

Part of my wife... Patti's... testimony... includes how she gave Christ control of her life... through the encouragement of friends... who she knew from High School. ... These friends...(just like my wife)... had been raised in Catholic families... but had discovered the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. ... Furthermore... they had all left the Catholic church and were fellowshiping in a charismatic church... where they had accepted its beliefs concerning spiritual gifts. Their experiences of speaking in tongues had become an important part of their Christian life.

Not very long after that... Patti accepted an invitation from a college friend... to attend an event with the college group at a Baptist Church. She did... and that is where we met.

After Patti and I eventually became engaged to be married... her high school friends... who God used to show her... that she needed Christ in her life... became very concerned. ... It made them nervous that she had been dating a Baptist... and now that she had become engaged... they thought she needed to be confronted.

I still remember the phone call that I received from Patti... after they had spoken their concerns to her... "*Jim... do Baptists believe in the Holy Spirit...?*" ... Caught off guard by the question... I answered... "*Yes... of course... He is essential to the God-head... He's the third Person of the Trinity... Why do you ask...?*" She replied... "*Because Val said that I am not supposed to marry you... because Baptists don't believe in the Holy Spirit...*"

After a brief laugh... I assured my future wife of our belief in the Holy Spirit... and how we might differ from the understandings of her friends.

You see... they looked for certain criteria... as evidence that the Holy Spirit is real inside a person's life... and they did not see any of this evidence in the lives of the Baptists they knew. They looked for signs of strong emotion... and ...what are known as “manifestational gifts of the Holy Spirit...” A typical worship service in a Baptist church... was not as exuberant with displayed emotions... .. Now I am glad to acknowledge that over the past several years... there seems to have been an increase of joy and celebration in our worship... (Praise bands have replaced church choirs... no longer do we rely on piano and organ to lead our music... and sometimes we even clap when we sing... some even raise their hands.) ... Now... I credit our charismatic friends for bringing this to us... but the line gets drawn... at a certain point. ... We do not speak in tongues...at our services... nor do we emphasize miraculous healings.

While it is true that Baptists do not normally manifest these “evidences” of the Holy Spirit... which our charismatic brothers and sisters in the Lord often look for... are there some definite evidences... found in Scripture... that every believer ought to have in his/her life...?

We cannot be Christians... without the Holy Spirit living in us.

Romans 8:9-11 (ESV)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

We cannot be joined to Christ without the Holy Spirit – according to 1 Corinthians 6:17. ... We cannot be adopted as God's Children without the

Holy Spirit – according to Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:6-7. ... And we cannot be in the body of Christ... except by the baptism of the Holy Spirit – which is what 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches.

If you are a Christian... then you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. If He does not reside inside of you... then let me declare very clearly to you... (according to what Scripture says...) you are not a Christian... and you do not have any real hope of salvation. ... So how do you know if the Holy Spirit lives inside of you...? I go back to my earlier question: Are there some definite evidences of the Holy Spirit residing in us... that is normal... that every believer ought to have in his/her life...? I believe that there are... and that every Christian needs to be confident of their existence in his/her life.

So as we study our passage this morning in the book of Acts... I am going to ask you to carefully consider if there is any verification of the Holy Spirit residing in your life. ... If He is there... (if you have allowed Him to fill your life)... then these evidences should be existent. ... I will be presenting five definite indications from our passage today. I am not declaring that these are the only five... but if you do recognize these to be present... then I believe you can have reasonable assurance that He lives inside of you – even though you may be are a Baptist!

I believe that I am being proper in asking you to check for these verifications in your life. ... Look what the Apostle Paul told the believers who were in the Church at Corinth to do...

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 (ESV)

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus

Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.

Last week in our study of Acts... we were in the passage that describes what happened at Pentecost. 50 days after the resurrection of Christ... the Holy Spirit came upon the little band of believers of about 120... as they waited in obedience for Him to come. ... When He came... He gave plenty of evidence that it was Him. ... He came with the sound of a mighty rushing wind from heaven. ... That attracted a lot of people from Jerusalem to see what was happening. ... And Jerusalem was filled with Jewish worshippers from all over the known world. ... When they came to find out what the noise was... many of them heard testimonies from the believers... in their own foreign language... from where they came.

In Acts 1:8... we read that just before Jesus ascended into heaven... He told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came... they would receive power and would be His witnesses. ... And they were – even to the point of witnessing in the known languages of the curious... who came because of the sound. God was starting the Church... and He was writing into it's very DNA - to have global outreach... as its concern. God's heart is world missions... and He demonstrates that He wants it to be the heart of the Church...

As the crowd observed... many of them marveled... But some mocked... and said that the Christians were simply drunk. ... That is when Peter stepped forward... and gave a wonderful demonstration of what it looks like to have the Holy Spirit present in your life.

I want to read our entire passage for today all the way through... first. ... And then we will step back... and observe evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence... that should be true in the life of every believer.

Acts 2:14-41

First of all... please notice the amazing transformation that took place in Peter's life. ... Just a little over a month and a half (...and that's all!) what had Peter displayed his character to be...?

In Mark 14:27-29... Jesus warned Peter that he was about to face an awful temptation. ... Yet Peter felt confident of his ability to remain faithful to Christ. "*Not me... I'll never deny You... Lord!*" ... But at the crucial moment of the trial... not only did he deny Jesus... he did it three times... and accompanied it with swearing and cursing...

But here we see a transformed Peter. ... He is irrepressible. He is bold! And he takes command. ... Take a look at the very different Peter... who no longer ran and hid... and then acted as if he didn't even know Jesus... when some girl recognized him...

Acts 2:23

Acts 2:36

There is observable change in this man... upon whom the Holy Spirit had come to dwell. ... That is the first evidence that we all need to see in ourselves. ... Is there evidence of a changed life...? And is this change something by which others can clearly observe...? ...

Titus 3:5-7 (ESV)

he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but

according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Listen if there is no obvious change in your life... that others can definitely see... then there is no new life. The Holy Spirit... in all likelihood is not inside of you.

I am not trying to be mean... it is just the opposite! The meanest thing I could possibly do... is to allow someone to think that they are saved... if they really aren't. ... So... would others be able to acknowledge a new life in you... which means positive change...? ... People fill our churches today who have simply prayed a prayer and then gone on living just as before – with no change. ... If that is you... you have cause to be concerned.

The second evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in our life... which is quite obvious from our passage... is that we will be witnesses. ... We will have a commitment to the Gospel. We will not be ho-hum about it... without any desire to see it's spread.

Once again... Christ declared in Acts 1:8... that once the Holy Spirit comes... believers will be His witnesses. ... They will be part of the effort to see its spread to change other people's lives. Our example of Peter... here in Acts chapter two... illustrates the presence of the Holy Spirit. ... there should be a passion to communicate the Gospel in ways that people will want to listen. Do you have such a passion...?

In verse 14... notice how all 12 disciples stood... but only Peter spoke. (Perhaps later they added to what he said...) ... But Peter is the primary Gospel preacher here. The others... we are told stood with him... I

believe... as a show of support. ... Do you have a passion for the propagation of the Gospel... Do you at least support it in visible/tangible ways...?

AND... We must find ways to communicate the Gospel in ways that people want to listen.

We happen to live today in an age that has been called “Postmodern.” In society today... truth is not seen as objective. There is no such thing as a truth that is true for everybody... whether you live in America... or Tanzania. Truth is subjective... it is experienced differently from person to person. Your truth may not be my truth. ... No one’s truth can be assumed to be the truth for anyone else. Truth is whatever an individual has discovered through their own experience.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life... will not allow the believer to just sit back... and say... *“Well... O.K. then... You go on believing the way you want... and I will do the same... That’s cool!”*

Since Postmodernism views all truth as subjective... and unique to every individual... it can take good points from all religions... without attributing absolute exclusivity to any particular one. ... (This is what we see a lot of people do today... including many who regularly attend fine Evangelical churches.) This is how Mahatma Gandhi was able to hold Christ in such high esteem... while rejecting Christ’s Own claims to uniqueness. ... He took from the life and teachings of Jesus those principles he found useful... without bothering with those features... that seemed to suggest that Christ was unique. ... He downplayed the historical importance of the Gospels and

therefore rejected those features he found offensive. Just like so many today.

But the Gospel message (as we see Peter deliver it in Acts chapter 2)... gives no room for such an approach to life. ... Peter treats the Gospel... as if it is based on OBJECTIVE historical fact... And then he presents Jesus as the ONLY supreme... unique Bearer... of absolute truth... Who won the salvation of humankind... through His death and resurrection. ... This is why it is so important for us to find ways of communicating the truth of the Gospel to our Postmodern Age... using historical... and other objective evidence. (The death of Christ is only briefly mentioned in TWO verses... but the resurrection goes on for 11 verses...) ... Peter gives it a high priority in the Gospel message.

We are getting ready to celebrate Easter... and Folks... it really happened! There is no need for us to pretend with the movers and shakers of our society... that all truth is subjective.

But now... I don't want to leave the impression that our entire Gospel is objective truth. ... No... some of it is subjective... and Peter presents a balance of both. ... He appeals to the objective truth of Scripture... quoting from the Old Testament Books of Joel... and the Psalms. He reasons from the written word... and he highlights the historical record of Jesus' death and resurrection. ... These are his objective appeals. ... But he also appeals to personal their own personal experience – what they had been experiencing in Jerusalem through the death and resurrection... to the appearances of Christ raised from the dead... to the events they marveled

at when the Holy Spirit came. ... These personal experiences are the subjective facts.

As we look for ways to communicate the Gospel... we need both as well. We need to base it on objective historical fact... AND our own personal experience with it.

People often respond to the Gospel that answers a felt need in their life... They are attracted to His power to heal... for example... or His ability to take away guilt... His comfort... and His control of the future. The attraction to the Gospel is very often subjective (personal experience oriented.) ... But if we only keep it there... at the subjective experience level... they will... before very long be on unstable footing... unless they are quickly grounded in the objective truths of the gospel. I have come to the conclusion that most people *come* to Christ in order to have a felt need met... but they *stay* with Christ because of the Gospel's objective nature... they have come to believe that the gospel is true.

One of the evidences of the Holy Spirit in our life... is that we become passionate about communicating the Gospel in ways that people want to listen. ... We find Peter using a balance that we need – of objective and subjective truth.

One more thing before we move on... A subjective experience of the risen Christ... is an important key to understanding the nature of Christianity... and it has sometimes been neglected by evangelicals... who regarded themselves as being very orthodox in their theology. ... Such an attitude is a betrayal of biblical Christianity. ... But so is an attitude that emphasizes

experience so much ... that it neglects the objective facts of the Christian message. ... It takes both.

Is there evidence of an observable changed life...? ... Is there a passion to get the Gospel message out in ways that people want to listen...? THIRD... Is there evidence of an enlighten mind...? (Are you making connections of Scripture to life... as you live it...?)

John 14:26 (ESV)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peter was an uneducated fisherman... He came from the disrespected regions of Galilee. But here he is connecting God's word to the situation... with authority and tremendous insight. ... Where did he get this understanding...? It wasn't from sitting at the feet of a respected and well-educated Rabbi. ... His audience would have HAD to marvel at the comprehension...,grasp... and discernment... that came from his lips.

Peter builds his sermon on a text from the prophet Joel. This prophecy had more fulfillment than just at Pentecost. But it fit Pentecost, so Peter quoted it.

Acts 2:17-21

The signs and wonders predicted by Joel's prophecy had not occurred. When you read Joel's prophecy in context... you see that it deals with the nation of Israel in the end times... in connection with "the Day of the Lord." However... Peter was led by the Spirit to see in Joel's prophecy an application to that situation. ... He said, "*This is that same Holy Spirit that*

Joel wrote about. He is here! ... Why do you think this is something odd or something strange? ... We have prophecy that says these things are going to come to pass."

Peter... with his enlightened mind to Scripture... understood that the "spigot" of the Holy Spirit had been opened. ... The Pentecost experience was merely a "down payment" on Joel's prophecy... a "taste" of God's future blessings... There is more to come... This was only "stage one!"

After he explained what they were witnessing was the Holy Spirit... as prophesied by Joel... Peter then concentrates on the resurrection of Christ... and displays his further enlightenment of more Scripture.

He quoted Psalm 16:8-11... and Psalm 110... verses that obviously could not apply to David... who was already dead and buried. David spoke of God not abandoning him to death. ... He then reasoned that... because David died... the psalm must have been speaking about one of David's descendants. ... Since Jesus is the only one who conquered death... and is a descendant of David... he must be the promised Messiah.

Evidence for the Holy Spirit in a believer's life... is an enlightened mind when it comes to Scripture. ... Do you have a better grasp on God's Word... and are you able to see how it applies to situations you are facing...?

Now... let me go back to Peter's enlightenment from Joel for just a moment. I love how the prophecy of Joel... as it is quoted in verse 18... shows us how inclusive the Holy Spirit would be. He would even be poured out on such down and outers... as male servants... **and** also... (perhaps you better

be sitting for this one)... female servants... (I bet some of you thought I was going to say “Baptists...”)

Josephus... the ancient Roman-Jewish historian... noted that the Jewish Law marks women as inferior to men in all things. ... A repeated rabbinical mantra, “women, slaves and minors” — demonstrated that women... like Gentiles slaves... and minor children... were to be under the authority of a man... and had limited participation in religious activity. ... Women weren’t allowed to testify in court... or study the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). ... In fact... Rabbis would rather burn the Pentateuch... than have a woman read it.

Joel had first prophesied this radical concept... that women would have the Holy Spirit... and now Peter repeats... what would have been a very unpopular... and revolutionary concept. ... Isn’t that another mark of the Holy Spirit’s presence in a life...? He makes us unafraid to look fanatical... radical... and even revolutionary from mainstream society’s vantage point.

Are you so concerned about looking so radical to our culture... (out of the mainstream)... that it affects what you say and do in certain crowds... so that you don’t come off as a religious fanatical...?

Being filled with the Holy Spirit... brings a definite boldness. With this boldness... Peter authenticates his message about Christ to the very ones who saw Him do many miracles... and he appeals to that. ... “*You were right there... you saw Him do them!*” ... Gutsy move – if Jesus had not actually done any miracles. ... But no one said... “*What miracles? I didn’t see Him do any miracles. Did you see Him do any...?*” ... And then he

looked them straight in the eye and said – YOU are the very ones who murdered Him!” – in verse 23 and again in verse 36.

So far we have looked at four evidence of the Holy Spirit in a Christian’s life. ... I believe there really ought to be evidence of... #1. An observable changed life... #2. A passion to get the Gospel out in ways that people want to hear it... #3. An enlightened mind when it comes to understanding and applying Scripture to what you face... #4. A boldness that doesn’t fear looking too radical.

Now our fifth and final evidence is not what is displayed by Peter. It is what the crowd who listened to him displayed.

Acts 2:37

To be cut to the heart... is to experience deep conviction. ... This is what Jesus declared would be the activity of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:8-11 (ESV)

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Has there ever been a time... when you have genuinely grieved over your sin. Has your sin ever struck you deeply with conviction...? ... If there has never been a time when you have felt the heaviness of offending God – not just a cheap sorrow that seeks to avoid punishment – then you lack this vital evidence. ... There are many who consider themselves a Christian... but they are never really burdened by their sin. They may ask God for His forgiveness... but there is never any sense of actually offending God. “*Its*

really no big deal... I asked God to forgive me... I believe that He did... and I moved on...” Rather than any sense of true conviction... it is flippant.

Now... I am not suggesting that a believer needs to moan and groan... and go into deep levels of emotional pain... whenever they realize that they have sinned. ... But what I am saying is that sometimes the Holy Spirit in a Christians life... will convict us of our sin in a way that we are truly sorry. And that is because our relationship with God is such that we don't want to offend Him. Therefore... (sometimes)... when we do... we feel a genuine sorrow. ... (Now... once again... let me be clear... I am not saying that you must ALWAYS feel this)... But if you never have... it may be worth your further investigation of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life.

The crowd Peter preached to... were convicted deeply enough that they wanted to know what they could do... in order to remove their feelings of deep regret. ... Peter said: *Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sin.*

As I usually explain during our baptism services... Greek... the original language of the New Testament... has different meanings for any given preposition. In verse 38... the preposition “for” is used. In Greek it is the word “eis” ... which is just as easily translated “because of”... Allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture... because there are plenty of Scriptures that clearly teach salvation... and the forgiveness of sin... does not happen because of something we do... (it is all a matter of our faith... and not of ourselves)... we need to understand that the better translation would be “because of...” Repent and be baptized “because of” the forgiveness of

your sin.” ... Because you have been forgiven – now go and pledge your obedience to Christ through the act of baptism.

Apparently many of Peter’s listeners did just that – about 3,000 according to verse 41.

Have you ever wondered... if there is any evidence that the Holy Spirit resides inside of you. This morning we have looked at Peter’s demonstration of what it looks like... and seen verification from other passages of Scripture which show that these are true evidences.

It is vital for every believer to know by seeing this evidence. Is there observable change in your life...? Do you have a passion to get the Gospel out...? Do you experience an enlightened understanding of God’s Word with an ability to apply it to your life situations...? Are you unafraid of looking radical to mainstream society...? Have you ever experienced real conviction of sin in your life...?

Do not try to manufacture these evidences in your life. Don’t try to whip them up in any kind of self-effort. ... If you are sensing that the Holy Spirit is not present in your life... but you would like Him to be... then take another look at verse 38... Peter’s answer for what they needed to do.

Acts 2:38

Repent! – Change your mind about God. Start trusting Him. He is the One Who needs to be in charge of your life. He is God and you are not. ... Agree with Him that you have grieved Him through disobedience... and by not trusting Him. ... Place your trust in God’s plan... the ONLY thing that will work. Trust what Jesus accomplished on the cross... to take the penalty

you deserve for all your offenses against God. ... You can believe that this really is true... because Christ rose from the dead.

Second... make a distinct pledge of faithful obedience... that you will remain a committed follower of His. This would be done through a ceremony called "baptism."