

The giving of the Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] Turn to a reading in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, and reading again at verse 33. Acts chapter 2, verse 33.

Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

Now the Creed is a short rule of faith. It's a profession of what we believe. And as we mentioned already, the Creed is Trinitarian in its formation.

There are three paragraphs in the Creed. The first is about God the Father, the second is about God the Son, and the third is about God the Holy Spirit.

And you might think, well, there's very little said about the Holy Spirit. The sheer brevity of the statement, I believe in the Holy Ghost.

[1 : 04] But you must realize that the remainder of the Creed is also speaking about the work of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and a life everlasting.

It's speaking about the new community, the church. It's speaking about a new relationship, forgiveness. It's speaking about a new existence, resurrection.

And it's speaking about a new fulfillment, everlasting life. So the work of the Holy Spirit takes up the rest of the Creed. Now when we say, I believe in the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit, what are we saying?

It is very commonplace, say 20 or 30 years ago, for preachers and lecturers and writers to say, the Holy Spirit has been until recently the forgotten person of the Godhead.

We can't employ that language today, because with the Pentecostal movement and the charismatic movement and so on, a lot has been said about the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 18] But we must never forget that the 20th century is not the century in which the Holy Spirit was discovered. John Calvin, the great reformer, was called the theologian of the Holy Spirit.

And John Owen, that great giant amongst the Puritans, wrote a great work upon the Holy Spirit. Yes, his work has been recognized, but the Spirit still remains a very anonymous, faceless aspect of the divine being.

We react to the fact that God is the Father. We think of a Father and we react. We think of a Son and we react. But when we speak about the Holy Spirit, it's difficult for us to respond to what the Holy Spirit is.

And although his work is remembered, yet maybe himself as a person is not known as he ought to be. A lot has been said, as I said in this 20th century, about the gifts of the Spirit, about the work of the Spirit, but has much been made of the person of the Spirit.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. Do I know that Holy Spirit as a person? That's the question we need to ask ourselves.

[3 : 45] Do I know him as I know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I relate to him in the way I relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? Do I recognize him as a person?

Do I honor him as a person? We've got to ask ourselves these questions. Now this morning, we're going to look at the giving of the Holy Spirit. And God willing, this evening, we'll look at something of the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

The giving of the Holy Spirit. Now as we've been saying, as we have been looking through the Creed, God made this world, this earth, as a theatre for his glory.

These are Calvin's words. God has made the earth as a theatre for his glory. And throughout it, he displays visibly the perfections of his invisible nature.

And particularly, he displays it in man and woman. His image. That's where his glory was to be reflected. But you see, man fell.

[4 : 51] He listened to Satan. And he rebelled against God. And he refused to glorify God. In other words, the reflector was defiled. Defiled.

Man and woman was to be the glory of God. The reflector of God's glory. But you see, the reflector has become defiled. Man has fallen short of the glory of God.

Well, the question is, how is this glory going to be restored? Well, it's going to be restored in and through Christ. He's going to make a supernatural entrance into this world.

And he's going to make a supernatural exit. He's the last Adam. The second or the last Adam. Who's the radiance of God's glory.

He's the man from heaven. Who comes to rescue and to save. And he comes to the theatre of this earth. And he comes, first of all, in humiliation.

[5 : 51] That's his glory concealed. And there are six steps in Christ's humiliation. Right down to his burial. And then comes his exaltation.

And there are three steps in that exaltation. And in the exaltation, his glory is revealed. First of all, there's the resurrection. Which is a declaration of his victory.

In which he is vindicated by his father. That's the first stage in the exaltation. A declaration of his victory.

In other words, he's everything that he claimed to be. That's what the resurrection says. He is everything that he claimed to be. But then after that comes the victory parade.

And that's the ascension. The visible triumph. The victor returns to heaven with his spoils. He has brought captivity captive.

[6 : 52] And give gifts to men. And so the ascension is his victory parade. But then the third step in his exaltation is his coronation.

He is exalted with divine glory. And he enters upon his mediatorial reign. And he's exalted, remember, in our flesh.

That's the important thing. He's exalted in our flesh, yet in glory. And he becomes the restoration of the glory that God sought for man here upon earth.

Christ is the one who is to bring back the glory to this earth. Well, the question then is, how is the earth to be filled with God's glory?

And the answer is, by the Holy Spirit. Wherefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

[7 : 58] It's by the Holy Spirit. And that's what Pentecost means. It means the giving of the Holy Spirit. There were 120 disciples of our Lord gathered in the upper room.

Before his ascension, the Lord Jesus Christ said, Wait for the promise of the Father. Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is given.

And so, this day of Pentecost has fully come, we are told, in verse 1 of chapter 2. Now, what was Pentecost? Well, Pentecost was the 50th day from the Passover.

It was the feast of the first fruits, celebrating the offering of the harvest. That was one of the great festivals that all males had to appear in Jerusalem.

Three times in a year, the male member of Israel had to appear in Jerusalem. And the feast of first fruits was one of these festivals.

[9 : 04] 50 days after the Passover. But it was also increasingly viewed as a commemoration of the giving of the law at Sinai.

It was not only commemorating the first fruits of the harvest, but it was also commemorating the giving of the law at Sinai. And so, as we think of the coming of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by all the phenomena that we have here in Acts chapter 2, let us remember these two things.

The feast of the first fruits, and a commemoration of the giving of the law. Well, what can we say about Pentecost? Well, first of all, Pentecost was a once-for-all event to be coordinated with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

It's a once-for-all event. We do not and we may not pray for another Pentecost. It was an event not to be repeated.

It's a final act of the Lord Jesus Christ before his second coming. It was the advent of the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 19] You see, there's an advent of the Son, and he came by a distinctive mode for a distinctive undertaking. There's an advent of the Holy Spirit by a distinctive mode and for a distinctive function.

And that's what Pentecost is. A once-for-all event comparable to the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But then the second thing that Pentecost is, Pentecost reveals publicly the hidden reality of the transaction that took place between the Father and the Son in heaven.

The Son went to heaven, He ascended to heaven, and He asked the Father to fulfill His promise. He prayed the Father to send the Holy Spirit.

I will pray the Father, He said to His disciples, and He will send you another Comforter. So it's an answer to the prayer of Christ.

[11 : 27] But also, Christ Himself says that He will send the Holy Spirit, and I send the Holy Spirit. If I depart, I will send Him unto you.

That's a strange combination. He prays to the Father for the Holy Spirit, and yet He sends the Holy Spirit Himself. And as Professor Murray says, that's one of the marvels of God's counsel that we cannot really understand.

He prays to the Father for the Spirit, and yet He sends the Holy Spirit Himself. And that's the transaction that took place in heaven between the Father and the Son.

And Pentecost reveals publicly what took place there in the secrets of heaven. And then the third thing we can say about Pentecost is this.

It is understood as an aspect of the work of Christ. Remember how Luke begins this Acts of the Apostles in verse 1 of chapter 1.

[12 : 37] The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. Luke was about what Jesus began to do and to teach.

Now Jesus is going to continue to do and to teach. But He's going to do it in the work of the Holy Spirit. He says to His disciples, I will come again.

And that coming is in the coming of the Holy Spirit. You know, Jesus Himself was the man who was filled with the Spirit. His very conception in the womb was by the Holy Spirit.

His baptism at the Jordan was the messianic anointing of the new Adam. The man of the messianic age full of the Spirit.

Jesus is the one who was full of the Spirit. And He was resurrected from the dead, we are told, by the Spirit of holiness. By the power of the Spirit, He was raised from the dead.

[13 : 40] And He assumed by the power of the Holy Spirit a spiritual body. A body of glory. That's what the Lord Jesus Christ had.

A body of glory. And so Paul says, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. In other words, Christ on His ascension came into such complete possession of the Holy Spirit that you can say as far as our salvation is concerned that the resurrected Christ and His Spirit are one.

He's another Christ. He's another paraclete. He is the one who comes alongside us just as the Lord Jesus Christ came alongside us.

And He is therefore Christ come back to His people. Christ as the life-giving spirit is the source for our resurrectionist existence.

He gives life to us. Life that is suited to the Spirit. And so the New Testament says to us, to have the Spirit is to have Christ. And equally, to have Christ is to have the Spirit.

[14 : 56] There's no distinction. If you have the Spirit, you have Christ. And if you have Christ, you have the Spirit. And so the goal of God's redemptive purposes is in Christ.

It's been consummated in Him. He's the firstfruits of that new creation. And that comes back to the idea we mentioned that the Pentecost is the festival of the firstfruits.

Well, here we have the firstfruits. Christ sends the Spirit, His intimate companion of His entire incarnation, to recover the glory in us and in the world.

That's what the Holy Spirit is doing. He's recovering God's glory in us and in the world. Let us think of it, first of all, in us. Because the giving of the Spirit is the central element in the new covenant.

Remember the new covenant promise that God gave to His people in Ezekiel chapter 36. He says, I will take you from the nations. I will sprinkle clean water on you.

[16 : 13] I will give you a new heart. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways. You see, at the very center of the new covenant promise is the giving of the Holy Spirit.

And the New Testament gives us a contrast or a parallel between Sinai and Pentecost. Moses ascended to the mount and he came down with the law of God written upon tablets of clay.

That was the giving of the law. Jesus ascended to heaven and he descended not with the law written on tablets of clay but with the gift of the Spirit so that the law may be planted in the hearts of his new people.

The parallel between Sinai and Pentecost. The giving of the law under Moses. The giving of the Spirit under Christ.

To enable that law to be written upon our hearts. And so this Pentecost is fulfilling in us what God purposed in the new covenant.

[17 : 31] The promise given to Abraham. The blessing of the Spirit has come upon the Gentiles says Paul in writing to the Galatians. And so here we have the transition from the old to the new.

Pentecost is the transition from the old to the new. Pentecost is inaugurating the new era. And everything about it testifies to that.

We hear here in chapter 2 about a rushing mighty wind. And what does that remind us of? It reminds us of the powerful operation of God's Spirit in creation.

You see there was a new beginning. The Spirit brooded upon the earth. The Spirit was there.

The blowing of the wind brought about the first creation. A powerful operation of the wind which is the Spirit brought about the first creation.

[18 : 37] And that same Spirit is here at the recreation. but also it's the reversal of judgment. You see in this one that happened in Acts chapter 2 we are told that they heard every man speak in his own tongue.

And you'll notice that in verses 8 to 12 we are given here a table of the nations and he goes through the nations and tells that these nations are present at Jerusalem.

The table of the nations. What does it refer back to? It refers back to Genesis 10 and a confusion that took place as a result of Babel.

The confusion of the languages that took place. This is the reversal. This is the community of the reconciled and a community of the redeemed.

the first fruits of what is going to be the kingdom of God. What is going to be the new heavens and the new earth. We are told that 120 was the minimum number of men required to establish a community with its own council.

[20 : 02] Here is a new community which is reversing all the effects of sin. It is in this new community that judgment is being reversed.

The judgment that came upon the world by the fall of man and by the pride of man and the confusion of tongues it is being reversed in this community.

Here is the beginning of a new creation by the Spirit of God. As he made the first creation so he is making the second creation. As that first creation fell and became corrupt and defiled so it is a new creation that is going to be full of glory and this community is the first fruits as Christ himself is the first fruits so the community these 120 upon whom the Spirit fell at first they are the first fruits of the new creation.

They are going to be very quickly supplemented by 3000 who are converted on the day of Pentecost but they are the first fruits and so this work is going on in us by the Holy Spirit.

The restoration of the glory that we lost by the fall is being reestablished and recreated in the people of God who are going to form the new community the new creation the new heavens and the new earth.

[21 : 35] But then the second thing is that this glory is being established in the world. You see the promise of the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit was in order to fulfill the messianic promises.

You see remember how it said in Psalm 2 ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance. That's what God said to his son ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance.

How is that going to come about? He certainly didn't accomplish it when he was here upon earth. His number of converts at the end of his life were very few. How is it going to come about?

The whole earth for his inheritance and nations for his inheritance. He's going to sprinkle many nations says Isaiah. He's going to I'm going to give him a portion with the the grave.

This is a promise made to the Messiah. How is it going to come about? In Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. How is it going to be accomplished?

[22 : 48] Well it's going to be accomplished by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We read there in Joel the day of the Lord is going to come.

That day of the Lord has now arrived. The powers of the age to come have been released. And what is different about Pentecost is the distinction in a distribution of the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament saints had the Holy Spirit. Let us never doubt that. As they were regenerated in the Old Testament they were regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit worked throughout the whole Old Testament era. Well what's the difference? Well the difference is now the Spirit is poured out in unrestrained measure.

The difference with the New Testament is the abundance. The Spirit worked in the Old Testament but in a restricted way through prophets and so on through leaders.

[23 : 56] But what happens in the New Testament is the abundance. As one commentator says it's like a heavy tropical rainstorm. The generosity of God's gifts.

It's not a drizzle that we sometimes get. It's a rainstorm. It's pouring out. And there's a finality about it.

What's poured out cannot be gathered again. And it's universal. It covers the whole of humanity. It affects all these people who are assembled in Jerusalem.

It's distributed without geographical or ethnic limitation. It was largely confined to the Jews in the Old Testament but now no longer.

In Christ the old distinctions are nullified. It is now for all nations. It's for all people. Remember Moses' request or Moses' desire.

[24 : 59] I wish all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put his spirit on them. Now that has become a reality. In a sense all the Lord's people are prophets because no longer will a man say to his neighbor know the Lord because all shall know me from the least to the greatest.

There will be a direct communication of the spirit to these people so that they'll know the Lord and they'll be acquainted with the Lord. And that's the great difference between the spirit in the Old Testament and the spirit in the New Testament.

it is in order that the glory of Christ may be spread throughout the nations. It's in order that the kingdom may come to the ends of the earth.

There's a universality about the pouring out of the spirit. There's a finality about the pouring out of the spirit. And this is what has happened at Pentecost to recover the glory of God upon the theater of this earth.

Let's make two applications. Professor Murray in his usual incisiveness says, I must bring this indictment against the church that we have dishonored the Holy Spirit by failing to lay hold of the plenitude of grace and resources which he imparts.

[26 : 29] We have dishonored the Holy Spirit by failing to lay hold of the plenitude of grace and resources which he imparts. We're living in the age of the spirit.

We're living in the age of Pentecost. It hasn't ceased how lamentably we have failed to bring the great truth of the giving of the spirit to bear in upon our preaching, upon our teaching, upon our evangelism, upon our witness.

That preaching that ought to be in a demonstration of the spirit and of power. And you know we must remember that. We have emphasized that the Pentecost is not repeated.

But as Mary says again, neither is it retracted. It is not repeated, but neither is it retracted. And we are to pray for the Holy Spirit.

James says no more mischievous and misleading theory could be propounded nor anyone more dishonoring to the Holy Spirit than the principle adopted by the Plymouth brethren, that because the spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the church has no need and no warrant to pray anymore for the effusion of the Spirit of God.

[27 : 53] On the contrary, the more the church asks the Spirit and waits for his communication, the more she receives. The prayer of faith in one incessant cry comes up from the earth in support of the efforts put forth for the conversion of a people ready to perish.

This prayer goes before and follows after the call to repentance. Yes, the Spirit has been poured out. We are to pray for the Holy Spirit.

The second thing is how does this relate to revival? revival. People often say, oh, that we would have another Pentecost and are speaking about a revival.

Well, a related aspect of Pentecost is mirrored in what we often call revival because in revival believers are aroused and non-Christians are brought into the kingdom.

That's what happened in the day of Pentecost. These Christians who were there, the 120, they were believers in Christ, they were regenerated, but they received the Holy Spirit, they were aroused, they were quickened by the Spirit, and then a large number came into the kingdom.

[29 : 11] There were people there with an individual sense of need and of sin, and the power of the Holy Spirit was present, and these people were converted, and there was a sense of awe in the people as they assembled there.

And how do we relate that then to revival? Well, Sinclair Thurgeon in a recent work on the Holy Spirit says, to develop further the metaphor of the flow of water, we might say that revival is the unstopping of the pent-up energies of the Spirit of God, breaking down the dams which have been erected against his convicting and converting ministry in whole communities of individuals, as happened at Pentecost, and in the awakenings which followed.

The breaking down of the dams that have been erected against the convicting and converting ministry. Yes, are we guilty of these dams of unrepented sin, of neglect of the Spirit?

These are the things that we've got to be thinking about as we seek to go on in the future. how can we repent of our sin and of our departure from God and of our neglect of souls and the well-being of the church and so on.

And these are things that you might say are damning up the work of the Spirit and his convincing and converting power. And the church is to seek again that repentance.

[30 : 51] Remember how in Acts chapter 3 it is spoken of that you may repent that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Yes, we need these times of refreshing.

Repent then, says Peter, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. That's what we need.

Yes, a Pentecost, mirrored in that first Pentecost, not repeated, but the power of that Spirit that has been poured forth for the salvation of peoples in all nations, for the quickening of the church, and for the enabling of the church to carry on the witness of Christ throughout all the ages to the end of time.

That is ours. It has never been retracted. It has never been withdrawn. It is ours now. We must pray for it. We must seek it. We must wait for it.

We must repent in order to have it. The Spirit has come. Let us live and work in the power of that Spirit. May God bless his word to us.

[32 : 04] Let us pray. Our gracious God, we pray that thou convict us this day of our neglect, of our sin, of our backsliding.

We pray we might be those who will come anew to seek thee in repentance and in faith and seek the enabling of thy Spirit to undertake the life of faith within us and that life of witness in the world around us.

We pray that we would seek great manifestations of thy Spirit in our land and in our world, that the tide of evil may be turned back as it was on the day of Pentecost, that we might save ourselves from this entire generation.

O Lord, bless us as thy people with the anointing and enabling of thy Spirit for all we do, for we ask it in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen.