

I have spent a lot of time over the past several weeks praying and meditating on what God would have me share with the Body for the New Year.

The nature and work of the church do not change with the seasons - as we do. The mission remains constant, while the specific vision may change.

The church has been engaged in an enduring mission, the great co-mission (Joel Dover) with Jesus Christ since Matt 28.

[Mat 28:18-20 NKJV] 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

We continue in that same constant direction. The message never changes even while the methods may. We look to God's Word and rely on the Holy Spirit to move us along, just like the saints of old.

The challenge is, if we don't take time for meaningful, intentional reflection or evaluation along the way (for whatever reason: fear, laziness, apathy, etc.) Then we can sort of drift, unintentionally, into a sanctimonious rut - what we might call dead orthodoxy.

In this condition we can find ourselves doctrinally sound, well-educated, even consistent. We can be right, and we can be quite lifeless at the same time.

That condition may be more prevalent than ever here in our neck of the woods - the deep south - where there is quite a bit of dead orthodoxy and culturally ingrained christianity.

How do we achieve a living orthodoxy that reflects a living Lord?

Have you ever wanted to do something for the Kingdom? For Jesus' glory and for the eternal condition of those around you?

Of course! We should! God's Word and the Spirit enliven us and move us to do the works of our Father.

[Jhn 5:17 NKJV] ...Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."

We are to reflect the character of Christ in real time, all the time, in our lives. Our Father has been working until now, and so we should too!

How does God work in our current age? By the church, comprised of the saints, participating in that Great Co-Mission. We share in the working out

of this holy work. We were created for good works that we should walk in them!

But where do we start? We don't want to be caught in dead orthodoxy not doing anything and we don't want to be caught in dead activism either - doing just to be doing - being busybodies.

We start in Acts 1. We begin by waiting on the Holy Spirit.

V.1-3

Luke begins by noting that this writing is a continuation of a former account. That being the Gospel of Luke.

Luke's gospel ends and Acts begins in the same place - what we call the Ascension - when Christ ascends into heaven.

But before Christ ascended, we find that he did several things:

- He gave commandments, orders, to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit
- He presented Himself alive after His sufferings (He was dead!) by many sure signs - he proved it;
- He was with them, and seen by them, for a period of 40 days;
- He spoke of the kingdom of God to them; He taught them.

Luke's Gospel adds a little more detail where these two portions intersect:

[Luk 24:44-49 NKJV] 44 Then He said to them, "These [are] the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and [the] Prophets and [the] Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 "And you are witnesses of these things. 49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Jesus taught them God's Word. He gave them understanding and comprehension. He does the same for us as well.

He gives them their marching orders based on their understanding and comprehension of God's Word - pointing to the suffering messiah -- repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations beginning locally, at Jerusalem, in Jesus' name.

And He placed them into the ministry stating: "you are witnesses of these things."

Then Jesus tells them, these mighty Apostles, to wait until the Holy Spirit has come upon them - because they with the Holy Spirit they will be clothed with power from on High.

Why? Could they not do what they had done when Jesus sent them out two by two?

Could they not just emulate their master? Just go for it?

The answer is no, they couldn't. Without being clothed in the essence, the being of their Lord they could not hope to accomplish any real lasting work. They had to share completely in His likeness. That is why they had to WAIT for the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps this was a lesson in obedience? God's timing often confounds us. Why didn't he send the Holy Spirit right away? Perhaps they had to learn something about their own weakness devoid of the Spirit.

Either way they are commanded to wait in Jerusalem - for that will be their first mission field.

We see this same event play out in Acts 1

V.4-5

Wait in Jerusalem. Wait for the Promise of the Father - the Holy Spirit.  
Don't do anything but wait.

He reminds them that their water baptism does not equip them for ministry; they need to wait on the baptism of the Holy Spirit - immersion in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will come upon them and engulf them in His character and move them to the works of the Father.

V.6-7 A sidetrack, reasonable concern over the kingdom. As they are being taught about this baptism in the Spirit the "power from on high" they might rightly think that God is changing things. And He is but not how they imagine.

This should give us great encouragement because even as we often feel unqualified or perhaps distracted, unable to do Kingdom Work, we are in good company.

They didn't quite get how all of these things worked together yet. Their minds, while opened to understand and comprehend the scripture, were still very much focused on establishing an earthly kingdom in their present world.

Jesus tells them to forget it. Those things are none of their business. He redirects their focus to what He is calling them to -- The baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was of supreme importance to Jesus!!!

V.8 BUT - you shall receive power - at the present they were devoid of power, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them.

Then what - you will be a witness. Wait, what? No magic tricks? No gimmicks? No clever marketing?

No - you will be a witness. Certainly miraculous things will happen. But what was Christ's commandment - witness. A witness is somebody who attests to what they know to be true.

Yes, the Holy Spirit empowers people to do amazing things but first and foremost the Holy Spirit empowers people to be a true witness! And first in your Jerusalem - locally!

[Jhn 15:26-27 NKJV] 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 "And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

[Jhn 16:13-14 NKJV] 13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own [authority], but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare [it] to you.

Is this forthcoming in our lives, the witness? If not, why not? And I don't mean in the passive sense. As a matter of fact, I am hard pressed to recall any documented occasion in the New Testament where the Apostles, and the church, understood the command to witness divorced from the Spirit and strictly in a passive sense.

When they were moved by the Holy Spirit they spoke as so moved, they declared the gospel and bore witness to the life-changing truth found in Jesus Christ. BECAUSE - that's what the Holy Spirit does. And if we are a holy temple unto God, the Holy Spirit living in us, we will serve as His mouth piece. Speaking His words.

The Holy Spirit moves us to be a witness for Jesus Christ, in the most certain terms.

Okay, so let's go! But wait. Have we received the Holy Spirit?

One may say, well yes, I am saved - I have received the Holy Spirit. Certainly, if you are saved, you are sealed as one of God's saints by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells within every believer. This is how we have unity with Christ and the Father. This is how we are sanctified, conformed into the image of our Lord.

But being sealed by the Holy Spirit and being moved by the Holy Spirit are different things.

In scripture we see that the Holy Spirit relates to people in 3 distinct ways. But how can the Spirit be 3 places at once? Oh, the wondrous nature of our God! He is ever present, exactly where He desires to be.

1. The first is alongside: John 14

[Jhn 14:16-17, 26 NKJV] 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ... 26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

[Jhn 16:7-8 NKJV] 7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Helper = parakletos = one called alongside to comfort.

Has a teaching and convicting ministry.

## 2. Within - John 20

[2Co 1:21-22 NKJV] 21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us [is] God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

[Eph 1:13-14 NKJV] 13 In Him you also [trusted], after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

A sealing ministry

3. Finally, a dynamic power, as the Holy Spirit moves upon His creation and we share in His holy inertia and are moved to do His work:

[Act 1:8 NKJV] 8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

You can be sealed, you can be convicted and educated by the Holy Spirit and you can be empowered to do kingdom work by the Holy Spirit.

But we MUST relate to the Holy Spirit in totality or else we are quite unusable.

What has God called you to do, you may wonder? I would ask have you received the Holy Spirit? This is not uncommon.

[Act 19:1-6 NKJV] 1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

Perfectly lovely disciples - without the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit. We must wait on the Spirit. We cannot command God at our whim. He commands us! He moves us! He clothes us in His Spirit to do His work. The Ephesian saints went on to receive the Holy Spirit and to speak, and to teach in the synagogue locally. God moved them. He will move us if we will but wait for His Spirit.