

"The Holy Spirit" Genesis 2:4-7, Acts 2:1-13, Mark 1:1-11 (06/15/25)

The Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit was one of the most difficult matters in my Christian life. When I first came to the church, every church people said, "Paul have you received the Holy Spirit?" "Paul, you should be baptized by the Holy Spirit." Every time when I heard these words, I was so confused and had questions about the Holy Spirit. "What is the Holy Spirit? and how can I receive the Holy Spirit?" These questions are still my questions. As a pastor, my questions are a little bit changed. "How can I introduce the Holy Spirit to the people?" "How can I make church members receive the Holy Spirit?"

For these questions, I had two answers. The first answer is that receiving the Holy Spirit is entirely God's domain. And the second answer is that the Holy Spirit comes to people when someone really desires the Holy Spirit. So, I realized that the only thing I can do as a pastor is to introduce the Holy Spirit to people, to let people have the desire of the Holy Spirit.

When I was doing missionary training in Hawaii, Kona, I heard a very sad story a lot of times. Since the missionary school I attended was very familiar with the works of the Holy Spirit, I could hear a lot of testimonies from the speakers about the works of the Holy Spirit. They delivered many miracle stories of the Holy Spirit. Healing, conversion of the people, casting out of the demons, etc. But some of the speakers said this at the end of their testimonies, "Because I grew up in the background of Methodist, I never experienced these kinds of works of the Holy Spirit." Not only one speaker but also several speakers who came from Methodist backgrounds said the same words. I was really surprised because I learned that Methodists were the people of the Holy Spirit.

[Slide 1] As you know, this is the symbol of the United Methodist Church. Red flame covers up the cross. This red flame implies the Holy Spirit. In this denomination symbol, not the Bible, not John Wesley, but the Holy Spirit is with the cross. This means that the United Methodist Church seriously emphasizes the Holy Spirit.

And John Wesley, in his article Thoughts upon Methodism, said, "I am not afraid, that the people called Methodists, should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead Sect, having the form of Religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the Doctrine, Spirit, and Discipline with which they first set out." The Holy Spirit was one of the three things that Wesley thought very important for Methodists.

Also, Outler said that the Methodists had four important ideas: the Bible, reason, tradition, and experience. The ideas of The Bible, reason, and tradition are also in other denominations, but the experience is a very special character of the Methodism. And this experience means that the Holy Spirit.

Yes, the Holy Spirit was traditionally and theologically emphasized in the Methodist Church very specially. Then, why cannot we see and experience the works of the Holy Spirit a lot in our denomination? Why does the Holy Spirit not represent Methodist in the United States? In my opinion, that is because we do not know how the Holy Spirit works in our lives and what are the works of the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, it was strictly forbidden to describe God as anything because if human beings describe God as something, people limit God in their thoughts.

The people of Israel tried to describe God as a gold calf, and many people challenged the Israelites to portray God by comparing God to other gods. And it was idolatry if human beings described God as something. However, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, was described by the Bible authors as other forms that were very familiar to human beings.

In Genesis chapter 2, the Spirit of God was described as the breath. This word 'breath' is the translation of the Hebrew word 'רוּחַ(Ruah).' This Hebrew word has meanings of both breath and spirit. So, this Genesis Scripture can be understood that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of life, came into the human when God created the human.

In Acts, the Holy Spirit was described as tongues of fire. In Acts chapter 2, "And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability." This was the event that the Holy Spirit came into the disciples and gave power to the people.

In Mark and other Gospels, the Holy Spirit was described as a dove in the event of Jesus' baptism. In the Bible, a dove was an animal that could be offered to God in the Tabernacle and the Temple. People could offer only doves without blemish to God. So, the dove had the meaning of sacrifice and purity.

In addition to these images of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit was described in various ways in the Bible, such as wind and water.

The images of the Holy Spirit might tell how the Holy Spirit would work

in people's lives. In Genesis, the Holy Spirit was the breath of life. So, Adam became the first human who had a spiritual life. Adam represented those human beings who were spiritual creations connected with God by the Spirit.

In Acts, the Holy Spirit was tongue and fire. So, the disciples preached the Gospel and showed the power of the Holy Spirit to the world. They were not in fear, and they were not afraid of delivering the Gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Mark, the Holy Spirit was a dove. So, Jesus sacrificed himself for us without any sins, like a dove with no blemish.

Therefore, knowing the image of the Holy Spirit in our lives is very important for understanding how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. So, this is my question. What is your image of the Holy Spirit in your life?

[Slide 2] This is the image of the Holy Spirit in my life. After I decided to be a Christian, receiving the Holy Spirit was the most complex challenge for me. My church members were so delighted when they heard that I wanted to be a Christian. Then, they started to push me to receive the Holy Spirit. I attended many prayer gatherings and heard a lot of preaching and testimonies to know how I could receive the Holy Spirit. Someone said that he felt like hitting his head with a hammer when he received the Holy Spirit. And someone said that a dark and black spirit came out from him, and a fresh cool wind came into him. So, I hoped to have such a spectacular experience and prayed hard for the Holy Spirit. But nothing happened.

One day, in youth summer camp, I could see a Christian's face that was full of happiness because of the grace of God. When I saw that face, I had a strong

desire in my heart to meet God like that Christian. Now, I believe I met the Holy Spirit at that moment. I realized that God gave me real happiness when I had the heart of desiring God. But nothing special happened to me at that time, like a hammer or dark spirit.

Even though I realized the true joy and happiness that came from God, I was not sure about the Holy Spirit. So, I prayed to God that I could have the special power of the Holy Spirit. One day, while I attended church youth camp as a sound technician, I ran many times from the sound booth to the stage to set up the sound system. But I sprained my ankle when I was running, so I could not even walk. It would be a big trouble if I could not move between the sound booth and the stage. So, I laid my hand on my ankle and prayed for healing. When I prayed, surprisingly, my ankle was healed, and I could run again. I was really surprised and was so happy because I thought I had the healing power from God. So, I could do my sound job safely without any trouble. However, as soon as the night gathering was over, my ankle hurt again. So, I prayed again for the healing, but nothing happened. I was so disappointed.

I was so curious why I could not have the special experience of God. While I was concerned about this question, God told me that the Holy Spirit came to me like a bonfire. While I was studying in the seminary, I had a chance to read a journal of John Wesley. In his Journal on May 24, 1738, Wesley said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." People say this feeling of Wesley was the conversion of Wesley. But nothing was special. He just felt warm. A bonfire is not a special fire. Anyone can make a bonfire with just embers and firewood. It cannot burn the whole mountain but can make people feel warm, cook food, and gather people together. It comforts people's bodies and hearts in cold weather and protects

people from wild animals. God told me that God wanted me to be like a bonfire.

The Holy Spirit did not show me any special power, but the Holy Spirit comforted my heart while I was walking my journey of faith as the first believer in my family. And the Holy Spirit encouraged me when I wanted to give up my life as a pastor. So, God wanted me to live like a bonfire that gives the people courage and a warm heart. This is my image of the Holy Spirit.

Then, let me ask this question again. What is your image of the Holy Spirit in your life? I hope to encourage us to look back on our lives. How has the Holy Spirit worked in our lives, and how did the Holy Spirit invite us to live as people of God? Now, we are heading to the season of the Holy Spirit. Through this season, I hope we can experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. During this season of the Holy Spirit, may God be with us and guide us to live with the Holy Spirit. Amen.