

BFF410 The Spirit in Acts

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm recovering. How are you?

Scott: I'm good. What are you recovering from?

Steve: I spoke at an Iron Sharpens Iron event in New Hampshire, a little over 400 miles away. I drove up on Friday, took a deep breath, and drove through New Jersey and across the Tappan Zee Bridge. It's not a white knuckle drive, but it's intense. I came across the bridge and there are signs saying, "I-95 closed." I found out later a tanker truck had exploded. All the traffic was diverted to 84, which meant it was stop and go, adding an hour and a half, to two hours to my trip.

When I got there, I had a lovely visit with my in-laws, and then spoke three times on Saturday and drove back most of the way on Saturday night and then the rest Sunday morning. I just don't have the same energy that I used to have.

Scott: I'm not sure I ever had that kind of energy.

Steve: Well, once I got out of Connecticut and New Jersey, I had a lovely time singing and praying and listening to the Bible. I think I listened to the whole book of 1 Samuel and part of 2 Samuel on the trip. Those are interesting passages to be reading, too. How are you?

Scott: I'm good.

Steve: Your voice sounds a lot better than last week.

Scott: Yeah, I'm still fighting allergies, but that's going to be for the next month probably, but the cold seems to be going away, so I'm ready.

Steve: So you can sing tenor now?

Scott: Maybe the lower tenor notes.

Steve: We're going to continue our study today on the Holy Spirit, which is the expression that's used the most to describe him.

Father, we pray right now that You will help us to understand more about the Spirit and the role of the Spirit and the different aspects of the Spirit, which can be troublesome to many, and it's not often talked about, this knowledge that we want, and so we're praying for You to give us help by Your Spirit. Give us ears to hear what Your Spirit is saying to us through Your Word today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: A little overview, in the whole New Testament, there are approximately 250 references to the Holy Spirit. There are about 54 references to the Spirit in book of Acts. So, rounding up, about 20 percent of the Spirit references are in this book, If I

was responsible for writing titles for the books of the Bible, I would call this "Acts of the Spirit" or "Acts of the Apostles Empowered by the Spirit." I wouldn't call it "Acts of the Apostles" because it wasn't the apostles, but the focus was on what the Spirit did with these ordinary men.

Right after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He breathed on them and they received the Spirit. Then He told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. Scripture also tells us that he presented himself alive to them after His suffering, by many proofs appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

If he had spent 40 days appearing to them, 3 days in the ground, and then He said, "Now, for this next week, these seven days, I want you to tarry in Jerusalem." It says, "When staying with them, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which He said, you heard from Me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Our first observation is that they had received the Spirit, and now they were going to be baptized in the Spirit. We're on ground here that most people fear to tread, but we need to read what the Bible has to say and then make our observations.

The first observation I'm going to make is, there must have been something different about being baptized in the Spirit, because they had already received the Spirit. When I think about baptized, I think about being fully immersed, totally, completely baptized, just like when you are baptized by water, you're fully immersed. There again, I just touched another nerve.

Let me keep going. I've been studying Deuteronomy 6:5, where it says, "You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, your strength, the whole thing.

I looked up those three expressions today, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. There were three things that he mentioned there. I looked at the Hebrew for each one of those, and what I came away with, they were simply saying the same thing.

It has to be everything in you. Your heart is that center of your being. It's your inner man. It's the seat of your will. It's more than your emotions. It's more than passion. It's the real you. That's all your heart, and "soul" is actually close to the meaning for "heart." It's what's inside.

The word, "all your strength" or "all your might," is rendered in the New American Standard as muchness. It's degree. In other words, everything in you. That's basically what the author is saying. You need to love God with everything in you to the muchness degree. This has to be everything, completely.

I think going into this study, that's what baptism means to me is you need to be fully, completely filled, empowered, covered, clothed by the Holy Spirit. So if we have that mind in ourselves, then I think that will help.

I'm going to read now from Acts 2:1-4. "When the day of Pentecost arrived," -- Penta means 50, we just counted 50 days, 3 in a tomb, 40, he was talking to them, 7, they were waiting -- "they were all together in one place and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting and divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." This was an amazing thing, which then Peter described, as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32. "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams."

It goes on to say, "In those days, I will pour out My Spirit." That pouring out is a completeness. It's a wholeness. It's a fullness. It's a baptism of the Spirit. So with that in mind, this completeness, this fullness, this whole package, Acts 2, Peter stood up and said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Now that's a new expression for us in our study, the "gift of the Spirit." The Spirit is someone that is given. You remember there was that one fellow, the magician, Simon, and when he saw that the Spirit was given through the laying of the apostles' hands. He said, "Hey, I have some money here. I want to buy this power," and Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money."

This is the first thing that we're going to just consider and soak it in, that the Spirit is a gift. Luke 12:11-12, Jesus has taught His disciples, "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

I think of that when I'm reading Acts 4:5-8. "On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family, and when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders..." and he began to talk.

I wonder if he remembered what Jesus had taught him. I wonder what was in his mind? This is a fulfillment of what Jesus said, "You stand up, the Spirit of God will tell you what to say," which is awesome.

Another account needs to be brought in because it's in Scripture. Acts 5 has a don't-mess-with-the-Spirit exhortation. Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, had some land, were going to sell it, then they were going to give part of the proceeds to the church, and keep a little back for themselves. If they had been honest about it, for it's their land and they can do whatever they want, they would have been ok, but they lied about it.

Peter said in Acts 5:3, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds for the land?" Then Sapphira came in later, not knowing that her husband was already gone, and Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?" Then she died. There are two expressions here, "lie to the Spirit" and "test the Spirit."

The Spirit is God, and the Spirit was being poured out in all directions. It was a wonderful time in the Spirit, but it was also a time to be careful of the Spirit and not treat him in a common way. He is the Holy Spirit, He's God, and we want to honor Him as such.

There's a wonderful expression at the end of that fifth chapter when Peter and the apostles were talking, "We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

I keep seeing this concept in Scripture. If you want to abide in the love of God, you need to obey His commands, but this is another topic that it seems like people don't want to hear about – trust and obey. They want to hear about trust and receiving grace, and trust and letting God do all the work, but the Spirit is given to those who obey Him.

This is similar to Proverbs 1, if we "turn at His reproof, He will pour out His Spirit on us." If we turn and repent and come back to God, God pours His Spirit out on us. So this is not a new concept, but it needs to be mentioned that the Spirit of God is given to those who listen to Him and obey Him and honor Him.

Now I'm going to talk about my namesake, Steven, although he has a P-H and I just have a V. In Acts 6, the apostles had noticed that they were spending a good deal of time taking care of waiting on tables, serving people, etc., but they were losing their time in the Word and in prayer.

"Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. What they said pleased the whole gathering. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Spirit," plus a bunch of other guys.

I have always thought that reading the Bible and praying, is the work of the Spirit, but these men were going to take care of the physical needs of the saints, and they also had to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

In the next chapter Stephen is confronted by the people, who are eventually going to stone him, but Stephen was described two places in the 6th chapter, as full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. A true Spirit-filled man. "They could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." Eventually he says, "You stiff-neck people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did so do you," and that pushed them over the edge and they started looking for rocks and killed him.

Right before he died, "He, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." God help me to be faithful to my name and be a man like Stephen, full of the Spirit, pointing to Jesus and faithful right to the end.

In Acts 8, "When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

I think I need to say this because there are theologians that say, "You can't go to the book of Acts for doctrine," because the book of Acts is more like a narrative. It's an account. It's not as valid as something like Romans or 1 Corinthians or 2 Corinthians, etc. I hear what they're saying on the one hand.

On the other hand, it bothers me when people tell me which parts of the Bible I can believe and why, and which parts I have to just treat differently.

I remember talking to a man years ago, who said, "Why do you teach about the Sermon on the Mount? That's not for us. That's for the Jews in the millennium," and I groaned in my spirit when I heard that. For All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching. All Scripture needs to be read from Genesis to Revelation. It's all inspired, and it's All profitable.

Man doesn't live by just a few of the words or the ones that theologians say, but "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father." So when I read Acts 8, I believe it the way it reads. These people, were followers of Jesus, and the apostles laid their hands on them, and they received the Spirit, and something was different. Done. That's all the commentary I'm going to make on that.

Then we have the Spirit transporting Philip, which is my middle name. The Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." I like the fact that the Spirit is talking to

Philip. Philip must have been in the Spirit because I've noticed it's a lot easier for me to hear the Spirit when I'm in the Spirit.

I know the difference between being in the flesh and in the Spirit. That's another talk for another day, but right now, Philip is listening, he's seeking God. Like John in the book of Revelation, who was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and then the Lord could give him the wonderful visions of Revelation, but we have to take some energy, some set of soul, we have to do some seeking to stay in the Spirit.

Anyway, the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." Philip gets up in the chariot, explains the gospel to the man. Then when they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. This is supernatural stuff going on because the Spirit tells Philip what to do, and then transports him.

Of course, my mind goes to "Star Trek." I can see Scotty laying the coordinates on him and transporting him somewhere else.

Then Paul enters the scene in Acts 9:17. "Ananias departed and entered the house, and laying his hands on him, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, Who appeared to you in the road by which you came, has sent me, so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"

In the first part of Acts, the focus is on Peter. In the second part of Acts, Paul enters, and between the two of them, they fill up the book of Acts. Even though we talk about the acts of the apostles, it was really Peter and Paul that received the most attention. The "comfort" of the Spirit." Jesus had used this word in John 14:26 and John 15:26> This words is sometimes translated "helper," and other times "comforter." "The comforter, even 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 said to you."

Jesus had already taught the disciples that the Holy Spirit was a comforter. He was a helper. He was a teacher. He was a bring to remembrance-er. Now in Acts 9, "The church throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria had peace, was being built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it multiplied." I like that expression, "the comfort of the Holy Spirit." It's just nice to see that the Holy Spirit, Who is God, and we don't trifle with him like Ananias and Sapphira, is also able to speak to us. He's able to move us around any way he wants, and he's a comforter. This expression used a couple times in John by Jesus, and fulfilled right here. They had a fear of the Lord, but they also had the comfort of the Holy Spirit. They had peace. They were being built up, and they were multiplying. So the Holy Spirit was active. There you go. What do you have to say to that, brother?

Scott: There's a lot in there.

Steve: There is a lot in there, and I just hustled through it, didn't I?

Scott: Oh, it's great, because I think we get bogged down sometimes in the little stuff that's going on, and when you connect it all together, it's really helpful to see, "Oh, this is how the Spirit works." This isn't just like the Spirit was in one place and then in one special place, and then another special place, but is active throughout the early church, and he's active throughout the church today.

I find myself wondering what's going on behind the scenes, like, "What was the Spirit up to? What was Jesus up to? What was the Father up to in that time between when Jesus said, 'Wait here for seven days,' and then Pentecost?"

What was going on behind the scenes there? Was that Jesus being promoted or ascending to his full status behind the scenes? I don't know. I'm just curious what was going on. Why wasn't it immediate that they were filled with the Spirit right there?

Steve: Well, when you come to the front of the line, you can make that your first question. I think it was more about them than him, if I can put it that way. I think that they needed to take a deep breath. They needed to get their hearts together. They needed to have unity, because powerful stuff happens when the body of Christ is one. They needed to seek God together. That's what I mean about being in the Spirit. I don't shift gears quickly. I need to set apart time to be still, to read the Word, to know that He's God, to seek Him. I know I'm going to find Him. Because He says, if you ask, you receive. You seek, you find. You knock, He opens, but sometimes the preparation is more for me because while Jesus doesn't change, I do.

I change from minute to minute sometimes, and I need to be still. I've also found that being together with other believers for a significant amount of time is important and blessed, "Because where two or three are gathered and waiting in My name," – "That's where I appear."

Scott: The other thought I had was when you said the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Him, as it says in Acts 5. It also says in Luke, you talked about it last week, I think that if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? The Holy Spirit is given to those who ask. I honestly think a lot of believers just don't ask.

Steve: Or are afraid to ask.

Scott: Could be. I find myself praying that a lot more nowadays, like, "God, give me the Holy Spirit. Fill me with Your Spirit," whatever that means. I know he's indwelling me, but whatever it means, if it's more or whatever, a feeling, I want it. I want Him .

Steve: I don't think God sighs when we ask for more of the Spirit and says, "Oh, I already gave him to you." I think he says, "Yes! Yes! This is what you need to be doing."

Steve: That whole passage in Ephesians 5 about marriage and into the beginning of chapter six, about raising your children, really begins at 5:18, where Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit..." because you can't love your wife well, you can't love your kids well, until you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Yeah, I'm with you. I'm always praying. Fill me afresh, baptize me, come upon me, because I want more of the Spirit. I do.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Amen. Well, let's close by asking. Father, thank You that the Word of God is right there for us to read. I've probably done commentating more on this than I normally do, but I'm aware of some of what we are all sensing that, "Well, is that too much or this?" We've had such mixed teaching on the Holy Spirit.

Help us to just love the Spirit. Help us to honor the Spirit. Help us to seek him. Help us to find him. We ask for your fresh filling of us today. Fill us so that we can be in the Spirit, we can love in the Spirit, we can be godly husbands and wives and children in the Spirit. We'd like to be baptized today. We'd like to be immersed. We'd like to have the whole fullness of the Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme.

If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.