verse 11 we are told to put on the armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles, the schemes, the plans of Satan to annihilate us. I hope that we understand what Satan's purpose—desire—on this earth is. In his thinking, it is to destroy each and every one of us. This is what Satan and his demons are all about.

Satan has been cast out of heaven, and he has no future that is positive. His only hope is to destroy what God is building. He truly and completely hates those who have the opportunity to become a member of the family of God.

But in God's thinking, Satan is a useful tool, in testing us, by causing us to resist the darts that he throws at us.

We resist them by the shield of faith. We must have faith in the instruction of God in how to live in this evil world, run by the prince of the power of the air. This will produce the character that we need, and will quench the fiery darts that Satan hurls at us.

I would like to go through some of these things in Ephesians 6:

Ephesians 6:13-14 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,. . .

Again, do not fall for the false things, but have truth as your foundation. Having the 'breastplate of righteousness,' means doing all that you can to live a righteous life, with each other, with the brethren, and with the world around you.

Ephesians 6:15-17 . . . and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace [This means you will not be fighting and getting even.]; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

We are to pray for one another, and to pray for the ministry as well.

In short, the key to resisting Satan, and overcoming him, is to be conscious of what God wants and to perform it to the best of our ability. I will tell you from personal experience, it is not easy. Paul still struggled with his own human nature after twenty or twenty-five years.

During Pentecost it is good to again be reminded of what the Holy Spirit is, its power, and its purpose for us at this time, and to be again reminded what a wonderful gift this is. It is also right to be reminded how special we are in God's sight to first receive this gift.

Why has God given us this gift?

James 1:17-18 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

The term "first fruits" indicates the first taken of anything; the first to be offered. Though the phrase here does not denote honor of itself, it does refer to the fact that this is the first time this was done, there is the sense of our being honored in this calling we have been given.

What is God's intent in giving us His Spirit?

Ephesians 1:11-14 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

God sealed us with His Holy Spirit of promise. What was the promise? God's Holy Spirit is the down payment, or the promissory note of our inheritance, which is living as members of the God family.

Here, Paul tells us that we are sealed. In short, we have had a mark set upon us to denote that we are genuine and authentic, and that we are confirmed and approved by God.

Brethren, I hope that all of us truly appreciates possessing this gift, and that we allow God's Spirit to influence our thinking in obedience, filling us with hope; causing us to look forward, so to speak, to the final payment being made, when we will all be changed into Spirit as members of the God family.

How long did God intend us to have His Holy Spirit?

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

Brethren we should be ever thankful for the wonderful gift that we have been given. It should reflect in our love for one another—husbands to wives, and wives to husbands. We should never neglect it, nor take it for granted, but truly appreciate it, and listen more intently to it, asking that it be increased in us. If we are doing our part, God will be pleased to give it to us.

II Corinthians 13:11-14 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.