

## MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

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**Scripture:** Acts 2: 1-4

Today is a very special Sunday for churches all over the world. Today is Pentecost Day, and that means 50 days after resurrection. This day can be called the birthday of the universal church. So, today I thought we would see briefly the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in a Christian's life.

What is Pentecost and the impact of Pentecost? Pentecost is 50 days after resurrection. Why is it called the church's birthday?

- For the first time in history, there was a descent of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament times, God's Spirit enabled prophets or some persons for a very specific task. But here, it was forever.
- This also started the mission of the church. Even after the resurrection, the disciples were very fearful. So, Jesus spent about 40 days visiting them, teaching them, reminding them.
- The disciples were given power from heaven – on this day when God's Spirit came upon them.

Acts 2: 1-4

*"2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*

When the Holy Spirit came in a very visible fashion, you see in the remaining part of Acts 2, everyone was surprised. Some people even ridiculed them saying that they were all drunk. That's when there was a big change in these fearful apostles. Peter stood up and explained what really happened. He quoted from prophet Joel in the Old Testament, saying that God has fulfilled the promise He gave. And at the end of it, this very same Peter, who was so scared to even say that he was a disciple of the Lord in front of a servant, was able to tell them: You crucified Him. We see God's Spirit working in their hearts.

It's mentioned that the people listening were convicted, and 3,000 people were added to the church that day – the first converts. The Christian church started on the day of Pentecost in an organized way.

Today, I thought we would see more of the ministry of God's Holy Spirit in our personal lives. I believe that is very important, and very often neglected. So, I thought we would see two things.

1. Living a joyful and a victorious Christian life. Let me read a few verses from John.

John 14: 16-17 <sup>16</sup> *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever—* <sup>17</sup> *the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."*

In some versions, 'counsellor' is written as 'comforter' – to be with you forever. I think we often miss that. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, that is the most essential step in our

becoming a Christian. That is the beginning. But the day you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, according to this verse, God's Spirit would come and reside with us forever.

God's Holy Spirit is also mentioned here as the Spirit of truth.

John 16:13 *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."*

God's Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth because God's Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And all of us need guidance on a day-to-day basis, on an hour-to-hour basis. We all need guidance – what decision to take, what to do, what not to do. Jesus Christ promises the disciples that the Spirit will guide you.

Then it says that "He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come." So, we must remember that we are so privileged to have God's Spirit residing in our hearts forever.

But there is a problem. God's Spirit is the gentlest person you would ever come across. God's Spirit would never take control of your life unless you give Him control. Paul writes repeatedly, "Be controlled by the Spirit." Therefore, that choice is in our hands.

That's where I believe, very often, we miss the evidence of God's power. Acts 1:8 says that when the Holy Spirit comes, we'd have power. Therefore, some of the things I wanted to discuss today was how to have a joyful and victorious Christian life.

## 2. Living a holy and sanctified life.

We receive Jesus and we become children of God. But living a Christian life, a sanctified life is a lifelong process. Very often, the Christian life is likened to a marathon race or a long journey. I'm sure all of us wish it were just likened to a 100 meters dash. Over.

But no, that's where the problem comes. We all get started with good plans, and soon enough, we get defeated. Therefore, we get discouraged. Among the many areas, there is one special area that I want to caution us. It was always Satan's strategy to somehow attack our hearts and our minds. I believe that we are living at a time when more than ever, there is a battle for our minds.

This particular battle for the mind comes from our favorite technology assistant, the name I want to give our mobile phones. It's a wonderful technology assistant is wonderful; it's with us all the time. we can anybody, any time, message anybody.

But unfortunately, we are captivated too much. As Christians, we must remember that there is a battle going on for our minds and our hearts. Today, there are videos or social media that are so powerful, so interesting, so captivating. And that's where we need to watch out. I have nothing against mobile phones. It's a good tool. But a word of caution. We need to take warning and remember that we are in the battlefield and be aware of our enemies. There are three of them.

- Our own sinful nature. Paul narrates it very well in Romans 7. We want to do good but cannot do so. We make great plans but cannot do them." and Paul says it's because of our sinful nature. Very often, we make great plans without knowing that Satan also made a plan of how to defeat us.
- The world. Romans 12 talks about "Do not allow the world to squeeze you into its own mold. Not, when you say world, that means the kind of expectations of the standards of the world, our friends, our colleagues, and so on, which are against scripture. We are constantly bombarded. We might be ridiculed by our friends, or even our family members.

- Satan. Satan uses both the sinful nature and the world.

All three put together, and we have a formidable enemy.

But the problem is that we often forget that we have God's Spirit residing in us forever. And that's something we need to remember, that God did not want us to live a defeated life.

But are we careful to give the control of our lives to God's Spirit? I want to encourage you there, because God has a great plan. If we want to achieve God's plan for our life, then we need to also be willing tools in God's hands.

Romans 6:4-7 <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

We talked about our sinful nature being our number one enemy. And v.6 says, "for we know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body of sin might be done away with." Practically, how do we do it? he says that when we took baptism, that is a sign that you died with Christ.

Romans 6:11-13 <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness."

This gives some practical views. Mind you, this is the first commandment: Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your mind. Let me just stop at these two – heart and mind. Baptism is a sign that we died with Christ. That's what the verse says: Count yourself dead to sin. We need to say to ourselves: I am dead to sin, no longer alive.

v.12 says: Do not let sin reign in your mortal body. it's not that we will not sin, but we should not allow sin to reign in us, to control us permanently. That's it! and if you sin, there is a remedy. We can confess anytime. And God's word says that God will forgive and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But we should not allow sin to reign in us, to be our master.

Whenever the Bible says 'don't do something,' it always says what to do. v.13 says: Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

Take, for example, our tongue. The tongue can be used to gossip, something which most people love, I'm sure. But when temptation comes to gossip, you can just stop. You can use that very same tongue to encourage somebody. Similarly, all our instruments that God has given us, we need to be aware that they have the power to be used in the wrong way. But we have the power to use it in the right way. And that's where God's Spirit will help you, if you ask Him. We are on the battlefield; don't ever think you can have victory in your own strength.

That's a mistake we all make. We believe that the role of God's Spirit is to just make us children of God. No! It's lifelong. Jesus said, "It's good that I go, because when I go, I'll send God's Holy Spirit

who will be with us forever.” We need to allow God’s Spirit to rule over us. Therefore, even though we have formidable enemies, God has given us godly resources.

- Spending quality time in devotion, in reading God’s word regularly, and asking God to speak to you. Maybe during the day, bring to memory some of those verses you read in the morning. Maybe God spoke to you specifically and you see how you need to change your life in some way.

Each time I read the Bible, I find that there are precious promises, encouragements, and things which I need to do. Ask God’s Spirit to help you, and He will. That’s what Jesus said God’s Spirit will do. It is the Spirit’s job to bring to our memory the things which Jesus said or what scripture says. That’s why it is so important to enrich our minds, to fill our hearts and our minds with God’s word. It’s a top priority. If you don’t do that, you are already accepting defeat.

- We need fellowship. We come to church not only to worship, but also to have fellowship.
- We need to prayerfully plan our day. It may sound silly, but I’ve found that the days which I don’t plan prayerfully, that day is already gone. I am not a disciplined person. Therefore, I always make my plan the previous day. What are the things to be done? Make a list of 7 or 8 things. At the end of the day, when you look back, you would not have done even 50% of what you planned. But if you don’t plan, you already plan to fail.

God wants us to use our mind in the right way. For example, it’s not that you should not see YouTube, but it should be in moderation. But, the moment you see one video, as soon as it’s done, the next suggestion appears. They are so attractive and so powerful. We need to plan how much time we want to give.

About 5 years ago, someone spoke to us about a survey that was done on the average time spent by Christians on the mobile or social media in a day. This value might have increased now. But it was shocking. It’s about 6 hours. We say we have no time for reading the bible for 15 or 20 minutes, but we have 6 hours’ time to spend on social media. That’s the kind of quantum we are talking about, and it’s common to all of us.

Therefore, we need to be very careful. Today, more than ever, the battle is for the minds. That’s where we need to be careful what we feed into our mind. Let me read Romans 8:12-13 again. It says, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”

We must remember that God has rescued us from our old nature. We have no obligation to listen to any of the temptations or suggestions which come from our old nature, but we have an obligation to God. But there’s a warning here also. If we live according to the flesh, we’ll die.

We must remember that the moment you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are lost to the kingdom of Satan. But Satan has a very interesting strategy. Satan knows that he can’t take away salvation from you. What he does is to make you ineffective. That is why Satan is after our hearts and minds. You can live a defeated life throughout your life. But he can also live a joyful and victorious life. Satan’s strategy for each one of us is to somehow make us ineffective during the day. That’s why we need to be watchful.

Therefore, be careful. There are good, practical ways of using your mind. One of the ways is to read good Christian books. Three godly resources:

1. Spend time in God's word,
2. God's Spirit which is with us permanently,
3. We have an obligation to encourage our brothers and sisters.

Whatever you learn by reading a good book, share it with others. Encourage others. That's the way to be joyful and victorious. And God will make sure that victory is ours. So, don't ever get discouraged. Victory is ours by right. But we have a part to do. We need to willingly surrender our lives to God's Spirit, and it'll happen.

Another thing that I want to say is that our life is not just about living a joyful life, or just somehow living a victorious life. We have more things to do. God has called us to a life of witness. So wherever we are, at home, or an office, or any other place, we have a job to do. Let me read a few verses and meditate on them.

*Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

God's Spirit residing in you means that God's power is already available, and that's the same power which brought Jesus from the dead. The important thing is that we need to willingly surrender ourselves to experience this particular power in our lives.

*John 15:16 says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last."*

Each one of us must remember that none of us chose the Lord. given our own choice, we would not have chosen the Lord. But God chose us and only eternity will tell us why. I don't know why I was chosen. But there is a reason. Jesus says, "But I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last."

I'm sure all of us will agree that fruit is never for the tree. When a mango tree gives mangos, they are not for the mango tree. It's for others. The fruit is for others. And Jesus says, "Fruit that will last." That's a good question for us to ask ourselves. am I bearing fruit? Is my fruit a lasting fruit?

*John 15:8 Jesus says, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* The call is to not only bear fruit but bear much fruit. And again, it's not about us. that's the most important thing to remember. It's all about God and what God's Spirit will do. In my own life, I have seen what God is able to do when you give the control of your life into God's hand.

*Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

If you read the previous two verses Ephesians 2:8,9 it says: By grace you have been saved through faith." The point is we don't earn our salvation. It's by grace. But we have a job to do. It goes on to say that we are God's workmanship. That is a very encouraging verse for us, one thing we must always remember – that you are very special. Each one of us sitting here is very special. God has never made a person like you; God will never ever make one more.

This verse also reminds us that you are created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. always remember, God has made you for a purpose, and that purpose only you can fulfill. If you don't do it, that part is missing in God's kingdom. So always remember that God created you for a purpose.

Am I fulfilling the purpose for which God created me? God will make it clear. I am a retired man, but God has made it clear that my time is not yet up. Till the day you are taken us, you have a job to do. these days when I pray, I thank God for every day that God has given me. he will tell me the purpose He has for me.

But are you conscious about that? are you willing to fulfill that purpose? We must remember that God wants us to live a fruitful Christian life and have no doubt about it that you have a purpose which He has prepared in advance for us to do. One day at a time, God will reveal what is that plan for today. I think that should be the kind of attitude of our minds. Every day when we get up, thank God for the day. When I drive to IIT from my present residence, I get roughly about 20 minutes, and I use it to tell God the kind of challenges that I have. When you go with that kind of attitude, God helps you to face the different situations, different challenges, different problems. You remember what Jesus told the sleepy disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26:42 says, "Watch and pray that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the body is weak." And that is true of all of us. The secret is to watch and pray.

So be in that attitude. Remember that you have something to fulfill every day. You are special. You have a plan to fulfill and keep that attitude. Don't accept defeat. I'm not saying that you should be bubbly all the time, but that joy should be there. God has created us for that.

Let me close with this particular verse:

Galatians 5:22 *"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."*

Each time I read this verse, I'm challenged. I don't have half of it, and that's true about all of us. by nature, I'm not a patient person. I am a teacher. I get very impatient with my students. But that's true of most of us. We may have one or two of the fruits of the spirit. But this verse does not say fruits of the spirit. It says fruit of the spirit. God's plan is to have all these nine things in our life. And God is working in your life to do that. so be joyful. As the days go by, become more patient. God is working in each area. Joy, peace, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. All of them.

Pastor usually gives this benediction, and I love it.

Philippians 1:6 "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."

So, we must be joyful knowing that God is working in us, and He's doing all this. What then is our role? Our role is to allow ourselves to be fully controlled by the Spirit.

In summary, remember that there's a constant battle for our hearts and our minds. Therefore, be watchful how you spend your time. live a life under the control of the Holy Spirit and always remind yourself that you are created for a very special purpose and fulfill the plans for your life.

Amen.

