

Paul Questions Twelve Men

By Paris Reidhead*

Will you turn, please, to Acts, the 19th Chapter. Acts, the 19th Chapter. We are speaking tonight on the theme, PAUL QUESTIONS TWELVE MEN. I'll read the first 12 verses, in order that the Word in context might be before us, might hold and engage our hearts. Listen carefully:

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. ³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. ⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should 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 his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. ⁷ And all the men were about twelve. ⁸ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. ¹¹ And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: ¹² So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

You will notice perhaps that we are scheduled to speak in the future on this subject, BY PAUL'S HANDS, and this is the portion from which it comes. But our concern tonight is with this first portion of the Word here in the early verses of this 19th chapter.

Paul questions twelve men by asking them, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

There are several questions here asked by Paul. We are concerned about all of them. The first is the last question, the question in verse 3. "Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism." "John came preaching, Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2) "There is one coming after me who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am unworthy to loose. He it is that baptizeth you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Luke 3:16)

Now the history of these disciples is obscure. We do not know whether they had been present at John's preaching. If so, it would have been extremely unlikely that they could say, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," because "John preached saying that Christ would baptize them with the Holy Ghost." But this much we do know, that to these disciples in Ephesus had come a testimony of the necessity of repentance. And obviously there had been a genuine work wrought in their hearts. Now this I want to establish right at the very outset, for when they heard that which Paul had to say concerning the Name in which they were to be baptized, Paul was prepared to immediately baptize them in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Now the Word clearly teaches from page to page and chapter to chapter and book to book, that baptism is a picture of an inward work, or as we have often said, the outward symbol of an inward work. No, it was not baptismal regeneration that was being set forth here. They were not being baptized unto forgiveness, they were not being baptized unto pardon; but, because that work of repentance and faith had been genuine, they were being baptized as a testimony to their faith in Christ, a testimony to their complete break with all that had engaged them in the past. Now this is extremely important, for if they had not been able to advance this second question to the satisfaction of Paul, the first question would have had no relevance, and no value, and no meaning. And so when Paul has asked them, "Unto what were ye baptized?, and they have answered, Unto John's baptism," certain things are absolutely clear. They are not particularly clear because of what you have here, but they are clear because of what is associated with John's baptism.

Whether or not they heard John, they certainly heard the meaning of his baptism, that it meant a complete break with the past. This is always implicit in baptism. Missionaries in India have told us that it is quite easy at times to get secret believers, those who are intellectually convinced that the Gospel is true. But when it comes to the matter of baptism, this is where they draw back and rebel; because their community understands that baptism cuts them off from the past and unites them to that which is new. Therefore, it is... the missionary is wise who does not count as a believer anyone who is unwilling to submit to baptism, because if they are unwilling it is quite evident that they do not understand the nature of repentance. And, lest someone should think that this was superficial and unimportant, let us remember what is involved in repentance: a change of mind, a change of will, a change of direction, a change of action. All of this is implicit. So essential is it that Christ said, "Except you repent you will perish." (Luke 13:5) And just as He said, "You must be born again," He said, "You must repent." It has the same force, the same strength. (John 3:3)

Repentance, however, is prerequisite to, and in point of time previous to in its beginning to forgiveness and the new birth. And so these people to whom Paul speaks had such insight from God, such revelation from God, through whatever testimony they had heard, whether it was from the lips of John, or from someone that had come with the message of John to their hearts, their response was genuine. Now this is no little thing. This is no little thing. And my heart leaps when I read that Paul was prepared after he questioned them, and probably the conversation was far more extensive than was recorded here, Paul was prepared to baptize them. He was prepared to baptize them, then, in water.

There had been a good work done. The work had been done so well that apparently there is no need for the Spirit of God to indicate that Paul had to correct it, reinforce it, or strengthen it. He accepted it. I think that we have had in the 20th century, and this I alluded to, or stated as frankly and strongly as I know how, a tragic thing happened where people had intellectually consented to the scheme or plan of salvation without having repented. They have embraced the words of eternal life without having received the Person who is Himself eternal. And there is evidence on every hand that we have cultivated by these means in the last hundred years a Christian culture in which people have become acquainted with evangelical truth, and evangelical testimony, and have failed to meet Him on that basic work of the Spirit of God in the human heart of repentance. Not only this, but it has actually been assailed.

I remember in my early years as a student and a young preacher that I had listened to my teachers inveigh against repentance and say that anyone who preached repentance in this time was actually heretic, because repentance was Jewish and had nothing to do with the church, that Paul never preached repentance: All he preached was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 16:31)

Now I have related to you those three Scriptures which completely contradict this, in Acts 17, Acts 20, and in Acts 26, where at Mars Hill he said, "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." (Acts 17:30) And in taking leave of the Ephesians, he says, "I was with you night and day, from house to house, teaching repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:20,21) And in Acts 26, before Agrippa, he said, "I delivered unto them of Damascus and Jerusalem, the Jews and the Gentiles, how that they must repent and turn to God and bring forth works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:20) You see, repentance is not a work. If you define it as, Sorrow, then of course it does have the quality of work, and sorrow might have some meter by which it could be measured. But repentance is a change of attitude, a change of purpose, a change of direction, a recognition of the enormity of sin, and an inward purpose no longer to continue in it, a change from governing and ruling one's life to turning that same life over to the rightful governor and ruler.

And so this has happened in these people, this has taken place. There is no question about that. There is to my knowledge absolutely no question about the fact that they have heard of Christ. Not that they were to be baptized in His Name, but I am satisfied that they had sufficient knowledge of Christ because remember, it is a good while; it is a good time after the ascension of Christ when Paul gets to Ephesus. And I am myself absolutely convinced that here in 56 A.D. some 33 to 36 years after the ascension of Christ that these people have heard that the one of whom John spoke was Christ Jesus, and they have repented, and they have received Him, as Lord. They have submitted to His Sovereignty, they have embraced His Saviorhood. I personally am absolutely convinced, from the careful study of this portion, that these people were not hearing for the first time now of Christ, but by the structure of the words are simply saying that they were to be baptized in the Name of One of

whom John preached, whom they knew to be Christ Jesus. And they had not learned that they would be baptized in His Name, but rather that they were to believe on Him, and their baptism was John's baptism.

Now the reason I am so convinced of this is that immediately Paul baptizes them. And were there any question at all as to whether or not they had savingly received Christ then there would be reason to suppose that this was, as some would try to construct it, baptismal regeneration and they were being baptized in order to be saved, which would be an anomaly, the only place in the Scripture it would so be taught, and would give grounds for a great problem. No. These people had learned that the essence of sin is self-rule, self-will, self-government. They had learned that if they were to every know God savingly they must be willing to turn the rule and government of their life over to Christ, that He was the Rock upon which they must fall; and that in falling, from that time on, He was to rule. They had been baptized with John's baptism, testifying to the renunciation of their right to rule, the receiving of Jesus Christ as the right and proper Sovereign of their hearts. Now this is important, this is tremendously important, because here are a people that have believed with all that that word believe has in saving significance, saving connotation.

We know what happens when one savingly receives Christ. We have reviewed it in the past, we should think of it again, in order that our minds may be clear and we may think together on it. First, the Spirit of God awakens a sinner to his danger; secondly, He convicts the sinner of the nature of his crime; thirdly, He brings that sinner to repentance; fourthly, He quickens faith, faith that leaps across the centuries and the pages to personally embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and as Savior. Now in response to that heart faith he is justified in Heaven; all the past counted to Christ, all his sin laid upon Christ; and the righteousness of Christ counted to him: he is justified. But at the moment that he is justified in Heaven, he is regenerated in his heart. This regeneration is by the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God who comes into that believer's heart, making real the presence of Christ in saving work. And it is the Spirit of God that testifies that he has been born of God.

I am convinced that all of this has happened in this people, that the Spirit of God has regenerated them, that they have the witness of the Spirit, that they are disciples of Christ, and that they are thus there, having their life in accord with the rule, and government, and principle as they have learned that rule, and government, and principle of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not been baptized in His Name, but rather in John's baptism; and so they are now to be initiated by Paul into the fact that baptism is a testimony of our relationship to Christ. It is an outward symbol of an inward work, and without farther instruction, without further dealing, he takes them into the water, they are baptized that very day.

Now if this is the case, and I strongly affirm it is, then the Spirit of God was in them; but the point that you must understand is this, that one does not even need to know that there be a Holy Spirit to come that far. It is not faith in the Holy Spirit that saves one; it is faith in the finished work of Christ enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Now let me strengthen the point with you. It's not necessary to know that there be such a Person as God manifest in His Trinity, and His Omnipresence, as Holy Spirit. They saw God in His authority on the Throne; they saw Jesus Christ as God come in the flesh. This is the testimony concerning Christ. They have submitted to the will of God in manifesting Christ, and to the rule of Christ in their life. They are disciples who are walking in obedience to the Mind and Will of Christ. All of this they are and yet they can be such, born of the Spirit, knowing they are children of God, and correctly affirm that they do not even know that there be a Holy Spirit. I want that point clear, if it is possible to make it, that it is not necessary for one to have faith personally placed in the Spirit of God in order to have been gloriously saved by the power of the Spirit of God. For it is the Spirit of God that awakens, but He does not say, I the Holy Spirit am awakening. The only thing He does is cause the sinner to say, What is the matter with me? Something is wrong between me and God. And then the Spirit of God convicts. When He is come, He will convict. And then it is the same sinner that cries out, I know what is wrong between me and God; I am a sinner. Now it is the Spirit of God that did that, but He didn't identify Himself in the doing of it when He did it. He caused the sinner to see it, but He didn't speak of Himself. And it is the Spirit of God that induces this one to repent, to throw down the arms of his rebellion, and the weapons of his warfare, and say, Jesus Christ shall rule my life; I won't be a rebel and an anarchist anymore; I will commit myself to His government. It is the Spirit of God that does that. But He doesn't identify Himself. It is a relationship between the sinner and Christ.

It is the Spirit of God that enables him to look across two thousand years and see a Jew, hanging on a Cross, outside of a little city; despicable in the eyes of the Romans, and that that man hanging on that Cross was God come to atone for the sins of a

race of sinners. It is the Spirit of God that takes away the fog, and the smog, and the atheism, and agnosticism, and infidelity, and unbelief, and doubt, and enables one's heart to leap across two thousand years of history and embrace that Man as their all-sufficient Savior.

Now it is, of course, understandable why our generation of unawakened sinners, listening to us preach, say, The Gospel is nonsense. How can the death of a man 2 thousand years ago have any relevance to me, living in the 20th century, is an honest question. And the answer is, There isn't any real relevance in his eyes until he comes to realize that that Man is God, God come in the flesh, who came for the purpose of redeeming sinners. And the only way that it can possibly become relevant is when the sinner realizes his sin, and realizes this man died for him, and reaches out across the centuries to embrace which is all encompassing and all dependent. When that happens, then I said, these two miracles happen and Heaven is justified; for God counted all of his sin laid upon Christ; and then now in response to his faith in so receiving Christ as Lord and as Savior, God counts all the righteousness of Christ to him. And he is justified, his legal standing before God is as sinless and holy as that of Christ. But while he is justified legally at that moment, the same moment he is regenerated by the Holy Ghost and God comes into his heart. And he partakes of life in the Person of God by the Spirit, and it is thus said that Christ is in him. But all of this is done, I say and affirm again, without him so much as knowing that the agent by which it is effected is God the Holy Spirit.

Now, it is quite possible then for this to happen, and for people to be able to say due to the absence of teaching and instruction, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," and to have been genuinely born of God; because God has not made it requisite that one know about the Holy Spirit to have saving relationship with Christ. Let us see that. That is the first thing.

Now, what is the second question that was asked by Paul as he questions these twelve men? If you will turn to the second verse you will see it as it is in the King James, or whatever version you are using. And I want you to notice every word, because every word is significant. "Have you, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" The revised version has it, and I don't like it as well, "Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed." I think there is no more justification in the text for that than there is for this, so we will deal with what we have before us here. "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

Now let us take the word that is the crux of this whole matter, the fulcrum on which the lever of truth has to rest. It is the verb in this sense, *received*. You see, it is very difficult from this particular translation to recognize that this is an active verb, for it usually carried with it a passive sense, as we would commonly use it. Have received would be in us a passive idea; something that has happened without any particular action on your part. But actually this would be far better translated, if we were to read it as follows: Have you taken the Holy Ghost since you believed? Have you taken Him? Have you taken?

The word here, the infinitive word *labita*, as you find it where Christ on the night of the resurrection said, *Labita hageos numitas*. Take the Holy Ghost, has in it the idea of taking, the same strength and structure here. Have you taken? He didn't say, Did He come when you believed as is stated; because if they believed, He came, you see. If you believed, He came. For if one savingly receives Christ, the Spirit of God has joined Himself to that person bringing life, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." (Rom. 8:9) He didn't say that. He didn't say, "Have you received" in that passive sense, Did He come when you believed; because that would be a contradiction of terms. If He hadn't come they had not savingly believed, hadn't come to bring life in regenerating effect. But that isn't what He said. He said, Have you taken? "Have you taken the Holy Ghost since you believed," or did you take Him when you believed, if you wish to go back to that.

What is he saying? Remember that I gave you a chart, I think some of which remain here to the present, in which I stated that there were two aspects, Born of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit offers Christ to the repentant sinner, and the Holy Spirit offers Christ to the repentant sinner. Isn't that what we have just dwelt on? The work of the Spirit of God offering Christ to the sinner, and savingly uniting that sinner to Christ. But you see it was the work of the Spirit of God to present to the sinner Christ.

But now what are we doing? We are moving into another area, a completely different area. We now find that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is offering the Holy Spirit in His fullness to the saint. For you see, the saint was born of the Spirit, but he wasn't born full of the Spirit. He was born of the Spirit, but wasn't born full of the Spirit; for the Spirit of God came with that work which was essential to uniting that one to Christ, which was to savingly impart Divine Life. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is

saying that the One who awakened you, the One who convicted you, the One who brought you to repentance unto faith, the One who justified you and regenerated you, the One who told you that you could call Almighty God, Abba, Father, the One who told you you were a child of God, this One is God, God the Spirit; and now the Lord Jesus Christ is offering Himself through the Person of the Spirit to this believer. This I say is the aspect that is presented here. Not so much did He come to bring life. This is synonymous with believing; but have you been aware of the meaning of this truth that the promise is to you, and to your children, and to as many afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call, that He is giving the Holy Spirit in His fullness to His people. Are you aware of that? Have you taken? Have you been instructed? Have you been taught? Do you realize that isn't just repentance and faith, and justification, and regeneration, and certainty that if you die you will go to Heaven. This is of primary interest to you, because you are concerned about your destiny, but Paul, and I might put words in his mouth, to have him say, Are you interested in what God's concern for you is? God's interest in you? It wasn't just to take you where He is when you die. But that He might come where you are while you are alive with all the liberty, and all the freedom that He desires and that He deserves. Are you prepared, therefore? Have you been aware of the fact that the One who came...

Now, we come to quantitative problems. And you say, Well how can a person have received the Spirit at life, at new birth... How can you receive the Spirit of God at new birth and then later take Him? After all, He is a Person. A Person cannot come in parts. Therefore, if He came in, He came in as a Person. And as a person, didn't He come? And the answer to that is, Yes, of course.

There is no problem here, however, because you see the Word has said, As He is so are we in the world., Now remember, Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, and one cell in her body was quickened by the Holy Spirit. And that Holy Thing born of her was Emanuel, God come in the flesh, and He was God from the moment of His birth, even before that. For you remember that when she came into the presence of Elizabeth, John in her womb leaped, for there was Emanuel being clothed upon with humanity and personality, ours. And the mystery of the fact that the Babe lay in Mary's arms and derived from her breasts was none other than God is incomprehensible to the mind that is limited by the things of time and sense. But this is the faith of our fathers, and the faith of our own heart that He was God. And those three kings that knelt at His manger bed and worshipped Him were driven of God from their paganism to come to the place where God had invaded humanity, and they worshipped God as they gave gifts to Him.

And from that time He was indwelt by the fullness of the God head bodily, Let there be no mistake about that, no question about that. This is true. From that time.

Now you know that at the Council of Nicea, and we have the Nicene Creed incidentally in the front of our hymn book, and I am so glad and I hope that you will memorize it and learn it. At the Council of Nicea, (You needn't turn to it, for it is only partially relevant at the moment)... At the Council of Nicea, this issue was settled. For here were heretics that said, Jesus Christ did not have a human body. Did you know that? Did you know that? Did you know that that was one of the great heresies of the early church: Christ did not have a human body. You are aware of that? Oh yes. That His body was an imaginary body. It looked like a body. It appeared to be. But it was not real. That was one of the aspects of the errant heresy that was so devastatingly effective in destroying the faith of many.

Then there was another side to the same heresy which said, Yes, oh no. He had a human body, but that is all He had. He was just a man. Until at His baptism, the Spirit of God came upon Him, and then He was God-man. For until that time He was just a man. Now that was the heresy that twisted and wracked the church for decades, scores of years. And at the Council of Nicea the matter was settled, for the fathers declared that He was Very God of Very God, very man of very man. His humanity perfect. He was God in all the perfection of Divine character.

Now, this means that the Christ, Jesus, God come in the flesh was perfectly God, perfectly man in every sense of the word, and yet, and yet, He wasn't ready for His ministry until the Holy Ghost came upon Him. And at His baptism, which was a picture of death to His rights, the right to His rights, oh He had died to them before the foundation of the world, and He is acting out now what had transpired when He is allowing Himself to be put beneath the water as did others and saying, I have accepted the limitations of My humanity. He couldn't be baptized in a sense of death to sin as it would appear to us, because "in Him there was no sin." (1 John 3:5) But to what could this death be related? To the fact that from eternity past, He had been God; and by

Him, all things were done, that were made were made. And now for the purpose of redemption, He had taken upon Himself a body like yours, and so He accepted the limitation of that body, and He is outwardly saying to the Father, By His baptism, Father, I am now accepting the limitations of My humanity publicly. Ten years now, or twelve, He had been a carpenter, master carpenter, engaged in pleasing the Father by pursuing His trade, and now He is saying, Father, everything that I've done I've done I have done to please You and all that I do hereafter shall be done by You, and He is relinquishing publicly the right to His rights; for He was to say subsequently, "I do not speak of Myself; I speak as I receive commandment of the Father." (John 12:49) "I do not do the works. The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." (John 14:10) And thus our Lord Jesus is bringing to issue now the fact that the means by which God's work is to be done in the world from that time forward is by men who have gladly and completely abandoned the right to their rights, and have surrendered all to God. And it would be God working through them, rather than men working for God.

And so "our Lord was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove." (Matt. 3:16) Remember that. John said, I saw. Oh, a visualization of what had happened, but our Lord says, It has happened. What was it? Wasn't the Spirit of God in Him? Yes. How could the Spirit of God be in Him, and not come upon Him? I'll tell you how. Because He is God, that is how. He is God. And when you reason from the human to the Divine, your reasoning is fallacious; because God has to reveal how He as God works. You can't reason. When a person comes, he comes in all of his personality and he is there; because the analogy breaks down. God is not like me or you. He is God. And thus He was in Christ, in nature, making Him very God of Very God, and He hadn't come upon Him to clothe that Divine Human Nature for service. And in the same manner, when you were regenerated, God the Holy Spirit joined Himself to your spirit, causing you to become a new creation, partaking of His Life, but it remained for you to understand that God wanted you to join Christ in death to reckon yourself to be dead, to consciously relate yourself to the Cross by realizing He died for you, but He also died as you. He wanted you to present your body to Him, that it would no longer be your using God, but God using you, no longer you working for the Lord, but the Lord working through you. Just as it was no longer Christ working for the Father, but the Father working through Christ. This is what He wanted. This is what He has taught. And so He said, Have you taken the Holy Spirit, yourselves to the Cross in abandonment, presenting your bodies to Him; have you reached out and taken Him to be the life of your life, and the power of your power, the strength of your strength? Have you consciously recognized that the One who came bringing life wants to cover you and clothe you?

That is why our Lord said in Acts 1:8, "After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He did not say, Come in. He said, Upon. It is an epi, an upon anointing, an upon covering, an upon enduement, not in. He came in at regeneration; now it is an upon, covering, clothing, anointing, and His question was not, Has He come? The question was, Have you taken? There is a difference. I might come to you and say, Well I hear that she is in need and I have a little extra. I'll just go to the bank and deposit it. And the hundred dollars that I have put into your account you have received. Yes, you received it. But it does not do you a bit of good until the mouth comes around and your record shows that somebody deposited a hundred dollars to your account. And you say, Well I do not know who it was but I am terribly grateful. And then you take it. But until you have taken it, what you have received has no relevancy. Do you see?

And so it was that He said, Have you taken the Holy Spirit?

Now where did He have to come from? Where did He have to come from? Where does the Spirit come from when He comes to clothe you, and immerse you, and submerge you and anoint you? Where does He come from? "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28) All geographical limits that you place upon God are erroneous. God is as near to you now as He is to the angels in glory. He is here. But you see, you don't see Him with your eyes, or hear Him with your ears, or taste Him with your tongue, or feel Him with your fingers. He is not the air. The air is in His presence, just as you are in His presence. And all things are imminent in His presence. But God is here. It isn't that He has to come from somewhere. It is like a bottle in the ocean. And the ocean is all around the bottle, but there is a cork in it, and all you need to do to have the bottle filled with ocean is take the cork out. Where does the ocean come from? Well it is not so much that it comes from somewhere. It is its relationship to what is in it. So you are in Christ through faith in His finished work, but now when you recognize that God by the Holy Spirit wants to fill you, it isn't that He has to come from so far. He is there. It is a matter of your attitude. It is a matter of your taking. It is a matter of your recognizing that He wants to fill you with Himself. And so He said, Have you taken Him?

Well that is a good question. One you have to ask your own heart. Have you taken? “Have you taken the Holy Spirit since you believed?”

Did He come?, Have you taken Him? Have you taken Him? Have you realized that this is the gift of the Father? And the promise is to you and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. If you are called of God, the promise is to you. Have you taken Him? That is what Paul said. That is what God asks. Received, in one sense, yes. But we are using the word now in its active significance, its active sense. Have you taken Him? Have you invited Him? Have you reached out in appropriating faith, your faith joined to the faith of others.

Now, as there was genuine evidence of God’s work of grace in their hearts of regenerating these people when they came up out of the water, I’m sure He spoke to them, and encouraged them, taught them, instructed them, and he laid his hands upon them, joining his faith to theirs, giving them that release that came from his encouragement and his identification, enabling them, seeking to help them to reach out and take the fullness of the Spirit of God, and “the Holy Ghost came on them.” There was an awareness. It was not that He had to come from so far, but they were aware of His Presence. “And they spake with tongues and prophesied.”

Now shortly, I am not just sure when, I am going to speak directly to the matter of “Tongues, A Sign or a Gift”. I haven’t yet chosen in my heart whether I should use this next week. But shortly and I shall give due notice on it, because I believe that it is a matter of tremendous importance. But let’s not become involved with that now. Let us just notice the text. What happened. “They spake with tongues and prophesied.” Some of them spoke with tongues, and some of them prophesied, but it came on all of them, you see. Some of them spoke with tongues, and some of them prophesied. And He came on all of them. They didn’t all speak with tongues. They didn’t all prophecy. But the whole structure is that some, that some spoke with tongues, and some prophesied. And what is the significance we see? When the Spirit of God comes upon you with an anointing, baptism or with an enduement, filling, or the crisis of the deeper life, you call it what you will because I long since lost interest in terms.

Somebody comes to me and says, Well that isn’t what we were taught, but you know that’s what happened. Well all I can do is rejoice and say, Well praise the Lord. All I’m concerned about is what happened. I’m not going to ask you to accept my terminology. All I want you to do is to know that He has met your heart, and you have reached out to take Him, to invite Him to fill you. Now this is true. Exactly as it is here, “The Spirit of God came on them.” There it is again, Epi, upon; this is a clothing, an anointing, and an enduement.

You might be greatly benefited if you were to read that little book that I have recommended so many times from F.B. Meyer¹, The Christ Life for the Self-Life, and the chapter on the anointing of the Spirit. A tremendous blessing. Or you might like to read Andrew Murray’s² splendid little volume, The Full Blessing of Pentecost. Well this is nothing new you know. This is not just discovered, these glorious truths, either 1900; this has been the currency of the church this has been the history of the church. And oh how your heart would be thrilled if you would read James Gilchrist Lawson³ little book, Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians, and find that the whole continuity of church history has been that God has answered hungry hearts. And when they have been prepared to meet Him on His terms and conditions He has been prepared to meet their need and fulfill His purpose.

You see the normal Christian life is to be “filled unto all of the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:19) Now you were born of His Spirit, but you weren’t born full of the Spirit. And He says, “Be filled with the Spirit, and that Christ may take up His lasting dwelling place that you might “be filled unto all of the fullness of God.”

Now, my dear, the great concern of your heart ought to be Paul’s question and let’s go back to it. Have you taken the promised Holy Spirit, inviting Him to possess you, to control you. Oh, how sad I am when people are seeking an experience so they can use God. It isn’t that, my dear. It isn’t that somehow you get a corner on God so you can use Him. It is quite the contrary. It’s God getting a complete hold upon you so that He can use you. And like our Lord Jesus who said, “I can do nothing of myself, I can only do what I see the Father do,” this is to be your relationship. This is to be your relationship. How wonderful it is.

¹ Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929) A Baptist Pastor

² Andrew Murray (1828-1917) He has authored over 240 Books

³ James Gilchrist Lawson (1874-1946) A Prolific British Christian author and compiler.

And here is the Word. This is His Word. So simple, and so clear. Well we will deal with it in the days to come, the question that I see rising up out of this. And I shall hope. I don't know. Either I will have it mimeographed before or after for the sake of those who might like the Scripture references, but I rather thought I might have gotten to it tonight, but I haven't. But I have come far enough to press to your heart this that God wants you to be a normal Christian filled with His fullness. This is His desire. And I am not interested in your biography. No dear. Someone says to me, Well I am not just sure when. Well... As old Brother Byers would say, Honey, I don't care about that. I don't care about that. All I want to know is, Are you walking in the fullness of God? That is the important thing. That is the important thing. You can, you know; and you should. And less than this is abnormal, second best. Oh, let us go on together, shall we. And not be detoured by anything less than Himself. "Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord. Once the gift I wanted, now the Giver own."⁴ Just Himself. Just Himself. All in all forever. That is what we want, to see Him, only the Lord Jesus as He is manifest and revealed to us through the Word by the Spirit.

Well let's pray. We are grateful for Thy Word; our Father "Thy Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our way." (Psa. 119:105) "There is a way, a way of holiness, and a wayfaring man, though a fool need not err therein." (Isa. 35:8) When men err, it is not because the Word is obscure, or difficult to understand. Error is not in truth. There are no truths that tend to error. We know that, Father. Error is in the hearts of men. There is no truth that tends to excess. Excess is in the hearts of men. No truths that tend to imbalance. Imbalance is in the hearts of men. And our hearts' cry to Thee tonight is that Thou by Thy Spirit shall enable everyone to answer, I have taken the Holy Spirit, offered by the Lord Jesus Christ, to fill me and possess me, and control me, and live through me the life of Christ, presenting my body to Him as a temple, my will, my whole being to Him that He might live in me His Own life. O grant that this shall be answered to that end, and grant that we shall understand the Word, and teach us how to teach, and how to help. And might the day come, not far away, Lord, when we will be able to help people here just as much as Paul was able to help these dear people. We look to Thee to teach us how that we can become by word and practice everything Thou dost want us to be. Now seal to our hearts what we have read. Grant, Lord, we'll ever stay in the Word. Don't let us get out of it. You know our hearts better than we do. And if we even should want to, hold us back, Lord. Trip us up, and bring us back right into the center of the Word. We thank Thee for this. Lord, should there be some to whom we are speaking who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, might this be the night, may they be just chained to their seat, unable to leave until they have repented and opened their hearts to receive Christ.

We give an invitation, you know, always. Sometimes we invite you to come forward during the service. And sometimes we invite you to come forward after the service and make known your need, but we are always giving an invitation. We want to help you. Tonight we are going to say that if you have a need to come forward, come to me to one of us after the service, and we will be so glad to help you in every way we can, praying with you and opening the Word to you. But now we are going to stand for the benediction. All the young people, College and Career Group will go upstairs to the time of the fellowship there. Let us stand.

Now may the love of God the Father, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be and abide with each of us now and until we meet again. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle, New York City on Sunday Evening, March 3, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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⁴ "Once it was the Blessing" By Albert B. Simpson, 1891.