

## GOD'S PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Good morning! Last Sunday was Easter. We celebrated the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was so windy I thought that was the Holy Spirit moving among us. I mentioned the Holy Spirit because he is our subject matter for today. We're starting a new series called "God's Awesome Promises to You". In this series, we're going to look at some of awesome promises of God. There are 7 of them in this series. Obviously, there's a lot, lot more but for now this should cover the next two months. 7 is perfect after all. Perhaps, we'll cover some more in the future.

I think it's important that we talk about God's promises. We live in uncertain times. We don't know when things will get better. In the midst of uncertainty, there's only one thing we can be certain of – the faithfulness of God. Because God is faithful, he will fulfill his promises.

So, we're kicking off this series by talking about the promise of the Holy Spirit. Do you know that "wind" is the first symbol or representation of the Holy Spirit in the Bible? We read that in Genesis 1:2, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The word "Spirit" in this verse is "ruach" in Hebrew and it means "wind" or "breath". In the New Testament, whenever you see "Spirit", it is a translation of the word "pneuma" which means "breath" or "that which is breathed or blown". That's the root word of pneumonia which as everyone knows nowadays is a disease involving the lungs, the center of our breathing system.

Now, after Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the Bible tells us that Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days. And during that time, on one occasion, he told his disciples,

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:4b-5)

Then, in fulfillment of that promise, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came. First, as a violent wind then as tongues of fire that rested on each disciple who were gathered in a room praying. Fire then is another symbol of the Holy Spirit. So, the promised Holy Spirit came. And when he came, each of those disciples were changed. It’s like they suddenly became alive. There was a sudden surge of energy within them. They were afraid, anxious, directionless, and now they became bold and brave and were filled with joy and love for people.

Folks, that’s what I want to talk about today. I want to talk about the change that the Holy Spirit can bring about in your life. How the filling of the Holy Spirit can inject new life into your own spirit.

In John 7:38, Jesus says, *“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*”

Here is another picture of the Holy Spirit. Living Water. That Living Water, the Holy Spirit, can be in you and flow from you to others. Unless you have the Holy Spirit in you, then you’re not truly living. True life starts within and it starts inside with the Holy Spirit. It's not about material wealth, or health, or academics, or accolades, or sports accomplishments, or your 401K, or building a platform, or being popular on social media, or having an influence, or changing the world.

This is consistent with what Jesus says in John 10:10, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Or as I showed last week, it also means an abundant kind of life. Therefore, the full, abundant life that Christ came to give us starts on the inside and it's an overflowing internal reality.

I would encourage you today that as we read through Scriptures to take note every time you see the words with, or within. That is what I want you to capture. That's what I want you to see today, that God desires to live in you, with you, to teach you, to empower you, and the Holy Spirit is the person to empower and animate your faith. You cannot do this on your own.

So, first it's this internal reality that overflows into an external reality. You see, when we get this backwards, when we think that being a Christian is about having all of our ducks in a row, and our behavior in a row, when we think that's what it means to follow Jesus, we have completely missed the message of the gospel in the New Testament.

Religion is all about behavior, and rules, and rituals and judgment. But Christ came to give you relationship, not religion. In order to restore your relationship to God. So, the good news is that you and I can get off our spiritual treadmill today. You can step off of it into the glorious unknown of God's divine goodness and grace and discover a life with God through his Holy Spirit. So, get this. **The Holy Spirit is key to life with God.**

So, what are the roles of the Holy Spirit in our lives? The Bible tells us many things. But I want to talk just about four of his roles today. I want to focus on his roles as they're laid out on chapter 13 through 17 of John. And I would encourage you to, this week pick up your Bible and just read through those chapters. They're the last alone time that Jesus had with his disciples before he was handed over to be crucified.

So, the first thing we see in these chapters is that God promised the Holy Spirit in order to

#### **1. Connect me to God's presence forever.**

Now, in these chapters, we see Jesus having this conversation with his disciples and he's telling them things they don't want to hear.

First they share a meal, he washes their feet, which is totally backwards in their culture because he's their leader. He's predicting his own betrayal by somebody who's in the room, he's saying he's going to go away and that they cannot follow him.

He's saying that he will come back for them one day, and he also says that if they want to know the way to God the father that he is the way himself. And there's just, kind of, this overarching sense of like, "What is happening?" in the room.

The disciples are troubled, they're discouraged, they're confused, they don't understand what's happening. They have literally given up everything to follow Jesus. He is their rabbi, he is their leader, he is their teacher and they believe in his vision and his message, and they are not ready for it to be over. They're not ready.

They've sacrificed everything and Jesus in his kindness responds to them this way. John 14:16-18 says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

Up until that point, Jesus has been their advocate. He's been the very presence of God with them. Even if they weren't fully aware of it at the time, Jesus was making God known to them. And here he's saying that, "I'm leaving, but don't worry I'm going to stay with you forever through my Spirit."

Jesus is comforting them by promising them that the Holy Spirit will be with them to advocate for them. To advocate is to champion, to support, to uphold, to back you up. He's also saying that he's going to come live in them. Now, this is a completely new concept for the Jewish people who are following Jesus.

These disciples, they're from a Jewish background, they follow Judaism and in the Old Testament when God comes to meet with his people he does so in a visitational form. He comes to temples, he comes briefly to prophets, to kings, or to judges and he visits his people, but he doesn't stay.

So, they're in this mindset that God comes and visits, and if we see him we meet him in a temple. And here Jesus, who they're now starting to believe as God himself, is saying, "Guess what? I'm going to come live in you." In other words, he is not just going to visit, he is staying forever.

This would have been mind-blowing for them to hear. Another beautiful thing that Christ says in this passage is that there will be no orphans. Meaning, although they may think that he's not with them, he's actually with them because he lives in each of them. Probably, the promise of God in Deuteronomy and other passages in the Old Testament came to their mind which says, that God "will not leave you or forsake you". Which, of course, Jesus affirmed in Matthew 28:20 after his resurrection and before he went to heaven, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) And what comforting words they are.

This demonstrates God's clear, full heart for us, that he has no desire that we'd navigate this life on our own. He is not interested in saving us and then saying, "Good luck, I'll see you in heaven." Jesus's desire is to be with us and help us navigate this life not on our own, but with him. Very clearly. And he is the answer to the pervasive loneliness that is just seeping into our society at every little corner. Which is being magnified by this pandemic. There is no way, if you are feeling alone that you have to feel alone any longer.

The reality of Christ's presence is real. Now, some of you might be saying, "Yeah, well, I don't feel like he's with me. I don't feel any less alone. I hear you say that, but I don't feel any different."

Then I would say to you, do you feel your blood pumping through your body and your organs? Do you feel your bone marrow making new blood cells? Do you feel the synapses connecting and firing in your brain as you're listening to me and processing what I'm saying? Do you feel your immune system fighting for you and keeping invaders away, that is, if you're vaccinated already? No. But your body is beautifully and harmoniously working together for you making your body work so that you can sit there, stay sitting up, pay attention, and listen. And that is the same with the Holy Spirit. He is animating your soul and your faith life. He is present regardless of whether you feel it or not. That is, if you truly have the Holy Spirit in you. If you're unsure, later on I'll talk more about how you can be sure that you have the Holy Spirit.

Now, God is good and he wants you to feel it, and he wants to give you that experience for sure, but know that it's not dependent on whether you feel it in any given moment or not. God's truth of his presence with us is regardless of whether we feel it or not.

So, first, God's promise of the Holy Spirit is to connect me to God's presence forever. Secondly, it's to

2. Teach me and remind me all things about God.

*In John 14:26, Jesus says, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*

Jesus is saying here that it's the Holy Spirit's job to teach us. Even more so than your pastors, and authors, and teachers. You see, the Holy Spirit is our first teacher. Jesus is saying it is his responsibility to remind us of what? All things. That's a huge promise. All things about God.

Now, there are three primary ways that need to be a part of every believer's life. And they are Scripture, prayer, and the family of God. Those three ways are primary ways that the Holy Spirit is always teaching us and training us in truth.

Scripture is so critical in our spiritual growth and so we need to read it everyday. Our bodies are starved and can go weak when we don't eat food, the same thing with our spirits. Without spiritual food, the Bible, we can go weak as well spiritually. So, read it as often as you can. Get the word of God implanted in your heart. God could do amazing things with every little bit of Scripture that you read. And when you read, please ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand. Because, we must admit there are certain things in the Bible that can stump you or confuse you. You might wonder as you read the Bible, "why does this verse seem to contradict this verse?" The Bible is a mystery but it can be truly a mystery only if we try to understand it with our finite minds. So, you need the help of someone who is more intelligent than us. And who else can help you better to understand than the author of the Bible itself, God the Holy Spirit? So, read the Bible and say a simple prayer at the same time, "Lord, help me to understand." So you can read the Bible by yourself and be guided by the Holy Spirit. Read the Scripture, pray. And then, God gave us another means to understand his Word. Let me explain.

You see, the Bible is an ancient text. The way you approach it is like when you were in high school. I remember as a sophomore, we were going through Homer's Iliad. Our English teacher did not just hand us the textbook and say, "Read this, see you in three months and we'll take a final." No. We students got together in groups, talked about the author and the context, and wrestled with the ideas of what was going on in their culture at the time, and asked questions like "And what is the author really trying to say here? And what do you think the meaning of this is?" And we reasoned together, and talked it through, and wrestled it out so that we could come to an understanding.

Now, if we did that with ancient literature why don't we treat Scripture with the same mindset? That we need to handle it more carefully, we need to go through it together, we need to reason together. Read it in community and find believers who have known Jesus for a long time to read it with, to help you understand and when you get to those passages that you're like, "I don't even know what is being said here", you can get answers from those around you.

So, the promise of the Holy Spirit is to connect me to God's presence forever. To teach me and remind me things about God. And number three, to **3. Walk out my faith with God.**

I want you to help me out here. I want you to type this on your chat box. I want you to finish some phrases for me. These are familiar phrases, but I want you to finish these out with me. Are you ready?

**God helps those** who? *Help themselves.*

**If it's to be?** *It's up to me.*

This is an older one, but I know you know this.

**At the end of the day the only person you can count on is** who? *Yourself.*

Yourself. That's right. That's the world's wisdom. The world says, "Look, if you're going to make it happen it's going to be up to you. You're going to have to go through this life on your own. You're not going to have anybody to help you. But God says, "No. No, I don't want you to go through life on your own. I want you to have a helper." And that's why he sent the Holy Spirit.

Look at this next verse. **John 16:7, "But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."** This is a really unique verse, because this is Jesus talking about the Holy Spirit coming, and he said this very interesting thing. He said, "Look, it's to your benefit. It's better for you if I go away."



Well, what's better than Jesus? That doesn't make any sense at all. I mean, he's right there. And Jesus says, "It's better because the Holy Spirit will come, God's Spirit will come, my Spirit will come and live inside of you. And so, it's better if I go away so you can have a helper."

Now, when you look at this verse here and you read the word helper it doesn't sound like a whole much, but in the Greek, in the original language this word helper means so many different things. Now, look how the Amplified Version renders this verse. It's the same verse, but it breaks out what this word helper means. It says, *"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you]."*

Folks, God wants you to walk a victorious life and that's why he sent the helper who is your comforter, and he is your counselor, and he is your advocate, and he is your intercessor. He's all these things to help you in this life so you don't have to do it on your own. The apostle Paul talks about how we are in this life running a race and this race is to win a crown, it's an everlasting crown that will not perish. And God wants you to win this crown. The way he is helping you is through the Holy Spirit.

Now, what are some ways the Holy Spirit helps you? There's so many. We're just going to go over just a couple.

First, the Holy Spirit is your comforter. That's one of the ways he helps, he's your comforter. When you're grieving, when you're heartbroken, when you're wounded and scared, or feeling anxious, or confused about life, he's there. He will comfort you. When you're feeling lonely his presence is there to comfort.

Loneliness is something that I understand quite a lot. I've felt alone for most of my life. I would be in crowds of people and I would feel alone.

I'd be in a classroom and I would feel alone. I would be out with friends or at dinner and I would still feel alone. Even in my marriage I have felt loneliness...whenever Bel is not around. But, you know, whether you're married or not, loneliness can also strike you.

But when I really understood who this person is, the Holy Spirit inside of me, that's when the sting of loneliness lost its power. Loneliness doesn't stick to me like it used to. I feel the Holy Spirit's presence and I don't feel as alone.

Look at this next verse, **Romans 15:13**. It says, *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit gives you power to hope when you feel like there is no hope left in your circumstances. He gives you the power to have peace in the midst of the storm. He also gives you joy. As a believer, it's your right to have joy. He wants to give you all of these things if you trust him, if you follow him. It's yours as a believer.

The Holy Spirit is also your intercessor. Now, it primarily means that he intervenes on your behalf. Have you ever gotten to this place before in your prayer life where you just feel like, "I've just prayed everything. I've prayed, and I've prayed, and I don't know what else to pray." Have you ever been there?

Well, God says, "I have given you the Holy Spirit to help you pray." Look at **Romans 8:26**, *"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses. For we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."*

Now, this word groanings has a very interesting meaning, because it means a deep grief, a deep longing and it's the same word that's used for the intensity of childbirth and the pressure of childbirth. Now, every woman here who's given birth knows how intense that is.

I will never forget Bel giving birth to all three of our kids, and I was in there helping her do this. I saw everything she was going through and I remember thinking, "Oh my goodness, I am not man enough to give birth. This is crazy."

When you're crying out to God, when you're pouring your heart out to him the Holy Spirit is praying with that kind of intensity. The intensity of childbirth for you. I've been in so many circumstances where I've been praying and praying, and I didn't know what to pray and I've wondered, "Are my prayers even getting past the ceiling?"

And this verse proves that God is hearing your prayers and that when you don't know what to pray the Holy Spirit is praying. And so, when you're crying out he's crying out to the father for you. When you run out of words, he's groaning with words that are too deep for anyone to understand, but the father understands them for you.

He is the ultimate prayer warrior on your behalf. All you got to do is say, "Holy Spirit, I don't know what to pray anymore." When you pray to the father, he's already doing it. He's already there doing it for you. So, when you get to the end of your rope in prayer he takes over. He's praying before the father.

Finally, the promise of the Holy Spirit in a someone's life is number four, to **4. Convict me of my need for God.**

Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in **John 16:8-11, "And when he comes he will convict the world of its sin and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the father and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged."**

Now, there's a whole lot going on in this verse and I just want to give you an illustration to basically, kind of, help explain what God is talking about right here. It's like this.

You're coming out of CVS and you're with your five-year-old boy, and you get into the car and you notice that your boy has stuck a pack of gum in his pocket that you didn't pay for. And so, what do you do as a loving parent? Well, as a loving parent you correct him. You say to him, "You know what? We don't take things that don't belong to us. We pay for things. We don't steal." And if you're courageous enough you'll walk the child back in with the gum, to CVS, and you'll put the gum on the counter and apologize to the cashier, and then you will pay for the gum and then you'll walk out with your child.

And then, you will lovingly care for your child and wipe away the tears on his eyes, and tell him, "It's going to be okay." And that, "everybody makes mistakes." And that, "We can do better next time and this is just part of the learning process, and he's going to be okay."

And why do you do that as a parent? Because you want them to go in the right direction. You want them to know right from wrong. And then you go home and then you Google, "Signs your five-year-old is heading for a life of crime." Just because you want to make sure you're doing an okay job as a parent.

The Holy Spirit is active and is the personal presence of God in this world. He is given to the world to convict the world of sin, to point us in the right direction, to lead us in the right way, to show us our need for Jesus and to woo us to Jesus.

And he is so kind, hear me on this. He is so kind, he is so gentle in his conviction, because of how much he loves you and it is his desire that no one should be lost, and he will go out of his way to make sure you know how loved you are and that you need him.

Now, what would it look like if you prioritized your life to be with God?

You stay connected to his presence, you allow him to teach you and to guide you, and you trusted him to help you in every circumstance of your life, how would that change things for you?

If you know Jesus, you already have all of the Holy Spirit. The question is, does he have all of you? The key to life with God is the Holy Spirit. He will change everything for you. He is God's promise to you.

How do you have the Holy Spirit in your life? It is by receiving Jesus in your heart as your Lord and Savior. So, we go back to our original verse, *"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."* By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."

Let us pray.