

The Most Neglected Promise

The Leading Cause of Spiritual Impotency in the Church

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“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), (14) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14).

Redeemed from the Curse

The terms used in the theme passage above must first be defined for the sake of those who do not understand them and to lay the foundation for the whole point of the title of this message.

Two crucial benefits are made available to us in the New Covenant through Christ having redeemed us from the curse of the law: the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the [Holy] Spirit. The word redeemed in the Galatian passage can be safely translated ransomed. Christ has ransomed those who believe. He paid the ransom (purchase) price for us to be released from our captor by substituting himself for us in death. In this case, our captor is the curse pronounced upon all who have broken the law of Moses, generally, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

The importance of the two benefits afforded us through Christ’s death on the cross is best portrayed by defining them. But first, let us understand that these benefits are bestowed on us because of our having been convinced by the Spirit of God of our dire need for them and that they are commanded by the Lord and are not optional. Paul identified what the blessing is in a promise God made to Abraham: “In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” More specifically, Paul reveals that it is justification by faith in Christ apart from the works required by the law of Moses. This means a person who places their faith in Christ as their

Redeemer is declared by God to be in right standing with Him. He accredits no sin to their account (Romans 4:1-8). The righteous requirements of the law (of Moses) are now fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1-4). This was defined in New Covenant terms by Jesus and the Apostles as the born again experience (John 3:1-17; 1 Peter 1:22-25; 1 John 3:9).

The born-again experience is the same as our being justified by faith in Christ. That justification is of life or rather, more clearly, results in (resurrection) life within us (Romans 5:19-21). Putting it in modern terms, those who have faith in Christ receive God's life-giving approval. His life-giving approval regenerates our spirit by which we communicate and fellowship with God. Paul defines it for us in Titus 3:5. He describes the born-again experience as the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." In 1 Corinthians 12:13, He states: "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether we are Jewish or Greek, slave or free, God gave all of us one Spirit to drink (GWV). "Washing" and "baptism" can sometimes be interchanged in Scripture and it would be safe to do so in these contexts. Additionally, Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He would give her "water" to drink that would spring up within her resulting in eternal life (John 4:13-14). Isaiah 12:3 introduced it: "With joy you will draw life from the well of salvation."

Hence, the blessing of Abraham is defined in many ways throughout Scripture, all of which are the same. God's life-giving approval through Christ washes away our sins and regenerates our spirit so that we can commune with and partake of Christ's life (the reality of who He is; the divine nature – 1 Peter 1:1-3). We now have a well of salvation (eternal life) within us from which we can always draw the water of life with joy. The Spirit of Christ (the well) dwells within us, thereby, proving that we are Christ's (Romans 8:9).

If all of this comprises the blessing of Abraham, then what does the promise of the Spirit entail of which Abraham did not receive because it was not available then?

Now, let's revisit Titus 3: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, (5) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He poured out on

us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Here, Paul refers to the [Holy] Spirit as being poured out abundantly upon us. This is different from being born again or receiving the Spirit of Christ within. The born-again experience is a well of water, whereas, the promise of the Spirit is an outflowing river (John 7:38). This indicates that the promise of the Spirit is the completion of being redeemed from the curse of the law in Galatians 3. The Apostle Peter proclaimed that their Pentecostal experience (Acts 2) was the fulfillment of (as in the beginning of) the prophecy from the book of 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. (18) And *on My menservants and on My maidservants* I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.” On the day of Pentecost, they received the promise of the Spirit referred to in Galatians 3. Jesus called it the promise of the Father and the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; see also Matthew 3:11). They were already born again—baptized by that same Spirit into Christ’s body, thus, uniting them as mutual and equal partakers of Christ’s divine nature. They already believed and confessed that Jesus is alive from the dead, thereby, securing their spiritual salvation (Romans 10:6-10). At Pentecost, they were baptized with the Holy Spirit unto power for witnessing and *not by Him* into the body of Christ.

Do you see the difference?

Upon being born again, the Holy Spirit places (immerses) us into Christ. At Pentecost, they were immersed (clothed) with (not by) the Holy Spirit to overflowing. Jesus described it in Acts 1:8 this way: “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” He again describes it another way in Luke 24:49: “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued [clothed; enveloped] with power from on high.”

So, is this enduing with the Holy Spirit the same as the promise of the Spirit referred to in Galatians 3? Yes, it is the promise of the Father and His promise is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Not convinced yet?

Listen to this: “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, (15) who, when they had come down, prayed for them *that they might receive the Holy Spirit*. (16) For as yet *He had fallen upon none of them*.

They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14-17).

These Samaritans were already believers in Christ (born again; partakers of the blessing of Abraham), having been water baptized in His name, but had not yet received the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter had preached right after their Pentecostal experience in Acts 2: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This was the way God *usually* blessed people: heart repentance first, then water baptism, and last but not least, the gift of the Holy Spirit. This clearly distinguishes the born again experience from the gift (or promise) of the Spirit. The Samaritans had already believed and repented, were water baptized, but had not received the gift of the Spirit. As Scripture states, “He had fallen upon none of them” although they had experienced Him as eternal life—the presence of Christ’s divine nature within them.

More proof?

Acts 19:1-6: “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples (2) he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ (3) And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ (4) Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ (5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

These believers in Ephesus had only heard a partial gospel of Christ. They did not know about water baptism in Jesus’ name or about the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Although their eternal destiny was secured, they would have been cheated out of their inheritance in this life because of ignorance if someone had not shown them otherwise.*

Having now accurately and undeniably proven the promise of the Spirit is a separate experience received after our being born again, we are obligated to ask ourselves this crucial and climactical question:

How many of God's people today have been erroneously taught and believe they received the promise of the Spirit when they were born again?

Receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit was commanded by our Lord as a requirement for New Covenant ministry. We must be endued with power from on High before we can be effective witnesses (Acts 1). Jesus received the promise of the Spirit after being baptized by John in the Jordan River. He did not need to be born again because of being sinless. He received power for ministry, thereby, setting the example for us. He stated after being baptized with the Holy Spirit concerning Himself:

“The Spirit of the LORD is *upon Me*, because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; (19) to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Luke 4:18-19).

Can you say the same about yourself? It's not an option but a command given to us by Jesus Himself. As the Chief Cornerstone, His earthly ministry did not begin until He received that Power from on High. Have you received the Spirit since you believed? Did you by the Spirit of God speak with (the gift of) tongues and prophecy as an outward sign that you had received it? The Prophet Joel declared that those upon whom the Spirit of God is poured out would prophesy, have dreams, and see visions. Based on the experience of those at Pentecost (Acts 2) and the later experiences of other believers, the prophetic gift of tongues, along with prophecy spoken in their native language, was the outward sign that a person had received the Holy Spirit. Dreams and visions usually followed later. In other words, there are always signs and wonders that accompany and follow receiving the Holy Spirit. Signs and wonders are manifestations in this natural sense realm that Jesus is alive from the dead and is Lord of all.

So, how important is it that we receive the promise of the Spirit? The late Dr. A. W. Tozer, author and pastor, wrote: “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.” *If we neglect it or do not receive it, we will always find replacements for it. Those replacements will ultimately be destructive.*

God is limited in what He can do for and through any of His people who have not received the promise of the Spirit and through any who have neglected it. God is limited in a similar way as He was in the Old Covenant. I have often heard New Covenant believers attempt to compare themselves or their dilemma to that of *Job's* (i.e. the Old Testament book of Job). While we can, in this New Covenant era, draw inspiration and comfort from the revelation of God's mercy and compassion to Job as revealed in the book, other things must be taken into consideration. Here are the three main differences between Job's experience and ours:

- (1) No blood covenant was established by God with Job as proven in his complaint that there was no mediator to go between him and God (Job 9:32-33). He practiced Noah's legacy. Jesus, our Great High Priest, is now our mediator. Everything needed that pertains to life and godliness is now secured by the power of His endless life (2 Peter 11-4; Hebrews 7:14-28).
- (2) The book of Job served as an example of the need for blood covenant. Abraham, a likely contemporary of Job, experienced protection from, because of blood covenant, the very things that happened to Job. In fact, he defeated similar nations that posed a threat to His own.
- (3) We can now, because of what Jesus has accomplished in our behalf, become Holy Spirit empowered sons of God. We can and must overcome the accuser of the brethren now by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by not loving our lives, even unto death (Revelation 12). These three essentials must be the trademark of our daily life as it was with Christ unto knowing the fullness of the promise of the Spirit. Dying to ourselves or not loving our lives unto death cannot be understood by itself. The flipside of it is that we instead love to walk in and live by the fullness of the supernatural Spirit of God. Dying to oneself is nothing more than an exercise in futility if we do not understand and have the promise of the Spirit and the treasures included with it. *To not love our lives unto death means we love life in the Holy Spirit realm instead. It is not difficult to live in. Only the way of the transgressor is hard* (Proverbs 13:15).

The story of the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda symbolizes the difference between Old and New Covenant experience (John 5). An angel would come down at certain times and stir the water and the first one in the pool would be healed. This was typical of the Old Covenant's limitations. Normally, the covenant blessing was only to the first-born and the Spirit of God only came upon prophets, kings, priests, and judges. In other words,

the working of the Spirit of God was as limited as the Old Covenant's ability to redeem from sin. Jesus went the man at the pool of Bethesda and asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" He was saying, "I am the replacement for the pool and all that the Old Covenant represents. Look to Me now because My power to heal is always available."

Oh, if God's people only understood how much Jesus desires for us to move out of the Old Covenant and into New Covenant faith. All things are possible to them that believe.

The Apostle Paul stated: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (9) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; (10) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9-10).

Have you been cheated out of the promise of the Spirit because of ignorance, the traditions of men, or wrong doctrine?

The Remarkable Benefits of Receiving the Spirit

Much can be said of the benefits of receiving the Spirit, but I will only say a little and leave the rest for you to search out. The Lord taught us that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Matthew 13:44). I would encourage you to closely and regularly observe how Jesus, His apostles, and the early Church benefited from the gift (treasure) of the Spirit as defined in the New Testament.

Jesus painted an ornate word picture of the benefits of receiving the "Comforter" (the Spirit of truth) in John 14-16. After telling them of His departure from the world (John 14), He assures His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans but would come to them in the person of another Comforter who is the Spirit of truth. Concisely, Jesus was telling them that this Comforter would do in and through them exactly what He would do if He were present with them. This was confirmed by this statement Jesus made to them: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (13) And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

How incredible...by receiving the promise of the Spirit, Jesus' disciples would be enabled to walk with the Father as He and accomplish the same things in a greater measure. This will happen only when we consistently surrender our souls to the river of God's Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we put you on like an overcoat, and make no provision for the flesh to give in to what it wants! May you rest upon us in your fullness now until rivers of living water flow freely from us (Romans 13:14; John 7:38).

Almost every unresolved problem within the life of a Christian can be traced back to this: they have not received the promise of the Spirit or have neglected the already received gift. They have not received or have not regularly kept themselves filled with the Holy Spirit. We cannot be filled with Him if we are being regularly filled (preoccupied) with the things of this life. This would include not just sinful things but also the "good" things that are a distraction or potential idols.

Holy Spirit, we ask forgiveness for neglecting You and for frustrating Your longing to be a part of every aspect of our lives.

"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, *"The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"*? (6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:4-10).

May Your jealous yearning for us, Holy Spirit, be satisfied beyond measure. Even as the springtime warmth and rains awaken and satisfy sleeping creation, unveil Yourself to us in full splendor. As Jesus promised, take what is of Christ's and show it to us. Make us your continual home. Use us to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, confirming the Word with signs, wonders, and various miracles. Come, Spirit of truth, and set up Your throne of truth within our hearts, expose and dethrone every belief and mindset that do not honor Christ as He is honored in Heaven. Thank you for being our closest friend. I receive You with no reluctance

right now. I am not ashamed of You or any of Your gifts. I will speak in tongues and prophesy. I will dream dreams and see visions.

Be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire in Jesus wonderful name! Amen.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotes are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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