

“Our Relationship with the Holy Spirit”
Acts 19:1-7
(Preached at Trinity, September 12, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we found Paul leaving Corinth and traveling to Ephesus. Upon arriving he came upon a certain number of disciples—**Verse 7** tells us there were 12. Paul asks them if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. They responded that they had never even heard of such a thing.
2. Like Apollos in the previous chapter, it is doubtful that these were true believers. They had only been baptized with the baptism of John.
 - A. Like Apollos, these disciples did not know the baptism of Jesus. They knew only John’s baptism which was a baptism of repentance. The Baptism of Christ points to the Gospel.
 - B. In other words, their knowledge of the Gospel was deficient. They knew of Christ but they did not understand the nature of the death and resurrection of Christ.
 - C. John’s baptism was a baptism of preparation. John’s baptism looked forward to the atonement of Christ. Christian baptism looks back to the atonement.
3. Last time I dealt with the nature of this receiving of the Holy Spirit. Charismatics often use this verse as a proof text that you can receive the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to salvation – a second blessing, a highly charged experience evidenced by the speaking of tongues.

As I pointed out last time, this was not a subsequent work of grace. This was the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit.

 - A. We can be baptized with the Holy Spirit only once
 - B. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is the act of Christ by which He places us into His body – it occurs at conversion
1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”
 - C. At this time Holy Spirit indwells us and begins His work of grace in our lives.
4. I had planned on moving on in this passage but in light of our experience with Paul Washer I thought it expedient that I cover one other area with regard to the Holy Spirit. I want to speak on the subject of our relationship with the Holy Spirit.
 - I. The nature of this relationship
 - A. We have received God
Acts 19:2 – “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”
 1. God has come to indwell man – He has send forth His Spirit
Acts 2:17 – “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:”

2. In one of the greatest of mysteries, the eternal infinite God has taken up residence in a human being
 - B. It is essential to understand the nature of the Trinity
 1. We serve one God, not three Gods
 - a. We are monotheists – we serve one God.
 - a. When we talk about receiving the Holy Spirit we are speaking of God
 - b. All of the divine attributes are ascribed equally to each of the three persons; they are of the same substance, equal in power and glory.
 - c. The same divine worship is rendered to them. The one is as much the object of adoration, love, confidence, and devotion as the other.
 2. Whether we talk about our relationship with the Father, or with Jesus, or with the Holy Spirit we are talking about our relationship with God.
 3. The three persons of the Godhead are distinct, yet one.
 - C. When we speak of relationship we are talking about a relationship of persons
 1. We are talking the human person having a relationship with the person of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit
 2. This is what we mean by “personal relationship”
 - D. We throw around many expressions, all of which refer to our relationship with God
 1. When we talk of spiritual zeal we are speaking about our relationship with God the Holy Spirit.
 2. When we talk about a passion for Christ we are talking about relationship.
 3. When we taking about being spiritually stifled or spiritually enlivened we are talking about relationship.
 4. When we talk about spiritual dryness we are talking about relationship.
- II. Our relationship with the Holy Spirit – with God is not just an experience
- A. Too many today are searching for a feeling – this is largely the result of the influence of the Charismatic movement.
 1. Many Christians weigh everything on how they feel
 - a. If they “feel” excited they assume this is spiritual zeal
 - b. If they don’t “feel” a zeal they doubt their salvation
 2. Pastors feel pressured to keep their membership excited
 3. Many church members blame the pastor or the church if they don’t feel the excitement.
 4. Example - The prayer meetings I once attended – much weeping
Just because we are stirred by experience does not mean that it is spiritual. Many things can stir you to tears – a movie, a song, or other people weeping.
 5. We should not even consider the excitement kindled around a meeting like we just had with Paul Washer a move of the Holy Spirit. It might be but it usually isn’t. There are many things that excite our flesh.
 6. Many Christians are looking for that next thing that will kindle excitement. They feel empty without it. So they search for that one preacher who will kindle the feeling. They look to the music in worship to kindle the feeling.
Paul Washer – “When was the last time you felt a passion for Christ apart from anything external?”

7. Feelings are fleeting and a poor foundation for a Christian. Every mature believer understands this and must teach it to new believers.
Keith Green – “Lord, the feelings are not the same, I guess I’m older, I guess I’ve changed. And how I wish it had been explained, that as you’re growing you must remember, that nothing lasts, except the grace of God by which I stand”

B. The Christian life is a marathon

1. The true believer presses on – he endures whatever hardships come. He labors for the glory of Christ even when the “feelings” are weak.
Matthew 10:22 – “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”
2. Our relationship with God is much like that of a husband and wife
 - a. I believe this is one of the purposes of marriage. It points to our relationship with Christ – with God.
 - b. When a couple first begins courtship there may be a great sense of excitement – getting to know one another, thoughts about the future but it is often immature.
 - c. By immature I mean inexperienced. Mature love is not based on feeling. It may kindle feelings but it is not dependent upon feelings. Feelings can be very deceptive and uncertain.
3. Christianity is about maturing in our relationship with God
 - a. Many people temporarily embrace God with great passion only to fall away.
Matthew 13:20-21 – “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”
 - b. Many people embraced Christ with excitement and then forsake Him
John 6:2 – “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.”
John 6:15 – “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”
By the end of the next day they forsook Him.
John 6:66 – “From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”
4. There are many marriages that start off like a Roman candle and then fizzle in divorce.
 - a. A healthy marriage grows and matures
 - b. Again, it doesn’t depend on feelings.
5. Let me tell you the story of a church. New young members coming with excitement and zeal over their new doctrine but by and by it faded.

6. Only a relationship with Christ will give you the power to press on. This relationship is not just an experience. It is a relationship that is built and strengthened by His grace. It is a love that is kindled that must never weaken – Illus. The Church of Ephesus.

III. How do we enhance our relationship with the Holy Spirit

- A. It is not by seeking to kindle a feeling.
 1. Nothing is more detrimental than a misunderstanding of this aspect of our relationship with God
 2. Christians are always longing to go back to the beginning – to their immature state when there was no knowledge. Just like with marriage you can't go back and you don't want to go back. Your relationship with God at the beginning was immature and weak.
 - a. You want a strong unmovable relationship that will endure until the end.
 - b. You want a relationship strong enough to make you finish well.
- B. Filling our minds with a knowledge of Him
 1. Our love for our wives has grown as our knowledge of them increases. We've learned to look beyond the superficial.
 2. Do you know God? Do you understand the workings of His Spirit within you? Do you know the love of Christ?
- C. Spending time with Him
 1. Husbands and wives only grow in their relationship as they spend time together. Imagine if you never spent time with your mate? If you were absent for months at a time?
 2. How do we spend time with God? How do we seek Him?
Hebrews 11:6 – “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
 3. We find God in His Word. Reading, meditation, study, memorization.
 - a. We hear this over and over but we don't really believe it.
 - b. We want the quick fix. The fast feeling, the easy emotion.
 - c. Relationships take work.
 4. We find God through prayer – prayer too is hard work.
- D. Filling our lives with the things He loves
 1. Imagine a husband only talking to his wife about car engines or hunting, or golf. Imagine a wife only talking to her husband about the latest dress style or her newest recipe.
 2. The wise husband or wife is interested in the interests of their spouse.
 3. Do you know the things God loves . . . and hates?
 - a. Do you really believe He enjoys watching TV?
 - b. Do you really believe He is interested in all the material things we fill our lives with – and our thoughts?
 - c. Is He thrilled with the size of your house or your car?
Matthew 8:20 – “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.”

4. What are the things He loves?
- a. He loves obedience to His law.
John 15:9-11 – “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. ¹⁰ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”
 - b. He loves pure thoughts
Philippians 4:8-9 – “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”
 - c. He loves mercy
James 1:27 – “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
 - d. He loves humility
1 Peter 5:5-6 – “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”

Conclusion:

1. The life of the believer is not about sudden spurts of excitement. It is about pressing on.
2. The Christian life is a relationship. We have met Christ. This fills our hearts with joy. Our joy is based upon Him. Nothing external can create this joy. It is based upon a knowledge of Him whose Spirit dwells within us.
1 John 1:3-4 – “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”