Round Top Church Christian Fellowship

***The Spirit Through Believers***

***Acts 1 & 2***

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The Year of Our Lord

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

The Book of Acts is about the “acts of the Holy Spirit” through the lives of Believers. Obviously, the apostles are the first group identified in Acts 1 to be the conduit of God’s Spirit after the Ascension. In our last sermon, we talked about the distinction between God’s Spirit at work in salvation and the conviction of sin (John 16:8) in comparison to God’s Spirit at work providing additional gifts and empowerment (John 20:19ff, Acts 2). When Jesus speaks of the “Helper” to come in John 16:7, it is in the context of His Spirit coming and continuing the work of the ministry. Without Jesus there in body, He will be there in Spirit.

From reading the Bible, we see that God’s Spirit has always been. God and His Spirit have worked through people since He created the world and Adam and Eve. Last week, we chronicled the activities of God and His Spirit beginning from Genesis 1 and 2.

It is not a stretch to view the whole Old Testament as the Acts of God as the Creator,

Acts of God in the Creation,

Acts of God in the lives of Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abram/Sara, Isaac/Rebekah, Jacob/Rachel & Leah, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon and many more to John the Baptist who pointed to God as Jesus the Messiah. God worked through all of these people. Whether it be in the presence as Creator, Counselor or Savior, God is here.

God cannot be divided from His nature. We can say that God is indivisible. This is important to realize that from the creation to the Cross to now, God is the same. God is not limited in form, shape, capacity, authority, presence or knowledge. Reading the Bible and experiencing God’s presence in our lives gives us the reality of an eternal victory that only He can provide. Some will say, “How can you be so sure?”

 First, let us make additional observations.

There is not any separation in the nature of God as He manifests Himself as Jesus-the-Son or Holy Spirit. We cannot emphasize enough that God is not limited in form or function. Simply put, if God was limited, He would not be God.

The Creeds of Christendom, particularly from Nicaea 325 to Trent 1545 to Vatican II 1962 (21st council) have “attempted” to define God as one. In reality, human language is insufficient to define God. We are addressing a spiritual being that is not contained by the laws of physics, of which we have a limited understanding.

It is a miracle that God has presented Himself in three ways to us known as Father, Son and Spirit. The bottom line is that the experiences in life for the Believer, the working of our conscience state of awareness, confirm that the Word of God is true, and His presence is true. We follow God and His word. Therefore, we see the outcome of the truth, His Word speaks, and we live-out His Word. At the same time, we see the consequences of alternative lives. At the heart of our experience is Love, peace and forgiveness. Answer the question, how can Corrie Ten Boom say:

 “There is no pit so deep, that God’s love is not deeper.” And

"You can never learn that Christ is all you need,

until Christ is all you have."

Corrie can say these things because the Eternal God lived in her. Of course, context is reality. For those of you who do not know Corrie, she spent her life after the Nazi concentration camps, that killed her family, forgiving the Nazis and witnessing the power of God working in her.

Have you a problem forgiving someone? You want to experience the reality of God’s Spirit working in you? You can start by seeking God to forgive you of your own sins. God’s spiritual power works in people who have surrendered to Him. This is supernatural power. The secular world does not have this power. You cannot order this power on Amazon or Google a remedy. This power to receive and give forgiveness does not reside in the fallen world. Jesus told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of the world. This is the kingdom power of which Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3. There are keywords Jesus told Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. Jesus told Nicodemus that a person could not see or enter the kingdom of God unless a person is born again of spirit. No wonder that lost prideful people find it hard to understand the Gospel of God. They cannot ‘see’ until they are born again. They can ‘hear’, but haven’t any spiritual understanding of the realty until they surrender to God’s Holy Spirit conviction. Jesus constantly said that a person who is lost has ‘no ears to hear or eyes to see’ the truth in His message. The world is looking for mathematical, naturalistic explanation for everything. However, these pursuits cannot produce love, peace and forgiveness.

Now, let us look at the Jews who heard the Holy Spirit preaching of Peter at Pentecost. Here is another example of God’s Spirit at work. These people are the ones whose hearts killed Jesus. Their hearty approval called for Barabbas to be released and Jesus take his place. Acts 2 chronicles the account. The Holy Spirit, through Peter’s preaching, convicted them, and then, they were able to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The point of salvation came when Scripture declares their hearts were pierced/cut (Acts 2:37). This is not a physical quickening. Man cannot perform this quickening in a surgical procedure. This is God’s Spirit business. This is when the need for forgiveness of sin becomes an eternal reality.

Remember, witness of the Apostles is after the Resurrection, after the Ascension and immediately after Pentecost. These are the Apostles who had abandoned Jesus before the Cross. Then they spent time with the Resurrected Lord. This changed their life-direction, and the fruit of their life-change was that others heard the Good News.

These in Acts 2 are proof that there is not any need for water-baptism to gain salvation. Remember, Luke is reporting an eye-witness account. It was the piecing of the heart by the Spirit of God that made salvation possible for them. When this happens, a person has a choice to make. Surrender or reject. These Jews surrendered and called-out to Peter, “What must we do?” This is the point of Spirit-baptism. This is the only reality to take place in a lost person in order to became a person who can stand in front of God “approved.” This is *faith* driven. *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
And for it the men of old gained approval* (Hebrews 11:1-2)

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, (Hebrews 3:7)

These Jews who had accepted Spirit-Baptism of the heart then witnessed their conversion in water-baptism (Acts 2;38).

Again, this is a miracle of the work of God’s Spirit. The same people that called for the crucifixion of Jesus surrendered to Him after Pentecost. This is God’s love, peace and forgiveness at work. This is why we are sure of God and His message. We are sure of God’s work as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**God’s Spirit is the same from the beginning.**

There has been much discussion about God’s Spirit resting upon someone or guiding them without being in them in the Old Testament.

**1 Chronicles 12:18** Then the Spirit came upon Amasai,

**Judges 11:29** Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah,

**1 Samuel 11:6** Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily

All of these are depictions of God’s Spirit at work with people. The use of the word “upon” is understood by many that God’s Spirit did not indwell a person, but simply guided them in an external way. The facts of the overall Biblical account cannot support this view. Below are other Old Testament passages detailing the Spirit of God came upon a person.

**Numbers** 11:17, 25, 26, 29, 24:2; **Judges** 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6,19, 15:14; **1 Samuel** 10:6, 10, 11:6, 16:13, 18:10, 19:20, 23; 2 **Kings** 2:9; **1 Chronicles** 12:18; **2 Chronicles** 20:14; **Isaiah** 32:15, 42:1, 59:21, 61:1; **Ezekiel** 11:5, 37:1

**Now let us examine the New Testament.**

Matthew 12:18 is a direct reference to Isaiah 42:1, 61:1

Here is a direct quote from Jesus as he recites Isaiah 61:1.

**See Matthew 12:18 and Luke 4:18** "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

 ‎ עָלָ֑י (Isaiah. 61:1 WTT)

**Isaiah 42:1** "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon (Hebrew עָלָ֔יו (Isaiah 42:1 WTT) Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

 What do we glean from this comparison? We see that the Hebrew or Greek word translated “upon” (in the cited context) means the same in the New Testament as it does in the Old Testament. Without a doubt, the Spirit of God was indwelled in the body of His incarnated Being that we know to be Jesus Christ. Jesus himself recites the Isaiah text with the word “upon.” Here are more witnesses to the Spirit in the New Testament as the Spirit was identified in the Old Testament.

**At Jesus’ Baptism with John.**

**Mark. 1:10 10** Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

**Angel of God telling Mary about her Spirit-pregnancy.**

**Luke 1:35** The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The text here in Luke is another witness of the use of the word “upon” meaning “indwelled.” How could Mary become “with child” if the Spirit of God just rested upon her and not indwelled her?

 **John the Baptist testifying about Jesus’ baptism.**

**John 1:32** John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

**The reference at Pentecost.**

**Acts 1:8** but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

**The Power of God’s Spirit Working in People.**

What we see chronicled in the book of Acts is God’s continued intent to work through people who have serious flaws. This is God in Spirit doing the work in people.

Remember that Jesus was determined to give the realization of His presence/being indwelling people. Our best example of this is in John 20. Jesus breathes His Spirit into the apostles in order to visibly show us His intent and the reality of His power to be at work in us. Yes, this is a miracle. Meaning that we cannot materialistically describe the process. However, we see the outcome. The Apostles go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to give them additional gifts. They then go to the Temple steps and preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 1ff).

 **It’s All About Love – The Miracle**

God did not create love in a test tube. Love is a miracle along with grace, gentleness, kindness and forgiveness. None of these can be created in a petri dish. Does that mean they do not exist? We know they exist. We experience all of these attributes of God in life. As Believers, our “spiritual consciousness” uses the gifts God provides.

Think about our design. People are designed to identify and chose to experience love. In this regard, we are the mirror image of God. He chose to create us in His image to experience love. This love-experience is a conscious choice we have to make. The Cross is the event that exhibited God’s love to all.

**How Powerful Is God’s Love?**

God is Love (1 John 4:8), and His love is so powerful it forgives the deepest of sin, even betrayal. Peter denies knowing Jesus and goes into hiding. The other apostles made themselves hard-to-find from the Roman and Jewish officials. This is understandable, as they too did not want to experience their own cross. What made them change their minds? The love of God pursued them after the Resurrection. Despite the fact that they had walked away from Jesus, His love pursued them and restored them. The “Resurrected Lord” restored Peter, and He will restore all those who come to Him. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).

Honest secular historians may discount the Resurrection, but they observe that the apostles changed their public activities after their claim of the empty tomb and Ascension. They came speaking in the name of Jesus. It is a historical fact that the apostles who ran away returned. Was it the message to meet Jesus in Galilee? Was it the personal encounters with the resurrected physical Jesus that powered them through their temporal fears? Does the account of Thomas doubting and examining Jesus’ body transform their fear into “death defying in the name of Jesus” witnesses? (John 20:27,28). Yes, it did. And God can work a miracle in your life too, when you invite God’s Spirit into your heart. God wants to come upon YOU TOO.

AMEN