

Series: Ancient Faith

The Spirit

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Ephesians 1

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, June 8, 2025

Today is Pentecost Sunday, and I saw something this week on Instagram where it just gave me pause for a second, and it was this person who was posting about Pentecost Sunday, and what they said is that Pentecost Sunday is one of the most important days in the calendar of the church. Now, if you think of the most important days in the calendar of the church, what immediately comes to mind? Shout it out, Easter and Christmas, absolutely right. We have those locked into our memories. We know what to do with Easter and Christmas. Christmas is the time when Jesus was born, and He came into the world so that He could die and rescue all of us from sin and death and disease and devastation and all of those things, so we celebrate that, and then we are really good about celebrating his resurrection. Jesus walked out of his own grave, which seems like a pretty big deal, and we should celebrate it, and then it comes to Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, and it is the day that the church was born and when the believers and followers of Jesus were indwelt with the presence of God through the power of the Holy Spirit, and I feel like we are not quite sure what to do with that one. I mean, at least we have Easter bunny and Santa Claus to help us wrap our minds around, and I am just kidding. We do not need that, but Pentecost does not have, there is no commercialization around it. There is nothing that really stands out, but it is one of the most important days on the church calendar, because it is the day we remember when we were given the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and so today, it is not an accident that we are looking at the Nicene Creed and the Holy Spirit now, on Pentecost Sunday. That was very intentional, and this is what the Nicene Creed says about the Holy Spirit. It says, “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.”

Now I want to ask you a question, and I want you actually to respond out loud when I ask this question, and it is okay. It is Pentecost Sunday. You are allowed to talk in church. All right. That is a joke for the charismatics in the room, and all the Baptists are like, “What? I did not get that one.” It is all right. We will keep going, so I want you to answer this question out loud and speak to me. When you think of the Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit, and what does the Holy Spirit do? What are some things you know about the Holy Spirit? Feel free to shout out, and I will try to catch them as you throw them out. Gives gifts, absolutely. Comforter, helper. Third person of the Trinity, absolutely. What else? Conviction, indwelt, absolutely. Those are great. He will speak to you, things you do not know of, awesome. I heard another one over here. The seal of our salvation, absolutely. Okay, you guys just nailed it, like you crushed it. I think you know everything you need to know about the Holy Spirit, so I am going to wrap this up. I am just going to pray, and I am going to let you all go. No, here is the thing, and this what I have become more and more convicted of over the last few years in my own life, and I think in the lives of believers and even here at Waterstone, is that I think many of us know about the Holy Spirit, but the question is, do we actually believe what we say about the Spirit?

Now for some of you that might be like, “Yeah, of course. If I say it, I believe it.” That is fine. Some of us might think, “Yeah, I know that the Holy Spirit is comforter and transforms us, and I know that He convicts, and I know that He seals my salvation and all of those things. I know those,” but what does it mean to believe those things? What does it mean to actually live like those things are true?

There was a pastor, A.W. Tozer, and years ago he was at his church, and he was preaching his sermon, and when he finished his sermon, he was greeted by this couple that did not go to his church. They were from a few towns over, and they came up to him, and they said, “Hey, we are here today specifically because we heard of your church, and we heard that you believe that the Spirit is still alive and still active, and we need to pray. We want someone here at this church to pray for us for anointing, for healing. My wife is very sick,” and Tozer was like, “Yeah, absolutely, we would love to pray for you, but do you not have a church that you belong to?” and they said, “No, we do not do this at the church we go to,” and Tozer had heard of that church. He said, “Oh, that is a great church. That is a beautiful church. I know the pastor there. I love that church.” They said, “Yeah, we do too, but they do not believe and teach what you teach here. They do not believe that the Spirit is still living, present tense, active in the world. They believe in scripture, but not in the power of the Spirit, and so we are here to receive prayer for healing,” and so Tozer grabbed a few people from his church, and they laid hands on this couple. They anointed them, and they prayed for her healing.

As Tozer was reflecting on that moment, remember, he knew the pastor. He had respect for the pastor of the church. He reflected on that moment with this couple, and he said, “If you went to that pastor, and you asked him, ‘Do you believe that the Spirit has the power to heal?’ the pastor would probably say, ‘Of course I do,’” but he did not teach it, and what Tozer said was, “What you believe but are not willing to teach does you very little good,” and then this is what he said reflecting on that moment: “It is the same with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Evangelical Christianity believes it, but nobody experiences it. The Holy Spirit lies under the snow, forgotten, and I am praying that God may be able to melt away the ice from this blessed truth and let it spring up alive again, that the church and the people who hear may get some good out of it and not merely say, ‘I believe,’ while it is buried under the snow of inactivity and non-attention.” That was Tozer’s reflection on that moment, and what does it mean for the Spirit and the presence of the Spirit, for belief in the Spirit to lie buried under the snow, forgotten? That is the question before us today, because when we look at scripture, and we see things like the Spirit gives life, or when we profess the Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, we believe those things. I believe that, but do we live like they are true?

Here is another way of phrasing that question. If someone followed you for the last week of your life, and they just observed everything that you did, would they see someone who is being led by the Spirit? Would they see someone who believes in the power of the Spirit? Would they see someone who is being transformed and understands that the Spirit of God, the living presence of God through the power of the Holy Spirit is alive inside of them, or would they see someone who maybe looks fairly similar to themselves? Would they maybe see someone who does not look like they are empowered by the Spirit but simply looks like someone who is living mostly on their own strength or by their own wisdom, someone who is maybe driven by anxiety or comfort or control and occasionally asks God for help and for his presence to be in their life if they think about it, but they are rarely relying on the power of the Spirit in

day-to-day living? That is what it looks like when the Spirit lies buried under the snow. It is the same thing as when you say, “I believe in fire,” but you never light a match.

What does it mean to believe in something but not to live it out and experience it? What if God wants to melt the snow in the lives of our church and us as individuals, that the Holy Spirit is not simply a theological idea that we give intellectual assent to, but it is the living, embodied presence of God in your life, here to awaken and to fill, to lead, to empower, and to resurrect the Lord, the giver of life? That is what we confess about the Spirit, but do we believe it? Waterstone, my prayer for us today is that God would melt away on this Pentecost weekend the snow of that blessed truth, that we would believe and live the idea that the Spirit is alive and active and indwelling his believers, empowering them for the mission that God has given us. That is my prayer for us today.

To help us melt the snow, I want to go to a passage that is a little less familiar to us when we talk about the Holy Spirit. I feel like often sermons I have heard, or sermons I have honestly given about the Holy Spirit, often come from the end of the gospel of John, where Jesus is praying for the Spirit for believers, and He says some beautiful things in those passages like, “It is better for me to leave and go away so that the advocate will come and dwell inside you,” or He says, “When I go away, the Spirit will come, and He will convict you of all truth, and He will convict the world of sin, and He will empower you for the mission,” and it is beautiful, all good things in that passage, but I want to go to a lesser-known passage in the book of Ephesians, because in Ephesians, Paul is writing to the church, and he has this prayer for the church that they would receive and experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and so we are going to be in Ephesians chapter one all day today. So, if you have your Bibles and want to turn there and follow along, feel free to.

We are going to start in Ephesians chapter one, and it will be on the screen for you to follow along. In verse 17 the apostle Paul says this: “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.” Paul starts this section of his letter saying, “I keep asking,” which is an interesting phrase. Paul is saying essentially that I keep coming before the Lord. I keep petitioning Him. I keep asking. I keep coming and hoping that you will experience what it is like to live life with the Spirit, and why would Paul be praying that for this particular church? You have to go back to the book of Acts, where Paul shows up in the city of Ephesus, and in Acts 19, Paul shows up at the church of Ephesus, and he finds to his surprise that there are actually some believers already present in that city, and so he comes to them, and he says, “Hey, it seems like you are believers. You have repented and believed in Jesus Christ,” and they confess and say, “Yeah, absolutely. We are following Jesus,” and then he says, “Have you received the Holy Spirit?” and they say, “Who is that? We have never heard,” they literally say, “We have never heard of the Holy Spirit.”

You have to imagine, Paul at this moment is a little confused. They are believing in Jesus, but everywhere that people began to believe in Jesus, it was accompanied by empowerment from the Spirit, the Spirit coming down and indwelling like it did at Pentecost, and the Spirit was moving to bring people into the kingdom of God, and so they believed in Jesus, but they have never even heard of the Holy Spirit. So, Paul begins to teach them about the Holy Spirit, and suddenly, in the middle of his teaching, they begin to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, and they begin to speak in tongues and prophesy. That is the part where everything gets a little weird about the Spirit, right? They were like, “Yeah, people are talking

in languages we do not understand,” and they start handling snakes and stuff, and that is why the Spirit is weird, and so Paul shows up, and the Spirit descends, and so, years later, he is writing to this same church, and he is saying I am praying that they would experience the power of the Spirit, and I think the story in Ephesus, it follows my own trajectory a little bit with the Spirit, and I am wondering if it resonates with you. I think many of us, we have a not dissimilar story in that we believe in Jesus, but when it comes to the Holy Spirit, if I were to ask you, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” I think you might most likely say, “I think so. I am pretty sure, but I am not sure what that is supposed to look like. I am not sure what that is supposed to do. I know the Spirit is within me, but I don’t know why that matters,” and I think for many of us, there are different reasons for that.

For some of us, the Holy Spirit is the weird part of the Godhead, of the Trinity. We have the Father, who is loving and loves us as his children. We have the Son, who is like our spiritual brother, who died for us and is our friend, and then we have the Holy Spirit, who is a little bit like the weird uncle we are not sure what to do with, and we just are not quite sure. We have seen different things about the Spirit where people have maybe abused the power or the name of the Spirit, and they do weird things, and we are not quite sure we want to lean into that space, or maybe like me, you grew up in an environment that was Father, Son, holy scripture, not Holy Spirit. We did not even know what to do with the Holy Spirit, and we need knowledge. We need to understand the scriptures. We need to understand what God is doing in this world, and so many of us, we have this confusion when it comes to the Spirit.

For some of us, it is disappointment. We feel like we have prayed to the Spirit or asked the Spirit to show up in different ways in our lives and our bodies that are broken and in need of healing, and nothing happened, and we prayed for our marriage to be mended, and it never was, and we prayed for the Spirit to show up in the life of our prodigal, and that child never came back, and so it is simply disappointment. Like what good is it to pray to the Spirit or ask the Spirit to show up in power if He does not, and so we have questions and wondering about what it means to believe in the Spirit.

Back to the text in Ephesians 1:17, where Paul says, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.” First, I want you to notice the Trinitarian language that is in this verse. It is one of the only places in scripture where we actually see within one verse Jesus Christ the Son, God the Father, and the Spirit all within one place, so it is very creedal in that sense. Then he goes on, and he says that he wants a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, for them to encounter the Holy Spirit and for them to encounter wisdom and revelation. Why is Paul asking for those two things? What is wisdom and revelation? Why is that so important, for this church to experience the Holy Spirit and wisdom and revelation?

Wisdom is cultivated discernment. It is a space where you have been empowered by the Holy Spirit, and you begin to understand, grow in wisdom and knowledge, where as you go through life, you encounter experiences that because of the Spirit with you and the wisdom that it has given you, you understand how to engage with those situations with the wisdom and humility and skill to navigate all of the things that life throws at you with the purpose of aligning with God and his mission. That is the Biblical understanding of this word, wisdom. It is a little like, has anyone here ever learned to drive a stick shift car? Okay, so many hands in the room. That is great. They don’t make them anymore, which is really sad and unfortunate, but you remember when you were learning to drive a stick shift. If your experience was

like mine, it is a little like start and stop at the beginning, right? You are trying to get the rhythm of when you hit the clutch, when the brake, when the gas, and maybe your parent or your uncle or a friend is in the seat next to you, giving you instruction, and you're trying to listen to them at the same time, and then they get mad at you the fifteenth time you stall out, and everything shakes, and they are just annoyed, and it is this kind of thing that you have to learn, right? It takes time to develop the skill, and then you get into the rhythm of it, and you know when to press the clutch and the brake and the gas and when to shift, and it becomes a smooth ride. That is a little bit of what this idea of wisdom is. It is something that is cultivated within us, a skill we learn to navigate the world.

Now if that is wisdom, this thing that is cultivated within us by the power of the Spirit, then revelation is that moment that is the opposite of that. It is where the lights just flick on, and you understand something new about God that you did not know before. Has anybody ever had those light bulb moments where a pastor was preaching, or someone was talking to you, and suddenly you understood something new about who God was, and something about Christ was revealed to you, something about yourself and insight into you was given to you? That is where the Spirit shows up, and it is just this instantaneous flood of light that illuminates your life, and Paul is saying he wants them to experience both of these things, the wisdom and the revelation of God, by the power of the Spirit. Both are initiated by the Spirit, but it is not something that reason can cover alone. It is grace breaking through, and he says, I want them to experience, I want you, church, to experience the power of the Spirit, for wisdom and for revelation, and why does Paul say that he wants them to experience this? What is the reason he gives? So that they might know God better, so that they might know God better. Paul is praying this profound prayer for the Ephesian church, not just that they would behave better or know more facts about God, or even that they would be protected from sin or from persecution. He prays that they would be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they might know God better.

I think when we hear that word "know," we assume that this word is intellectual information, but that is actually not at all the context of this word in the original Greek. In fact, it has very little to do with intellectual knowledge. Its meaning is much deeper. It is experiential knowledge. It is not just knowing about someone, but it is knowing them through encounter. It is the difference between knowing about fire and reading a story about fire and feeling the heat of fire on your face. It is the difference between reading a Shakespeare love sonnet and understanding something about love from reading about it and holding your infant in your arms for the very first time. Those are two entirely different experiences, both valid, both important, but incredibly different, and Paul is saying that he wants the Ephesian church to know God better, to experience God better and more deeply.

I think oftentimes when we think of this type of knowing that changes us, that humbles us, that fills us with awe, the problem is in modern evangelical circles, we are a little bit skeptical of that. We are a little bit wary of this idea of experience, and we treat knowledge and experience like they are enemies, like they are two different polar opposites that have nothing to do with each other. Some of us fall into this category where we just want more knowledge. We want more truth. We want to understand more. We want our sermons to feel like a seminary lecture, where you are given all the Greek participles, and I am going into all the detail, and you just want all the truth laid out, and the more information you have, then the better you feel about the world and the more certain you feel about the world. You just need the

knowledge, and there are others of us that are like, “Yeah, I do not really care about any of that. I just need to feel something. I need to feel like the Spirit is alive. I need to feel like the Spirit is moving.” We are just chasing after that moment when the worship band hits the note just perfectly, and we get the goosebumps. We are like, “That is what I am chasing after,” and we treat those things like they are two different ideas, but Paul is joining them together in this word, and he is saying truth, knowledge, and experience go together. They are not enemies. They are actually crucial for us understanding and knowing who God is. It is God saying that He does not want us to just know about Him doctrinally, but He wants us to know Him relationally, and what does that mean for us practically? It means that God does not want you to just believe in Him abstractly. It means He wants you to know Him intimately and experientially. It means that God wants you to hear his voice in the word. He wants you to sense his nudges in your spirit, He wants you to grow in discernment for daily decisions, and He wants to flood you with light and moments of worship and prayer. It means that God wants you to know Him not just with your brain, but with your entire being.

So this the part where I have to be honest with you, that my story is one of skepticism around a lot of this, and when it comes to conversations about the Spirit or the charismatic or things that we can’t quite explain, I am a little bit skeptical, until a few years ago, when I feel like God began to melt the snow in my heart and wake me up to the reality of the Spirit. One of the crucial moments of my story came a few years ago when I had the privilege of going to London for a pastors’ conference, where we were working with this group of people. They brought a bunch of American pastors over to London, where we could learn from them of what it is like to do ministry and a post-Christian culture. London in many ways is about fifteen to twenty years ahead of us in some of those respects, and so they were saying, “This is what is effective of how we can reach the next generation and how we can reach out to those who don’t know God,” and so I went to this conference. Steffi and Camden got to come with me. I was so excited to go and to learn about all of the information that they had of how we could more effectively reach people for the gospel.

Then I got there, and I found myself sitting in this eighteenth-century cathedral on a Sunday morning and a little bit jet lagged. We had gotten into London the night before, and we went to church at this church the next day, and it was one of those, I mean, stained glass windows, wood and stone above that. It would just make any American church just blush at how beautiful it was, and I was sitting there in this service, and the pastor, the guest speaker that day, and to be honest with you, I do not think I am that great, but he was not that great, and I was like, “It is fine.” It was a fine message, and so we finished that moment, and then they offered prayer at the end of service, and this is the part when I start to hang back. Then they, people just flooded forward for prayer and to receive the Holy Spirit and to experience the Holy Spirit and prayer for healing and all these kinds of things. I was like, “Wow, what is that?” I mean, the pastor did not do much. They just all came forward. Like, that is great. Like, that is awesome, and then I just sat up in this balcony, and I was like, “Maybe I should go forward,” but Camden is crawling around. She is like two. I don’t want to leave her with Steffie, and like, “I have to go all the way down the stairs and walk all the way forward,” and like, “I am a little tired. I am still jet lagged,” like I, and what will actually happen? and it was this moment in my life.

You need to know this, that it was actually a moment in my life that I could probably count on one hand, the number of times when God has felt most distant in my life. It was one of those seasons when it just felt like my future was vague. I had no idea what God was doing. I felt like God was distant and aloof, and I would pray, and I would do all the things that I felt like I was supposed to do, read my Bible, pray, go to church, all of those things. I just felt like I was not getting anything from it. I felt like God was distant, and so there was that part of skepticism lying under me as well. So that was Sunday. I did not go down.

Monday, we go to the pastors' conference, and it is all about how you are supposed to reach other people who need to know Jesus, and I am coming, expecting like, "I want the facts. I want the information. I want all the studies you have done," and they show up, and they say, "Hey, you know what really works and what you really need to reach lost people? It is the Holy Spirit," and I was like, "What? Like you do not have anything else for me than, 'You need the Holy Spirit'? What?" I was so skeptical, and so then we go to their staff meeting of this church that we had just been to the day before, and it was all prayer and worship. I had never been to a staff meeting where there were no details or no planning. It was just like we are just going to sing together and pray together and ask the Holy Spirit to show up, and I was like, "But what are you doing? Like, what are you actually doing? What programs do you have to reach lost people? We need something more than just worship and prayer," and then they finished that moment with another invitation to come forward for prayer, and at this point, my radar was just like doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, like, "This is crazy. These are not my people. This is a wasted trip. I am just going to enjoy being in London with my family."

Then people start coming forward for prayer, and there was this African American, this black lady from Louisiana, and she had that Southern accent that like, I am from the south, and it just it sounded like home. She was another pastor that had been brought out there, and she comes forward during this period, and she takes the microphone and in this just beautiful accent, she begins saying, "Hey, I feel like I was given a word from the Spirit that there is someone here who has a test coming up that they need prayer for, that there is something going on, some sort of heart condition that they are going back to after they finish this trip, and so I just would like to pray for them," and then this man from Portland, Oregon stood up and said, "Yeah, that is me. I have been going through tests, and I have some important tests when I go back," and I just need to confess to you, in this moment I was thinking, "I bet they talked beforehand, like they totally, they like, I bet the church even set this up." I was like, "Okay, you are going to stand up, and you are going to be like this sweet little lady, and then you are going to be like, 'Oh, yeah, that is me,' and then everybody is going to be like, 'Whoa,' and then believe that it is all true." That was where my heart was. That was how skeptical I was at that moment. I just saw that all playing out, and I was like, "They totally, this was a plant. This whole story is fabricated and made-up," and then it is my invitation to come forward for prayer, and again, all the reasons, like, "I do not want to get up, and I do not want to do the airplane seat thing or have to walk around someone, and what if I disturb them, or what if the people that I am with think something is wrong with me and think it is a bigger deal, and I have not shared what is going on?" and so I did not go forward.

Tuesday, the next day, the last day of the conference, we were talking, and it is again about the Holy Spirit and prayer and all of these things about you can have the best programs, you can be the best

preacher, you can have an amazing worship band, and you can have the smoothest transitions, but no one has ever been saved by a smooth transition in church. You need the Holy Spirit to show up in what you are doing, and so they again invited us for prayer, and at this point I was just hanging back in the back, and it felt like an anvil was on my chest. I wanted prayer so badly, and I just felt like I could not get up, and I could not go forward, because I was too afraid and felt too weird and was not quite sure, and then a man came up to me, and he tapped me on the shoulder. I stood up to talk to him, and there are two things you need to know about him. One is I had never seen him before in my life. I did not recognize him from the conference. I do not know where he came from. He just came up and tapped me on the shoulder, and the second thing you need to know is he was from Norway. We did not even speak the same first language, and he spoke broken English with a very heavy accent, and he essentially said, “I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to come up and pray for you. Would that be okay if I prayed for you?” and I felt a little cornered in the moment, to be honest with you.

I was like, “What? I can’t say no, so I guess, yeah,” and I was not quite sure what to do, so I was just like, “Sure, like why not?” and again, so skeptical and so much feeling like God did not care about who I was. God did not see, and then he opened his mouth to pray, and I broke, because it felt like he had been inside my mind for the last two months, and it felt like every thought that I had had, every question, every doubt, every worry, and everything that had made me feel so unsure, without even taking a prayer request, he just prayed over me in a way that the only way I know how to explain it is that there is a Holy Spirit living, breathing, alive inside his church, that is working to bring together his church in unity and compassion, to build us up, to go on mission for the church. It was probably one of the top ten most important moments in my life. I could not pick that man’s face out of a lineup if you paid me a million dollars. There is no reason. There is no explanation. It is not that there was some magic aura with the moon in London at that time of year. It was the Holy Spirit. That is what Paul is talking about when he says this experiential knowing, that goes beyond reason. It goes beyond what we can explain. There is no other way for us to know, other than the Spirit has stepped in and is alive inside his body of believers, wanting to give life to his church. That is exactly what happened to me at that moment.

I think for many of us, we need those types of experiences. We have the knowledge about God. We know the Bible, but we need those moments like the one I had in that moment, where I just felt the heat of the fire for the first time in a long time, and something began to melt away within me, and the Spirit began to come alive. I think sometimes we have some skepticism around that, because we are like it is the space where we get all the, “Yeah but,” right? “Yeah, but what about?” or “What about?” or “Yeah, but?” I do not know what to do with a lot of those things, but I know what I experienced, and I know that the Holy Spirit wants to give that type of knowledge to his church.

What I have become more and more convinced of and convicted of is that there is so much more available to many of us Christians than we believe, that many of us have the knowledge, but we are lacking the experience, so Paul goes on in verse 18, and he says this in 18 and 19, he says, “I pray,” he continues with this prayer. “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened,” and then he just goes on this word avalanche, this language avalanche, “That you may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power to those of us who believe.” He says he wants us to experience, “to know the

hope to which He,” God, “has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparably great power for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” These are not spiritual clichés. This is Paul doing thunderclaps with his pen. Then he goes on in Ephesians 1:19-20, and he says that that power, “that incomparably great power for those of you who believe,” he goes on to say that that power is the same as “the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of the heavenly realms.” Let that settle in for a moment. The same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now living in you and available to you. That same power that reanimated crucified flesh, that exploded the seal of the tomb, that defeated death and darkness forever, that power is in you. That resurrection life is available to you in the power of the Spirit.

Most of us, we grew up with the right theology about the Holy Spirit, and we still live tired, cynical lives, where we are stuck in defeat and patterns of fear and frustration and sin. As A.W. Tozer put it, we believe in the fullness of the Spirit, but it lies buried under the snow. Many of us have made peace with lifelessness. We have grown numb to the idea that more is possible. Billy Graham, the great preacher and who by no means was a charismatic, he said this about our interaction with the Holy Spirit: “Everywhere I go,” and keep in mind, he is someone who traveled the entire globe and preached the gospel to over 200 million people, “Everywhere I go, I find that God’s people lack something. They are hungry for something. Their Christian experience is not all that they expected.” Has anyone ever felt like that? Christians today are hungry for spiritual fulfillment, and the most desperate need of our nation today is that men and women who profess Jesus Christ be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What if we actually had believed that? What if we actually believed that the people of God, we, Waterstone, were filled with the power of resurrection life within us? What if we believed and prayed like the Spirit was alive and moving, because He is? What if when we laid hands on others, it was not just out of habit, but out of expectation? What if we lived with so much joy and love, empowered by the Spirit, that it made cynicism and skepticism look ridiculous? What if our homes, our jobs, our parenting, our relationships, and our leadership positions were shaped by the living breath of God inside of us? What if your life was filled with the electricity of resurrection power in your life? The Spirit of God has not been given to you as a believer in Christ to make your life safe or manageable. It has been given to you to make your life fully alive. The Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, is not distant, and He is not buried. He is here, and He is available to you.

Two years ago, I was given the gift of a sabbatical from Larry and the elders of our church, and it was such a gift. It was a sweet season for our family. We actually found out, like the first weekend we were on sabbatical, that we were pregnant with Landon. I say, we Steffi, I had not, well, whatever. Going back into the moment, this was a great sabbatical. Over the course of this sabbatical, again this season where the future felt a little vague, I was not quite sure what God was doing in my life, what He had for me, and a little bit of a dry season, so it was a great time for a sabbatical, and I found myself drawn over the time of the sabbatical to the story of Exodus and the story of Moses leading the people out of Israel and then Joshua taking the mantle from him. Looking back now, I can see what God was doing around Larry’s transition and all of that, and so I am very thankful for that, but in that season of walking through the Exodus, there was a particular story that stood out to me in a way that I had never really heard before.

I was away at a silent retreat, and I was actually praying for our church, and I felt drawn to this story in Exodus 19. It is this fascinating passage where God has just rescued the people out of slavery in Egypt. He has brought them to Mount Sinai to be his covenant people, and it is filled with all of this promise. It is like the joy of a wedding ceremony, where someone says, "I am going to be with you forever. You are going to be my people in return," and at this moment, God is inviting the people to become his priests, his holy nation, and so He comes, and He descends on Mount Sinai, and it is lightning. It has thunder. It is like a volcano is exploding, and God invites the people from the foot of the mountain up to the mountain to be in his presence, and they respond with, "No thank you. That feels like a lot. You feel like too much. That feels a little scary. We do not know what is going to happen if we go up there. We could die." It is filled with fear, and they choose to stay at the foot of the mountain, and as I was reading that and praying for Waterstone, I felt this sense that, and that is where so many of us stay stuck, is that God has invited us into his presence by the power of the Holy Spirit, and our reaction is, "You know what? That feels like a lot. I do not really know what might happen with that. I do not know where you might send me. I do not know who you might bring into my life. I do not know what you might ask me to do. I do not know where you are going to tell me to go, and so I will just stay back at the foot of the mountain where it is comfortable and where I do not really need to risk anything. I do not have to have my life shaken up at an uncomfortable level by the power of the Holy Spirit," and then we live lives with Jesus Christ, following Him as disciples, and we are completely unsatisfied. I wonder if maybe it is because there is something available to us that is more than we are experiencing. The beauty of the Spirit is the invitation is to everyone. Every single one of us has been given the gift of the Spirit if we believe in Jesus Christ, but do we receive that invitation, or do we hang back?

There is this teaching that Jesus gives in Luke 11, where He says this, and you have probably heard this teaching before, but it is never really understood, the end of this teaching. He says, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?" Jesus is making a joke here. He's saying, "If you are a good dad, and your kid asks you for something to eat, you are not going to hand him a venomous snake, or if he asks for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? You are a terrible father if you give venomous animals to your child, right? "If then you, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give you," what? "The Holy Spirit?" The Holy Spirit. All you have to do is ask. I think many of us live a life of discontent and dissatisfaction in our walk with Jesus, because we want something more, but we do not know that all we have to do is ask and accept the invitation. The Holy Spirit is already within you.

So as we close today, we are going to see a couple more songs, and we are going to have some people around the wings of the church where you can go to them, and you can ask for the Holy Spirit, not because you do not have it, but because you want to grow an awareness and experience, more of the Spirit. There are so many reasons why you, like me, could stand in this moment and think, "Nope, not for me. Too weird, not sure, I do not know what to do, do not want to get up and bother the person next to me." All of that is acceptable and fine, and you do not need to worry about it. No one is going to judge you. No one is going to question you. This is not a matter of need. This is something we all need and should long for, and so we are going to have these people that have a little lanyard, and it is just going to say, "Can I pray for you?" so you know whom to go to.

You can give them a request if there is a place in your life where you need the Spirit to show up in power. Maybe it is a marriage that needs mending. Maybe it is a body that needs healing. Maybe it is something going on in your life that you just want the Spirit's presence and wisdom and revelation to come to you. You can pray for that, or they can simply just say a simple prayer, the ancient prayer that the church has said from the very beginning, "Come, Holy Spirit, come," which is not an invitation for the Spirit to come where He is not. It is an invitation for us to grow an awareness of where the Spirit already is in our lives, so that is the invitation before you today, come and pray. I am going to invite you now to stand as we close. I am going to pray over this time.

Holy Spirit, as we step into this moment, God, I pray that we would not be distracted about things that do not matter, about where we are going next after this. I pray that we would stay in this moment with you, that there are places that we need to experience and know who you are, to know you better. God, I pray that you would speak to us today, and it is in Christ's name we pray, amen.

Thank you. We went a little long today, so I apologize to the kids' staff, who are hanging out with all of our kids. I want to close with this prayer: "If you love me, keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him." You have experienced Him, "for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you." Waterstone, may you know and experience the goodness of our God through the power of the Holy Spirit this week, in Jesus' name. Go in peace.

42:43 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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