

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (8)

Receiving the Holy Spirit

Reference: GDC-S18-008-Mw-R00-P2

(Originally spoken on 22 September 2013, edited on 25 September 2013)

Web site: <http://www.ajourneyinlife.org> and <http://www.ajourneyinlife.com>

This message is protected by copyright © 2013 Lim Liong. Permission is given to reproduce part (where the meaning is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all, of it, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that **no changes are made** and the message is **distributed free** of charge. Please do so prayerfully and discreetly.

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

The paragraphs above as well as this paragraph must be included when the message is reproduced so that others who reproduce it will be conscious of the conditions stated above.

The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the eighth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

The Lord Jesus Christ baptizes His disciples with the Holy Spirit to empower them in spiritual development and service. All Christians who want to honour the Lord Jesus in their lives and be a witness for Him may receive the Holy Spirit in this sense. Will all who are born again experience this after Pentecost? How will it be manifested? What is the helpfulness of this experience?

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

Let us turn to **Acts 2: 32 and 33**.

Acts 2: 32-33

32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

33 "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

In this context, the apostle Peter was preaching to the Jews, to the people who were gathered in that place in the event of Pentecost, and he explained that God poured forth His Spirit on all mankind in accordance with the prophecy that God had made in the Old Testament times. And here, he tells us that God poured forth His Spirit through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus was raised up again by God and they were witnesses.

Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

So the Lord Jesus received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was promised, that is, that God would one day pour forth His Spirit on all mankind in this form. So: "He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" – it was in a form that they could see, they could hear, they could recognize.

So while we are told that it is God who poured forth His Spirit, here the explanation is that God did it through the Lord Jesus Christ – He poured forth the Holy Spirit. So the Lord Jesus is the One who now baptizes His disciples with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had indicated that he baptized with water but the Lord Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

So now the event of Pentecost has taken place, God has poured forth His Spirit, the Lord Jesus wants to baptize His disciples with the Holy Spirit. What does this mean then for us?

Acts 2: 36-39

- 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."
37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"
38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

So the apostle Peter explains that God having poured forth His Spirit on all mankind, they would now be able to receive this gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. If they were to repent, if they were to be baptized, if they were to respond positively, then they could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this promise is for them, their children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself: so it is available to all.

The underlying principle is that God wants all His children to receive this gift and if we respond as we should, then we can, we may, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – we can experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit. So all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and want to honour Him may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be empowered to live for the Lord.

God wants to give us the Holy Spirit to help us. Before the Lord Jesus went to the cross, He told His disciples:

Luke 11: 13

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

So God wants to give the Holy Spirit to His children, *to those who ask Him*. So this tells us that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not something that just takes place on its own, just because we are children of God. One of the situations where it may come to us is when we ask: We ask God and He gives the Holy Spirit to us.

We have seen that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience. It is not a moral transformation. And this distinction is very important.

So it is different from being born of the Spirit. When we are born of the Spirit, it is moral transformation. When we respond positively morally, something takes place in our heart and we are born again. And in that situation, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ: So, all Christians who are born again will immediately become members of the body of Christ spiritually.

But with regard to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, it is not the same. It is not a moral transformation. It is an experience. So this experience may come at any point of time, as and when God should choose it to be so, and in accordance with His provision and His instructions.

Acts 8: 14-17

- 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,
- 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.
- 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 17 Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

So although the baptism with the Holy Spirit is offered to all Christians, it may not take place for different reasons.

There are various situations where this may not take place. In this particular occasion, **Acts 8: 14-17**, we are told that there were people in Samaria who had received the word of God, that is, they responded to the gospel, they were born again, they became Christians. And this was after the event of Pentecost and yet, they did not receive the Holy Spirit in the sense of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

So the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John and they came and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit and as they laid their hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

This is an example of how they might receive the Holy Spirit, but it does not mean that we receive the Holy Spirit only in such situations.

This is to tell us that it can take place sometime after we become Christians and in situations that God sees fit for it to take place.

In this instance, God saw fit for this to take place through the apostles from Jerusalem coming to Samaria, praying for them, laying their hands on them.

We may say that it could be that God wanted to indicate that there is authority that comes from the apostles whom God had appointed, and that this event of Pentecost and what God had provided would also be transmitted to other parts of the world – first in Jerusalem, then Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the world.

But the principle is that this is an experience which may take place at different points of time.

So although these disciples in Samaria had believed in the Lord, they had not yet received the Holy Spirit in the sense of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

While all believers in the Lord Jesus would immediately be baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, the baptism with the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus may not take place after becoming a Christian.

Acts 19: 1-6

- 1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.
- 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."
- 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."
- 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in 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 Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying.

So here is an event in Ephesus, where Paul found some disciples and from the context, we can say it is very likely that these were genuine disciples who responded to God, who were born again, but they were not aware of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and that the Lord Jesus would baptize His disciples with the Holy Spirit. So when Paul laid his hands upon them after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit came on them.

So it can be considered that these were Gentiles and the message was going forth from Jerusalem to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world. But the underlying principle again is that these were disciples and the Holy Spirit came upon them after they became Christians.

So there are different reasons why the baptism with the Holy Spirit may be delayed or even not experienced.

Sometimes, it is due to ignorance: people are not aware that there is such an experience that we can go through that will help us in our lives. Sometimes, it is because we do not ask: we think that we are adequate, we are already Christians, we do not need further in our development in terms of our experience of God; and so, we may not ask and we may then not receive.

But it is also not true that if we do not ask, we always will not receive. There are times when God sees what is in our heart and though we may not ask, He may also give to us. And in various situations of life, when the response is meaningful, God may grant the experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit even when we do not ask.

Sometimes, it is related to the quality of our response. We want to experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit but with the wrong motive, and our response to God is not in the direction of what is meaningful to God. We want it – the experience, the power; we want it, to be able to project an image of our prominence, our ability, our significance. In situations like that, God may not grant to us what we ask.

However, whatever the reason may be, it can be corrected; and all Christians can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and know the experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

With the event of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is now available to all mankind in a form, in a manner that was not the same before that. Now that the Lord Jesus has been glorified, He has made available the Holy Spirit in a manner that is different from in the past. So we can all enter into that experience.

What then are the manifestations that can help us to know that we have experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit? Various ones may want to understand: Have they experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit? How can we know?

From what I can see in the Scriptures, there are two categories of manifestation and it is helpful for us to recognize the difference between the two categories.

The first category arises from the being of the Holy Spirit. The second category arises from the gifts or enabling by the Holy Spirit. They are not the same and there is significance in the difference.

Many people concentrate on the second category but it is the first category that is really important. The first category is the primary aspect that we should concentrate on, but many people are more impressed with the second.

It does not mean that the second category is not important or not helpful. It is helpful and it fulfils a function that God intends, but the ultimate meaning is secondary to the first.

So let us consider the second category: Manifestations that arise from the gifts or the enabling by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2: 3-4

- 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

So here, we see a manifestation arising from the gifts or the enabling of the Holy Spirit. There was the manifestation of tongues of fire, something that they could see – tongues of fire in the physical realm. And at the same time, the people were speaking with tongues, speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. It was something that they were not able to do on their own. It was an enabling by the Holy Spirit such that they could speak with other tongues.

So this helped the people to recognize that it was the Holy Spirit at work. The Holy Spirit came upon them in the context of tongues of fire and in the context of their speaking with other tongues.

Acts 2: 17-18

- 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;
18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy.

So this was the manifestation of spiritual experiences – spiritual experiences such as: prophecy, visions and dreams from the Holy Spirit, dreams from God. The Holy Spirit can bring about such experiences for those who experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They may prophesy. And prophecy is an enabling by the Holy Spirit. He can grant that ability to various people. And visions and dreams can come from God to reveal certain things, to fulfil certain purposes that God may want to bring about.

So in the second category, we see that these manifestations arise basically from how the Holy Spirit may enable people, He may grant gifts to certain people in certain situations, and they may experience it in such a way that it helps them to recognize that God is at work in that situation.

However, bear in mind that in this category, the evil one can imitate. There can be counterfeits. Dreams, prophecy, speaking in tongues can all be imitations. The evil one is able to do that to a certain extent.

So in such areas, we need extra carefulness to ensure that it is really from God and not from the evil one. Even in the area of various miracles and healings and various powers that men may experience, many of these areas can be imitations from the evil one: counterfeits.

But God does work in that way and when God is working and we respond well, they can be helpful for our lives.

So what is the first category?

The first category arises from the being of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. He is God the Holy Spirit. So in His being, when He comes, He brings to us the presence of God and the reality of the spiritual realm.

This is a very wonderful experience. When the Holy Spirit comes, we can recognize, we can sense, we can experience the nearness of God. In one sense, we can say it is as if we are in heaven: We behold God; we experience the presence of God. And the baptism with the Holy Spirit can bring about an experience whereby we are living in the atmosphere, in the environment of the Holy Spirit.

So what would that mean?

It means that for a Christian who longs to know God, who wants to obey Him, who wants to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus, the baptism with the Holy Spirit can be a great encouragement. It can help us to recognize the reality of our faith, to know the reality of the spiritual realm: that what the Scriptures talk about, they are true, they are real, and we can behold the glory of God.

So this is one very precious aspect that can take place when we experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit. God becomes much more real to us. He is not just an idea, a concept, something that we can say "I believe in, I agree with", but we have an encounter with Him. We can say it is somewhat similar to the apostle Paul meeting the Lord Jesus risen from the dead. It is an encounter with God.

So in the spiritual realm, this experience can draw us nearer to God - appreciate who He is - and we become more conscious of what life ought to be.

The things of the world may become “strangely dim” when we live in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. We see things in perspective; we recognize what is really important.

So, many of us are very absorbed in things of the world because God is not so real to us; the spiritual realm seems far away. But when we enter into the presence of God, then we see things differently.

The other aspect of great importance is that He being God the Holy Spirit, He will bring to our experience the meaning of moral holiness.

When the Holy Spirit comes, we recognize what is moral purity and goodness and holiness. We behold the glory of God.

Yes, we may acknowledge that God is holy, we may say that we want to be like Him, but when we experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit and our attitudes are right, we will see much more clearly what it means to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, what it means to be transformed to be like God.

So this is a very major aspect in terms of how the Holy Spirit can come and help us recognize His presence, so that we can respond well to God.

He is the **Spirit of truth** and He will therefore lead us and guide us in the path of truth. He will reveal to us what is in God’s heart and He will help us to fulfil the purposes of God.

John 16: 13-14

- 13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.
- 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

So the Spirit of truth will guide us into all the truth. He will help us to understand what is in God's heart, what God wants us to know, understand, receive and live by. So it is very important that we come to Him and ask Him to teach us.

The Lord Jesus said: "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you." When we read the Scriptures and we hear the words of the Lord Jesus, we may be able to understand the basic meaning. But if we do not look to God, if we do not seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to appreciate very little of what the Lord Jesus truly wants to communicate to us.

The Holy Spirit comes to glorify the Lord Jesus. He comes to help us understand and appreciate who the Lord Jesus is and the reason is: He wants us to become like Him. The Lord Jesus came to help us to become what we ought to be, to be transformed to be like Him. So the Holy Spirit fulfills that function and He helps us to grow in that direction to become like the Lord Jesus.

So then, as we see the difference between experience and transformation, we may ask the question: Since the baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience, why is it helpful? What is important is transformation. What is the helpfulness of an experience?

The answer is that the experience is not helpful if it remains an experience.

The experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit will not really help us if it remains an experience. Its helpfulness primarily rests on it becoming transformation. The experience is meant to draw us to God and to prepare us to respond in a way that we can become transformed.

So it is very important to recognize this: The baptism with the Holy Spirit is very helpful, but only if it results in transformation.

If it does not, then it can lead to disaster: We can become proud, we can become self-confident, we can think that we have already reached spiritual quality when actually, it is only an experience. God may seem very close to us, we may find the Scriptures very alive when we read it because the Holy Spirit is helping us recognize. And we may think that that is a mark of spirituality, but it is not.

It is an experience where the Holy Spirit brings the spiritual things into our consciousness, helping us to appreciate that, but unless it leads to the response of our hearts in a manner where God can then work in us and transform us, then it will not do us good.

There are two kinds of helpfulness in this experience. First: the power of God to do His will that may not involve the transformation of our being. Second: the transformation of our being arising from which we do the will of God.

The first kind is still helpful. Although it may not directly involve transformation, it can enable us to do something that is useful in the kingdom of God. But it can also lead to much problem.

We need to be very careful in this first kind of helpfulness. The experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit can enable a person, for example, to perform healing, to prophesy, to speak in a situation to communicate the will of God, and it can be helpful in certain situations. But that by itself does not do us good unless it leads to a deeper response in our hearts to God.

The second kind of helpfulness is the one that we should concentrate on. And that is the transformation of our being arising from which we do the will of God.

So the first kind takes place when the Holy Spirit grants power and ability to do what God wants to accomplish. For example, in the Old Testament, we have seen how the Holy Spirit granted wisdom and physical skill to some people to accomplish His work. In some other people, God grants physical power, for example Samson and others, in order to conquer the enemy. In others, there may be words to testify or prophesy and this can happen even to a person like Balaam whose attitude was not good but God wants to fulfil a purpose. It can also happen to those who are more positive. They can testify and prophesy according to God's enabling.

So these are situations where the Holy Spirit may grant power in order to do something that God wants to accomplish.

The second kind is a lifetime development, where the Holy Spirit teaches us the right way to live and we respond well, receive His life and He becomes part of our moral and spiritual being.

This is the critical part and it is of great importance that we appreciate this. It is in that context that we will then bear witness for God and do His will.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit can help us to see, to understand, to appreciate in a way which we might not have, we would not be able to generally. It gives us the opportunity to behold God and His ways; it encourages us in the positive direction. And when we respond well, it leads to transformation and the Holy Spirit becomes part of us, so our character is then transformed.

It is in that state that we will bear the most powerful testimony because there will be the life and meaning that comes from us. As we speak, as we testify, the reality will come through.

I want to concentrate on this second kind of helpfulness, to consider how it can be very helpful for us.

Let us consider the analogy of food. How can food help us in the development of our body?

Consider a situation where a person is very hungry. He wants to eat but there is no food. And he has to travel a long distance to find a little bit of food.

In that situation, it is very difficult for him to have enough food to properly sustain his body. But those who are more diligent, they may be able still to find some food that is good for them. They are prepared to work hard, to travel to look for the food and therefore, to benefit from it.

So food will be helpful to us only if in the first place, it is available. If food is not available to us, we will not be able to benefit from it.

Then secondly, we also need to recognize that food may be available, but we are not eating the food. The food can be plentiful all around us, but some people are just too lazy to reach out their hand either to cook, or to prepare, or to eat.

And so, even though the food is available, you will still starve or become malnourished because you are not eating the food; the food is not being received into your body, so therefore you will not benefit even though food is available.

Then when you eat the food, it does not necessarily mean that it will benefit you.

If your body cannot digest the food, it will just get passed out: You do not have the necessary enzymes to digest the food, so when you eat the food, it can just get passed out through your system and you do not benefit. Even though you can eat and eat and eat, you do not digest it and you will not benefit.

After it is digested, it may still not benefit you because although it is digested in the stomach or in the small intestine, it is not absorbed. The body has not the capacity, the ability at this point of time to properly absorb what is digested. Something is wrong with the system so the nutrients cannot be properly absorbed. So even though it is digested, it will still get passed out and you will still not benefit.

After it is absorbed, it needs to be incorporated into the structures of the body.

When the food is properly digested, it is broken up into various components, parts, where your body can then bring them together and incorporate them into various structures in the body, for example, the building of bones, muscle, nerves, blood vessels; many of these structures are constantly being replaced. The structures, the cells are being replaced, constantly. The liver is constantly being regenerated.

So, we need to incorporate what is absorbed into the structures of the body. It is then that the food has become part of your body. It has contributed to the structures of your body and if they are good food, then your structures become healthy. But if they are lousy food, your body will be lousy. So that depends on what you eat, what you digest, what you absorb and what is incorporated into your body.

In the spiritual realm, this is true and it is very important for us to understand this.

Many of us think that just because we have good spiritual food, we will be strong. It is not true.

So first: whether available or not. Pentecost was the event where God poured forth His Spirit so that now, the Holy Spirit is abundantly available to all mankind. In the past, God may give here and there; certain selected situations, He provides this. Those who are more eager, more diligent, they seek God; they receive more. But generally, it was not available in the same way. But when the Lord Jesus was glorified, He poured forth the Holy Spirit to help us to know Him and to move rapidly in that direction.

But the problem is that many people are not partaking of that food.

The Holy Spirit is now available, but we think we do not need Him: We already are Christians, we are already members of the body of Christ, we are already born of the Spirit, He is already in us, so there is no need for us to seek Him, to know Him more deeply, to receive Him.

And so, we may not receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit. We may not experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And so our spiritual life may remain superficial. We may follow the Lord Jesus but more by our intellectual thinking and by the profession of our lips rather than in the fullness of our hearts.

So we need to eat the food, that is, we must receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We must come to God, ask Him that He will empower us, He will baptize us with the Holy Spirit, so that we can behold Him, we can love Him, we can walk in His ways.

Then the food needs to be digested.

There are many people who may have experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but who have not responded well. They do not understand what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do. The food must be properly digested. Otherwise, it will not benefit you. So too, when the Holy Spirit comes, we must understand what is He seeking to do. If our motives are wrong, if our approach is not right, if our emphasis is not correct, then we will not benefit.

So in order to benefit, we must listen well, we must understand what is He seeking to tell us, we must identify with what is in the heart of God; we must try to understand the whole spirit of the Scriptures.

That is why we are considering major themes in the Scriptures, to understand what is in the heart of God, what God is seeking to communicate.

So if we listen well, we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into all the truth, to help us understand the ways of God, then we are digesting the food, so that it can then be absorbed into our body: So, proper digestion is very important.

Why is it that many people do not properly digest their food? There are various reasons and one of the reasons that can happen is that we do not chew our food. We eat very quickly – it is nice to eat, we just swallow them – and it can be difficult for our stomach to properly digest the food.

So if we want to digest the food well, especially when it is solid food, we need to chew properly, so that the enzymes can properly work and the body is able to digest it, to break it up into smaller parts that the body can make use of.

So one major reason why we do not benefit from the baptism with the Holy Spirit is that we are too quick: We think we know what to do; we do not listen to Him; we do not spend time to seek to understand what God wants to say. We may come into His presence, we utter some words of what we like and we just go away.

We need to sit down carefully at the feet of the Lord Jesus to listen to what He has to say. We should not allow ourselves to be distracted by the so many things in the world. Whether it be work, or family, or hobbies, or friends, we can easily be distracted and we do not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

So if we want to benefit, then we need to listen carefully: Spend time to ponder over what the Holy Spirit has revealed in the Scriptures. He is the One who inspired the writing of the Scriptures. We need to listen to Him, understand what He wants to say. When we do that, then the food begins to be digested.

After digestion, we need absorption. If it is just digested, it can still be passed out. So we need to absorb what is digested. Many people may ponder over and understand what is in the heart of God but they may not be prepared to respond positively, they may not be prepared to take the steps necessary to live by that.

So in order to benefit from the food digested, we must receive it, absorb into the system. That means in our heart, we must constantly appreciate what the Lord Jesus is speaking to us through the Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, through situations of life. And as we understand, we tell God, "Yes Lord, I agree. I love your will. I want to walk in Your ways. I receive all this into my heart; they become my values in life."

As we constantly respond that way, then we are absorbing what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do. He becomes more real to us as we constantly respond to Him, express our appreciation for what He is teaching us.

Then after it is absorbed into our system, we need to incorporate what is absorbed into the structures of the body. And this is very important for us in our daily lives.

And that is, while we welcome what the Holy Spirit may say, we agree, we thank Him and they become values in our lives, the critical final step is: live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

We must live by what we believe, we must live by what we have agreed to, we must put into practice what we say is important. We can say we love the Lord; we can say it is important, but are we living by it? We must incorporate all this into the structures.

Every aspect of our being, every area of our lives must be transformed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He must be part of our lives in every aspect, in all that we do.

It is in that situation, when we constantly live by what we believe that the fruit of the Spirit will be formed in us. Christ will be formed in us. The good soil will bear fruit.

We must hold fast the word with perseverance. We must be prepared to live it out even though the path is difficult, perplexing and we find it hard to go on. There is a need to live by what we have come to understand.

This is a very common problem: that the vast majority of Christians, they are not so prepared to live by what they profess and what they believe.

So in the end, we can believe many things that are right, we can say these are our values, we hold them, but are they true in the daily lives that we live? Are they translated into living actions?

Let us turn to **2 Peter 1: 2-8**.

2 Peter 1: 2-8

- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;
- 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.
- 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
- 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,
- 6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,
- 7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.
- 8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So here, the apostle Peter tells us that God has made every provision for us: His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. So God has made every provision for us.

We have no excuse when we fail. God has made all provision for us so that we can succeed: we can live a life that is truly pleasing to Him. So when we fail, we must come to Him for forgiveness. We must acknowledge it, we must correct it.

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises... God has given us His promises, and God always keeps His promises.

The important thing is: Are we benefiting from His promises? Are we fulfilling the conditions by which His promises will be made real to us?

It is so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature. We are to partake of the divine nature. We are not just to listen, not just to appreciate but we are to partake of Him so that He becomes part of us. That is what God wants to bring about. Are we doing that?

If we are preoccupied with our own desires, we are just living according to how we feel and what we please, we cannot properly partake of the divine nature. God will not be absorbed into your being because there will be repulsion, there will be a conflict. If your heart is not for God, for what is truly good, then the Holy Spirit will not become part of your being.

So this is critical. We need to ensure that we truly love what is good and what is of God. Then we can properly partake of the divine nature.

“...having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”: Have we escaped that? Is this our stand? Are we prepared to reject the corruption that is in the world by lust? If we are not prepared to do away with that, how are we to be partakers of the divine nature?

The two are in conflict. If we love the world or the things of the world, then the love of the Father is not in us. There is a conflict between the two. So we must take the stand to reject all that is in the world by lust; the corruption that is in the world, the attractions of the world. We must separate ourselves from that.

And then he says, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence...” This is the part that is very difficult.

But he says, "...for this very reason also..." If you want to be partakers of the divine nature, if you want the life of God to become incorporated into you, then he says: "You must apply all diligence". It is hard work; it requires a lot of determination, perseverance, daily exercise. If you are not prepared to do that, it will not take place. We have to apply all diligence.

The apostle Peter understood that. He was very eager, he was a very eager disciple, but he faltered and failed many a time. He was not so watchful. He was emotional; he was impulsive although he was sincere. So the Lord had to teach him over a period of time. He became humble, he became conscious of his weaknesses, he became determined to follow the Lord; he was prepared to correct himself when he was wrong. The apostle Peter was diligent. That is why he developed. So he wanted to transmit this to all believers.

"...applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence..." that is, you must develop all these qualities. And these are qualities that come from the divine nature. It is the Holy Spirit who will enable us to develop these qualities. We do not have these qualities in ourselves. So the Holy Spirit has come in order to help us to be transformed, but we must partake of Him; He must become part of us.

And so these qualities as we develop them, he says: "...they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ may not be so true, may not be so complete, may not be so pure, may not be so deep, if we do not work hard in these areas. We know Him somewhat. We appreciate Him to some degree. But our lives do not manifest the character of Christ and so, we cannot properly bring honour to Him.

If we want to be neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we must develop the fruit of the Spirit. We must learn to partake of the Holy Spirit so that we are transformed to become like the Lord Jesus.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must come to God to seek the guidance, teaching and empowering of the Holy Spirit; and we must partake of the life of God so that His character is formed in us.

So it is important for us to recognize that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is very important, but it may not benefit us because it is an experience. On the other hand, it can benefit us greatly if we respond well, so that it leads us in the path of moral transformation of our being, that the character of Christ will be formed in us.

So then, as we come before the Lord to seek to appreciate Him more, let us ask Him to help us to understand these issues more deeply.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to be our teacher, our guide that He may show to us what is in the heart of God, He may help us to recognize if there are aspects in our lives that need to be corrected, that we will do something about it.

We need to take steps in order to respond properly to God then we can benefit from what God wants to give to us.

But if we merely listen and we think we understand, we even welcome it and we think that now it is part of our being, then we are wrong. We must choose the path that God has called us to. We must learn to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We must build on the rock. We must act on what the Lord Jesus has said. It has to be lived out then it becomes beneficial to us.