

The Life-Changing Package

The Miracle Within

Acts 2:37-39

9/11/16

- During the depression, there was a man named Yates who owned a sheep ranch. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay his mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his property.
 - o With little money for clothes or food, his family was barely able to survive. Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was greatly troubled about how he would pay the bills.
 - o Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and informed him that there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well. Gladly, he signed a lease contract. He didn't think they would find anything, but the payment he would receive for them to try would most definitely help his family.
 - o At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Several subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a test of one of the wells showed that it still had a potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day.
 - o And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the ranch land ... he had received all the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he had been living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty.

- The problem? He didn't know the oil was there ... even though he owned it. He was not aware of the miracle that laid within his own property.
 - o Many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They do not know the wealth that lies within them. They do not know the miracle that lies within them or they ignore the miracle within.
 - o They wonder why they continue to struggle day after day after day. They wonder why they can't seem to tap into the victorious and joyful life that they have heard a follower of Jesus should have. They hear about and even see others whose lives are like this burning fire for Jesus, but theirs is lucky to be a smoldering ember.

- For the last two weeks, we have been talking about the life-changing package of salvation. Salvation isn't a one-time gift. It is a package that holds several gifts within. We've been studying **Acts 2:37-39** to find these gifts. Let's read it.
 - o First, we learned about the gift of repentance which opens the salvation package. Without repentance – admitting and turning from our sins, we will never be able to open the package that Jesus has for us.

- The next gift is baptism. This takes repentance to the next level. It is an outward, public declaration of the repentance you have done and the decision you have made to live for Jesus and him alone.
- Then, Peter tells us the next gift. After repentance and baptism, believers will receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift that brings the fire, the blaze, the passion to your Christian life.
 - Peter knew this Fire literally. He and 120 followers of Jesus had just experienced it as they were gathered in Jerusalem waiting and praying for the Holy Spirit. And, when the Holy Spirit showed up, they knew it! He showed up in a blaze of glory, in a blaze of what looked like tongues of fire settling on their heads.
 - This is known as the Day of Pentecost. This was the day that the church was born – born in a blaze of glory that made them unstoppable.
 - Because of this blaze and fire of passion, Peter and the other disciples went out and started to tell everyone about Jesus. Peter preached to a great crowd. The passage we just read was at the end of Peter’s sermon and it’s when the people asked how they could be saved.
 - This blazing passion is what could be used to describe the actions of the disciples turned apostles, the early church leaders and the early church. This church was on fire!
- Can we sing & proclaim the same today? Where is that blaze of fire? Where is that blaze of glory in the church today?
 - It seems to me that the average Christian and the average church is bogged down somewhere between Calvary (the cross) and Pentecost. They have been to Calvary for pardon, but they have not been to Pentecost for power.
 - And, because of this, the average Christian, has not tapped into the gift of the Holy Spirit – the gift that is already within them!
 - At Bethlehem, Jesus came as Emmanuel which means “God with us.”
 - Calvary means God for us.
 - But Pentecost means God IN us.
 - The average Christian might well know of God with us and God for us, but haven’t tapped into how God is with them. Are you the average Christian? If so, you are in for a miracle today!
- D.L. Moody said, ... "You might as well try to hear without ears, or breathe without lungs, as try to live a Christian life without the Spirit of God in your heart." You can’t live the Christian life without the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, where do we go wrong with this gift?
- Well, often the gift of the Holy Spirit is ignored. Many Christians today are much like the Ephesian believers spoken of in Acts 19:12 when Paul asked them “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They replied we did not even know that there was a Holy Spirit.

- There are churches, even today, that don't preach on the gifts of the Holy Spirit or just briefly mention the Holy Spirit, but don't talk about him too much because of the controversy that has arisen over the years about the gifts of the Spirit.
 - Through the years, we have seen abuse and misuse of the spiritual gifts and of God's power as people claim one gift is evidence of the Spirit over another. As a result, we become so afraid of the excesses or afraid of those who go to extremes.
 - Yet, we must not allow anything to push us away from that which is true and that which is real!
 - Even the word Pentecost is avoided. But, Pentecost is not a Denomination. It is an encounter with the Spirit of God that every blood bought child of God should receive.
- The other way we miss the gift is when we don't fully understand the role of the Holy Spirit and so we haven't tapped into the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Instead, we've tried to substitute true power with something that we have tried to create.
- Because of this, we see churches that are filled with things to do and programs and ministries and activities to please everyone and to drum up excitement when what we need are not more things and activities and stuff, but we need the wind and the fire of Pentecost.
 - When we substitute our stuff, they are poor substitutes for the real deal. Our stuff lacks power, they lack the real fire from God. We are just trying to produce our own fireworks only to find out that we've got duds!
 - We are living in the day of program and promotions, trying to duplicate the excitement that God, the Holy Spirit did on that glorious day. We whip up our own flames and our own fire, but we lack the reality and the warmth of the real thing.
 - What we need are Spirit-filled believers who have caught the Holy Spirit fire! Then, we wouldn't have to work to get folks excited, I wouldn't have to work to get folk excited. We would already be excited about God and his kingdom because we are filled with God's Spirit and his fire has lit something under our backsides and inside our hearts!
- Our passage in Acts 2 says that the Holy Spirit, the real flame lives and abides within each of us and will do the miraculous by getting us excited about the Kingdom of God and excited to do the things of God – if we let him!
- Rev. Vance Havner once said, "The average one of usis so afraid of getting out on a limb ... that we never even bother ... to climb up the tree."
 - As Christians, we climb the tree to get out on a limb when we unwrap the gift of being filled with the Holy Spirit. When we unwrap the gift of the Holy Spirit, we will find that we aren't climbing the tree or getting out on limbs alone. We have a supernatural power within us that empower us and even gives us the desire to do some tree and limb climbing!
- Unfortunately, though, most see tree and limb climbing as something meant for someone else. This is another way we miss the gift of the Holy Spirit. We think the outpouring of the

Holy Spirit is for a select special group of people – you know, the super holy – the missionaries and pastors and evangelists.

- But, did you catch what Peter said to the crowd? We learned last week that this crowd was 3,000 people. He said you. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This you is a plural, meaning everyone here, you.
 - People here have made fun of me for saying y'all. Yes, I'm from southern Ohio with Kentucky and Tennessee influences.
 - If Peter were from southern Ohio and especially if he were from even more southern states, he would have said, all y'all – meaning all of you – everyone here. Here in Rhode Island, you might say all of youse.
- Not only did Peter say it is for all y'all here listening, but he also said that the promise of the gift was to all who believe – to the children of everyone there and even to the Gentiles who had yet to hear about this gift. But, when they do and when they respond, the gift of the Holy Spirit would fill them as well.
- So, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not a special blessing for a special few in a special age. It is for all – all who have truly repented. All who believe that Jesus is Lord and have made him the Lord of their lives.
 - It is for all who have turned from their sins. It is for all who have followed the first act of obedience through baptism and made a proclamation of their inward transformation and life decision.
 - Now, if you haven't repented and you haven't completely turned from your sins. If you haven't fully been obedient to the Lord with your life. If you do not want to make a public proclamation of Jesus being the Lord of your life. If you are holding on to something, especially some sin, that you know God wants you to give up, then it's going to be hard for the Holy Spirit to be given because you aren't ready to receive him.
- But, if you have repented and turned to God and have made your faith public, then the real question is not whether you have a right to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The question is have you claimed the Jesus given right for you to have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Have you availed yourself of the miracle of the Holy Spirit living in you?
 - If not, you are going to have a hard time feeling empowered for daily living, let alone Christian living because you haven't tapped into the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - Many have allowed the devil or religious tradition to rob them of the power of God. They have believed the lie of the devil the Holy Spirit is for someone else and they have believed the lie of religious tradition that if you do things in a certain way, that is enough and that's key to salvation. Both are lies that keep people from the promise of God!
 - The promise is for you! The Holy Spirit want to fill you and empower you! It is a glorious promise that will catapult your Christian life so that you aren't living in hum-drum, mamby-pamby, disgruntled, frown on your face Christianity. Instead,

you will be living in powerful, victorious, exciting Christian living because you have the power of the Holy Spirit living within you!

- And yet, this encounter with the Holy Spirit is not some intangible mystical experience that automatically happens. This is another way we go wrong in our thinking and receiving of the Holy Spirit. We think he just comes on automatically.
 - o No, He is given to those who ask him! In *Luke 11:13*, Jesus said, “...*how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.*”
 - o Listen God doesn't break into our lives or our hearts and take us by force. He gave us free will. We have to ask him and invite him. We have to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and we have to continue to ask Him to fill us and empower us to be more like Jesus.
 - o This is the process that we call sanctification in the church. Sanctification, or the Holy Spirit filling, is not a one moment in time event. It is a life-time process as we are filled with the Spirit and then we are filled more and more as allow him to work in us, as we submit to his moving in our hearts and as we obey his leading us in doing what is right and godly.

- The great evangelist, D L Moody, was once asked why he urged Christians to ask to be filled constantly with the Holy Spirit. "Well," he said, "I need a continual infilling because I leak!"
 - o We all leak! One day we are on spiritual fire and a week later we are walking around as though we are defeated. We leak!
 - o We all need to be filled anew, to be filled consistently, to seek a greater and greater filling with the Holy Spirit. That is how we grow spiritually – when we seek the Holy Spirit and his filling of us more and more.

- Now, like I stated earlier, one of the ways we go wrong in our thinking about the Holy Spirit is we don't understand the role of the Holy Spirit. We believe that there is a Holy Spirit who can live within us, but we don't really know what He does or some don't think that he does very much.
 - o If that is the case, then we are going to miss out on the miracle of what the Holy Spirit can give to each of us.
 - o Christ clearly states the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit the life of each believer when he said in *John 16:7-8*, But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.
 - o Jesus said it is better for us that the Holy Spirit fills us than for Jesus to stay on earth. And in *John 14*, Jesus says that we will do things even greater than Jesus did. How is that – because of the miracle with you! Because of the power of what the Holy Spirit will do!

- So, what does the Holy Spirit do? We see what the Holy Spirit does in our lives by how we live our lives. There are evidences of the miracle of the Holy Spirit in us.

- I'm going to spend a lot of time on the final two evidences this morning. In reality, I could preach a sermon or two for every evidence of the miracle of the Holy Spirit in us.
- The first evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that he Enables us to stand firm.
 - There is a story about Jackie Robinson, who as we probably know, was the first African-American to play major league baseball. But, it was tough. Robinson had to face jeering crowds at every stadium. He was held to a higher standard, and was criticized and scrutinized more often than the white players of his time.
 - One day, while playing in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error at second base and the crowd began to ridicule him. He stood at that base, humiliated and completely discouraged while the fans jeered.
 - Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie and stood with him facing the crowd. Robinson was no longer alone and the fans grew quiet.
 - Robinson later said that Pee Wee's act of solidarity, that arm around his shoulder, saved his career and gave him the strength to go on.
- When we choose Jesus, we need a miracle within us to stand firm as we live completely opposite of the ways of the world. With the arm of the Holy Spirit firmly holding us, He can shut down the jeers of the evil one and the world and give us strength to go on.
- Another evidence of what the miracle of the Holy Spirit is doing in us is that We follow rather than lead.
 - A story is told of a certain guide who lived in the Arabian Desert who never lost his way. He carried with him a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one of its legs.
 - When in doubt as to which path to take, he threw the bird in to the air. The pigeon quickly strained at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and thus led the guide accurately to his goal. Because of this unique practice he was known as "The dove man."
- What is the symbol often used for the Holy Spirit? The dove. The Holy Spirit, the Heavenly Dove, is willing and able to direct us because he knows best the narrow way that leads to an abundant life. If we will let him. If we will stop insisting to go our own way!
 - You know, there is a time to lead and there is a time to follow. It doesn't matter if you are a natural born leader and that's just in your DNA or not, there is always a time to follow and there is always One who you definitely should follow, regardless of what you think. That One is the Holy Spirit. When he lives in us, we want to follow him rather than take control of our own lives.
 - You can tell if someone is a Spirit-filled believer if they are good followers who are submissive to the voice of God, rather than trying to justify doing things their own way or according to their own desires or preferences. Are you still trying to control your life and your life circumstances or are you content to follow the Holy Spirit?

- The third evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that we desire to learn and live in community. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit will teach us, will counsel us and will lead us into all truth. This is key to our spiritual growth. Who here, when they came to Jesus, automatically knew everything about Jesus and what he wanted you to do with your life? That comes by learning as we read God's Word and hear from the Holy Spirit.
 - o When I was ministering in Indiana, I was mentoring a woman once who was unmarried and living with her boyfriend. Both had recently committed their lives to Jesus. As we were going through Scripture and some mentoring material, one day she said, "I was reading my Bible, and from what I was reading, I don't think that I should be living with my boyfriend. Is that right?"
 - o Now, as someone who grew up in the church, I thought everyone just knew that – you should not have sex with someone before you're married and this includes living with them. But, she didn't know that because she didn't grow up in the church and no one taught her. Until the Holy Spirit taught her through God's Word and giving her understanding.

- Did you also note that she asked someone else, namely me, about what the Holy Spirit through God's Word taught her? We, then, together looked further into God's Word. She was hungry to learn other things that she didn't know. She realized that if she didn't know about this, there were probably so many other things that she did or thought that might not be in line with God's Word and his ways. She had a desire to learn.
 - o And, that desire to learn is not just a desire to learn individually, but to learn in community.
 - o The Holy Spirit is always going to guide you to learn and live in community, never to learn and live solely individually. Yes, quiet time with just you and the Lord is important. Yes, personal devotional time and personal prayer time is important. But, the Holy Spirit is also going to guide you to learn and live in community as well so that we can be better together.
 - o That's because God is relational. His core is relational. The Trinity is relational. So, he wants to develop us relationally.

- In Galatians 5, it lists the fruit of the Holy Spirit. These are things that the Holy Spirit will develop in us as we allow him to dwell in us. Do you know what they are? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
 - o All of those are relational in nature because God always intended us to learn and live in community. Think about it. You don't need to have kindness if you are doing life by yourself. We're all pretty kind to ourselves, selfish and self-centered, even. You don't need to grow in self-control or goodness or faithfulness or patience or love for our own good.
 - o But, we sure do if we want to be in community with one another. These are fruits that help us to live together, as the family of God and as those who set an example of a follower of Christ to unbelievers who are watching our lives.

- I don't believe that a person can say they are filled with the Holy Spirit and then try to do Christian living on their own. That goes against the working of the Holy Spirit and the building of the church initiated by Jesus Christ!
 - Last week, we talked about the four things that we want to see every believer in this church do as they grow as a disciple of Jesus. First, we want everyone to worship together on Sunday morning as a family. Second, we want everyone to be involved in a LIFE Group. Third, we want everyone to be involved in a ministry of the church. Fourth, we want everyone to do outreach in some way to proclaim the good news of Jesus.
 - Last week, we saw how baptism moves people to the first action of a believer. The filling of the Holy Spirit in your life will move you to the second action of a believer.

- The Holy Spirit will move you to be involved in a LIFE Group, a connection group of believers, so that you can do life, Christian life, together with a group of people. In this group, you take God's Word and you study it together. But, it's not just hearing what one person has to say about it. It's asking questions about what you are reading in His Word. It's giving your insight. It's digging in together. It's growing deeper and more in depth than what we can do on a Sunday morning.
 - In the past, this was called Bible Study. We are calling them LIFE Groups now. Same thing. The foundation of LIFE Groups is Bible study. It is studying and learning and growing together. It is praying for one another. It is living and learning in community.
 - Please listen to me - you will never learn as much as you can from the Holy Spirit if you are not actively learning and living in community. Together, we sharpen each other, we grapple with the things of God together. Together, we begin to see a whole new level of spiritual growth that we will never attain alone.
 - And, you can't skip this discipleship step and just move on to service. If you do, you will not experience the depth of service that God intends for you to have because you have not developed the depth of relationships within community the God intends for you. Relationships spark the desire to serve.

- If you neglect living in community, you will never experience the next evidence of the Holy Spirit because it's one we often don't want to have at all. The Holy Spirit empowers us to witness. *Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
 - Notice something in this verse. It says that **first**, they would receive the Holy Spirit, and **then** they would be his witnesses. The Holy Spirit comes first and then witnessing.
 - Now, these were Jesus' disciples that Jesus was talking to. If anyone should be able to witness, it would be them. Yet, without Jesus present, Acts 1:8 implies that they could only become witnesses after they received the Holy Spirit. Why should they have to wait? Why not just begin witnessing right then and there?

- Well, they could have started but they would have lacked the power to be an effective witness. That's because you need a different kind of power to witness. You can't count on your own power being enough. You need some supernatural power, some Holy Spirit power, to witness and do it right!
- Have you ever felt frustrated in witnessing? Have you ever even tried it? Does it intimidate you? Have you tried to invite folk to church and it just doesn't seem to work? People do not seem to want to listen. They politely put us off. They have other things to do.
 - It can be Frustrating... extremely frustrating. Then, there's the whole fear of rejection. We've been talking for the last two months in the 24 to Double Module viewing that we do every first Sunday about what hinders us from inviting people to church.
 - We have learned that the difference between a growing church and a dying church is INVITE. If we – all of us – don't invite people, the church will die. If we do invite, the church will grow. Inviting people to church and witnessing are in the same category.
- But, it is intimidating and frustrating and at times we probably feel it would be so much easier if we could be like Lucy in the old Peanuts cartoon where Lucy says to Charlie Brown, "I would have made a great evangelist."
 - Charlie Brown answers, "Is that so?"
She says, "Yes, I convinced that boy in front of me in school that my religion is better than his religion."
 - Charlie Brown asked, "Well, how did you do that?" Lucy answers, "I hit him over the head with my lunch box."
 - Now that may be a tempting way to witness. But I'm sure not real successful.
- What I'm sure of is that part of our frustration in witnessing can come from not understanding the pivotal role that the Holy Spirit, can play when sharing our faith.
 - Remember what Jesus said in John 16:7-8? But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.
 - Not only does he empower us for living, but one of the primary responsibilities of God's Spirit is convicting people of their sin, of their need for righteousness and the reality of the impending judgment.
 - You and I do not have to convict people with regard to salvation. That is the Holy Spirit's job. We are to witness.
- In a court room, there is a judge, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, a defendant, and witnesses. A witness gives his or her testimony.
 - Do the witnesses prosecute the defendant? NO! Do the witnesses convict the defendant? NO! Do the witnesses proclaim a judgment? Absolutely not!

- Witnesses witness and they do their best to give honest and true testimony. Why? Because they realize that the verdict may hinge on how well they witness.
 - But their only job is to witness, to testify.
- Convicting people of their sins of the need of righteousness and the closeness of judgment is the Holy Spirit's responsibility. It's not ours. We don't have to get frustrated when people reject the Jesus. They are rejecting Jesus, not us. We just have to witness.
 - Witnessing is important because we work with the Holy Spirit within us so others might know of the package of salvation that is available to them. Without our testimony, without our witness the world, would not know the Good News.
 - Unless someone witnesses the Good News, people cannot hear. If they do not hear, the Holy Spirit has a harder time convicting them of their need. Then, they cannot believe if they do not believe they cannot call and if they do not call they will not be saved.
 - The witness of God in us is a vital part of the Good News. Holy Spirit filled followers desire to and are empowered to witness.
- I have heard something recently that will probably never get media coverage. Apparently, a revival is happening in some high schools in Ohio and it is happening through football teams. I read that several football players at Greenville High School (which is about 20 minutes from my hometown in Eaton, OH), accepted Jesus as their Savior. They started witnessing to the friends on their team. And, the Holy Spirit showed up!
 - Almost the whole team has accepted Jesus as their Savior. Then, they went to play a game against another team and were praying. Several players from the other team came over to pray with them. Then, those players and players from the Greenville team, witnessed to players from the other team. Several on that team accepted Jesus. This has happened three times, now.
- Listen, the Holy Spirit wants to do some miracles in us and through us. We are still living in a generation and in a time when God desires to pour out His Spirit. The rain of the Holy Spirit can and is falling on the dry, religious Ground of our day.
 - And, the Holy Spirit wants to rain down upon us to prepare us for his miracle in us and for harvest here. Do you believe it?? Are you ready for it?
 - You will be if you have claimed the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to you and are allowing him to work in your and be evidenced in your life. Have you tapped into the miracle within you?