



## **The God Who Pours Out His Spirit** **Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #35**

**Joel 2**

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I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Joel 2. We are on a journey through the Scripture in the Behold Our God series where we are in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. We've been there for the last three or four weeks and we'll be there for the next three or four weeks.

I don't know about you but I think most of us are a little bit freaked out by the prophets. We're sometimes just not sure what to do with them. I think there are several reasons for that. One thing is we get confused. Right? Any child who's learning the books of the Bible is doing really well through Psalms and Proverbs and then we get to all these funky names. We can't remember who's first, Zephaniah or Zechariah. Or is it Zacharias? We get confused.

There are Major Prophets and there are Minor Prophets—what's the deal with that? Did the Major Prophets make it to the Big Leagues while the Minor Prophets just couldn't hit a Big League curveball? It really isn't like that. They're not any more or less important than one another. Simply the Major Prophets wrote longer books than the Minor Prophets. But sometimes that's confusing.

We look at the lives of some of these guys and they did some really strange things. They didn't have many friends; they were mainly rejected. Jeremiah put on a yoke and walked around carrying it for a long time. It's just very strange. Then there's the whole chaotic time frame in which the prophets ministered. It's a very disappointing time in the history of God's Old Testament people where the nation had split into two separate nations—the northern ten tribes of Israel and the southern two tribes of Judah.

God is sending out prophets whose basic job in life is to proclaim to the people. We get confused sometimes about that because when we think about prophecy, we think of predictions or foretelling. And there's plenty of that in the prophets, particularly as it has to do with the Person of Jesus Christ. We come back to these prophecies during different points on the church calendar. At Christmas, we remember that Isaiah said, *"For to us a*

*child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder...*" (Isaiah 9:6). We say, "Okay, we get that." At Easter we read that *"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows..."* and we get that (Isaiah 53:3).

However, then there are these other prophecies and we're not quite sure—should we be waiting for them to happen? Or did they already happen? I think one thing we need to remember is that as much as the prophets were fore-tellers—prophesying in that way—they were also forth-tellers. They had a message for people in their own time and context. It is very similar to what happens here each Sunday morning as God's Word is spoken forth and the pastor says, "Thus says the Lord." In fact, the Puritans called the art of preaching "the art of prophesying" for that reason.

Joel was one of those prophets who had a message for people in his own time. Inevitably, God was sending them to speak to His People was that the people had not been faithful to the covenant God had made with them. Remember that when they entered the land of Israel, God set before them blessing and cursing. "If you keep My covenant, if you worship Me alone, if you don't turn to the left or the right from My Word, then I will bless you. In many ways, that blessing will be evidenced by what the land will do for you. The land will be productive; it will be fruitful. You will enjoy that and it will be a token of My grace toward you. But on the other hand, if you are not faithful to the covenant, if you turn to other gods, if you just blend in with the nations around you, then there's going to be cursing. And that cursing will also be reflected in the land's lack of production. If you don't repent, one day you'll be removed from the land." We know that happened in the story of the Northern Kingdom of Israel as the Assyrians conquered them. Then a few generations later the very same thing happened in the Southern Kingdom of Judah as the Babylonians conquered them.

Our text this morning comes from Joel who is proclaiming a message that's so familiar in the prophets: a message mixed with judgment if you don't repent and hope if you do repent. So I want to begin by looking at Joel 2. We're going to go rather quickly through the first 27 verses and really get to the heart of the text in the last four verses but I do want to take some time to get the context of where we are in the book of Joel. Let me ask for God's help as we do that together; let's pray.

Oh God, the Holy Spirit, I pray that You would enable us to see the glories of Christ in the gospel through the book of Joel. I pray that You would open up this ancient Word to us and open us up to this Word. I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

## A Message of Judgment

In our text this morning—Joel 2—through the prophet, God begins speaking a message of judgment in the first 11 verses. He does this by talking to the people about an impending invasion of an army. Now the people had already experienced an invasion—an invasion of locusts. This was a huge problem in their context and time, as it continues to be in that part of the world. Locusts can come in—millions upon billions of them—and absolutely devour all vegetation. You can imagine how devastating that is to an agricultural society. It doesn't just have an effect for this year but it has an effect for next year. God's people had experienced God's judgment through an invading army of locusts.

In chapter two, Joel informs God's people that there's another army coming that they need to be equally concerned about and afraid of—if not more so. Look at Joel 2:1-11:

<sup>1</sup> *Blow a trumpet in Zion;  
sound an alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near,  
<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains  
a great and powerful people;  
their like has never been before,  
nor will be again after them  
through the years of all generations.*

[This is what this army is like. They have this scorched-earth policy like locusts coming through, devouring everything in front of them and just leaving stubble and barrenness behind them.]

<sup>3</sup> *Fire devours before them,  
and behind them a flame burns.  
The land is like the garden of Eden before them,  
but behind them a desolate wilderness,  
and nothing escapes them.*

<sup>4</sup> *Their appearance [like locusts] is like the appearance of horses,  
and like war horses they run.*

<sup>5</sup> *As with the rumbling of chariots,  
they leap on the tops of the mountains,  
like the crackling of a flame of fire  
devouring the stubble,  
like a powerful army  
drawn up for battle.*

<sup>6</sup> *Before them peoples are in anguish;  
all faces grow pale.*  
<sup>7</sup> *Like warriors they charge;  
like soldiers they scale the wall.  
They march each on his way;  
they do not swerve from their paths.*  
<sup>8</sup> *They do not jostle one another;  
each marches in his path;  
they burst through the weapons  
and are not halted.*  
<sup>9</sup> *They leap upon the city,  
they run upon the walls,  
they climb up into the houses,  
they enter through the windows like a thief.*

<sup>10</sup> *The earth quakes before them;  
the heavens tremble.  
The sun and the moon are darkened,  
and the stars withdraw their shining. [Whose army is this?]*  
<sup>11</sup> *The LORD utters his voice  
before his army,  
for his camp is exceedingly great;  
he who executes his word is powerful.  
For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome;  
who can endure it?*

Joel says the Day of the Lord is coming and it's a day you need to fear. On the one hand, this would have given the people an opportunity to say, "Yes God, go get 'em! Go get our enemies!" and they would have seen the Day of the Lord that way. But Joel is expanding their understanding of the Day of the Lord—this day of impending judgment—to say, "God is not just coming to judge the nations. He's not just coming to judge your enemies. He's coming to judge you, too. So you better prepare yourself for this great and very awesome Day of the Lord."

It reminds me of 1 Peter 4:17 where Peter says, "*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God...*" God is saying to His people, "Judgment isn't just for people out there. Judgment is for you, too. But there is hope (verse 12) if you turn—if you repent." This is so much the case in the prophets that there is impending judgment but there is also hope. Look at verses 12-17:

<sup>12</sup> *"Yet even now," declares the LORD,  
"return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
<sup>13</sup> and rend your hearts and not your garments."*  
*Return to the LORD your God,  
[Why? Because this is what our God is like.]*

*for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;  
and he relents over disaster.  
14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,  
and leave a blessing behind him,  
a grain offering and a drink offering  
for the LORD your God?*

*15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
consecrate a fast;  
call a solemn assembly;  
16 gather the people.  
Consecrate the congregation;  
[There's urgency here.]  
assemble the elders;  
gather the children,  
even nursing infants.  
[Nursing moms are not excluded, newlyweds are not excluded.]  
Let the bridegroom leave his room,  
and the bride her chamber.*

*17 Between the vestibule and the altar  
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep  
and say, "Spare your people, O LORD,  
and make not your heritage a reproach,  
a byword among the nations.  
Why should they say among the peoples,  
'Where is their God?'"*

There's a message of impending disaster and judgment but there's also a message of hope based on God's character because God is gracious and compassionate. Yes, He is a Judge and that is His glory, but His greater glory is to forgive those who come to Him—that you can count on. The prophet says it may not erase the possibility of consequences—who knows whether or not He will relent in the disaster He's sending—but He will forgive.

## **The People's Repentance and God's Forgiveness**

The turning point of the whole book of Joel is between verse 17 and verse 18. There might be a space in your Bible there. That space is a turning point because the people did repent. Things change drastically beginning in verse 18. Look at verses 18-27:

*18 Then the LORD became jealous for his land  
and had pity on his people.  
19 The LORD answered and said to his people,  
"Behold, I am sending to you  
[not locusts, not an army to devour everything you have]*

*grain, wine, and oil,  
and you will be satisfied;  
and I will no more make you  
a reproach among the nations.*

<sup>20</sup> *"I will remove the northerner far from you,  
and drive him into a parched and desolate land,  
his vanguard into the eastern sea,  
and his rear guard into the western sea;  
the stench and foul smell of him will rise,  
for he has done great things.*

<sup>21</sup> *"Fear not, O land;  
be glad and rejoice,  
for the LORD has done great things!*

<sup>22</sup> *Fear not, you beasts of the field,  
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;*  
[Look at the words for "abundance" in the next few lines.]  
*the tree bears its fruit;  
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.*

<sup>23</sup> *"Be glad, O children of Zion,  
and rejoice in the LORD your God,  
for he has given the early rain for your vindication;  
he has poured down for you abundant rain,  
the early and the latter rain, as before.*

<sup>24</sup> *"The threshing floors shall be full of grain;  
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.*

<sup>25</sup> *I will restore to you the years  
that the swarming locust has eaten,  
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,  
my great army, which I sent among you.*

<sup>26</sup> *"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,  
and praise the name of the LORD your God,  
who has dealt wondrously with you.  
And my people shall never again be put to shame.*

<sup>27</sup> *You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.  
And my people shall never again be put to shame."*

God graciously restores His people in this section. It is a result of His character. He restores the fortunes of His people and He even goes beyond that. He lavishes great blessing on them. They're going to be swimming in the abundance of the land. From a bare and desolate land that was devoured by the locusts, to a land that—as it was described when they went into it—is overflowing with milk and honey. It is overflowing with

abundance as evidence of God's grace. And people will know that God is in the midst of His people and they will know there is no other god. But how? How will they know this? How will they know God is in the midst of His people? How will they know He will never again put His people to shame?

## God Pours Out His Blessing

Our central text for this morning—verses 28-32—answers that question. This is how you will know that God is in the midst of His people. Verses 28-32:

<sup>28</sup> *“And it shall come to pass afterward,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.*

<sup>29</sup> *Even on the male and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

<sup>30</sup> *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and  
fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness, and  
the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD  
comes. <sup>32</sup> And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name  
of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there  
shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the  
survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.”*

How will it be known that God is in the midst of His people? How will it be known that they will never again be put to shame? Because He is not just pouring on them physical blessing, He is going to pour upon His people a greater blessing. He is going to pour out His Spirit upon them with great abundance and without reservation.

We need to realize that up until this point in God's working through His people in salvation history, the Spirit's work and ministry has been limited. It's been temporary and has often been task-specific. Mainly those who have had the Spirit of God upon them have been people like Joel—prophets, priests or kings like Saul, David or Solomon. But even that leading and presence of the Holy Spirit could be temporary. We know Saul had it removed from him because he was faithless. David even cries out to God in Psalms 51:11, *“...take not your Holy Spirit from me.”*

At the bottom-line, this has been the problem for God's people. This is why the prophets have to keep coming to God's people and calling them back to faithfulness. Without the full ministry of the Holy Spirit, they keep failing. They keep failing to keep God's covenant and to maintain a relationship with Him.

So the prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to a day when God's Spirit would be poured out without limit on all His people. Moses was the first to look forward to this when he said in Numbers 11:29, *"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"* Or the famous passage about God's new covenant blessings—including the new covenant blessing of the Holy Spirit—in Ezekiel 36:26-27, *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."*

Prophets looked forward to this day when all God's people would be indwelt with the Holy Spirit. And that day came. It came hundreds of years after Joel, some two thousand years ago for us. It came at the Jewish celebration of the Passover, the celebration of the abundant harvest. I want you to fast-forward to Acts 2 and the pouring out and coming of the Holy Spirit.

If you remember the context of this passage, Jesus' ministry on earth has been completed. He has given His life as an atonement and ransom for sin at the cross. God has vindicated that as a wrath-satisfying sacrifice for sin by raising Him to new life. He has spent 40 days on this earth with His disciples and then He has ascended to the right hand of God the Father. He has told His disciples and followers that it is good for Him to leave and He's going to send the Holy Spirit and for them to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That's where we are here in the book of Acts. Peter, the other ten apostles and other followers of Jesus—about 120—are gathered in an upper room and something very strange happens. There is the sound of rushing wind and there are these flames of fire. The Bible uses the term "tongues of fire" to describe what appears on their heads. There's a play on words here because they all start speaking in different languages or "tongues"—intelligible languages that people on the outside of the building can understand. And they're declaring the glories of God in all these different languages.

That's where we pick up the story in Acts 2:14. Peter stands up with the eleven apostles, lifts up his voice and addresses the crowd that has gathered. There would be a crowd gathering anywhere if something this strange had happened. And he says:

<sup>14</sup> *"Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose [they were accused of being filled with wine—being drunk—but they were filled with something else], since it is only the third hour of the day [9:00 AM]. <sup>16</sup> But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel*

[What you see now is what Joel talked about some 500+ years earlier when he said “Afterward, later” in Joel 2:28]:

<sup>17</sup> “*And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh [this is exactly what Joel said], and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;*

<sup>18</sup> *even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

<sup>19</sup> *And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;*

<sup>20</sup> *the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

<sup>21</sup> *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*

<sup>22</sup> *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—<sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

Peter looks at what is happening here and says, “This is what Joel was talking about.” This is what the other prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to, that God’s Spirit would be poured out without measure on His people. Notice that Peter connects it with the coming of Jesus. He says, “*In the last days...*” [He tweaks it a little bit from how Joel said it—“*the day of the Lord...*”] “So we understand that the coming of Jesus is the beginning of the end. The coming of Jesus is the beginning of God putting into motion everything that He had promised in the Old Testament.

If you enjoy the study of eschatology—the study of end times—understand that Jesus’ coming was an eschatological event. It was an event that kicked into motion all the things God would do to bring His eternal plans to fruition. Peter connects that to the signs and wonders Jesus did. You could add to this the darkness that was over the earth while He hung on the cross. Peter and Joel together say, “This is our God.” He is the One Who pours out His Spirit without measure upon His people.

My aim for the rest of this message is for us to understand that the pouring out of God’s Spirit demonstrates God’s overflowing generosity. This is what our God is like. He is generous, gracious and lavishly gives good gifts to His children. That’s what good dads do, don’t they?

I have a good earthly dad. Every time we're together, he always wants to do things for me. He's always picking up the tab and doing things for us as a family. He comes with my mom—who is very gracious as well—and they stay with us. I can always be sure that when they visit in the spring, that I'll come home from the office and my garage will be cleaned out. It will not only be swept clean but it will be scrubbed clean because I not only have a good dad, I have a Dutch dad. So that garage is really clean when it's all said and done.

Good dads are that way, aren't they? They want to give good gifts to their children. They don't just give a little bit—they overflow in their generosity. Jesus said of earthly dads, "If they're evil and know how to give good gifts, how much more our Father in Heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask" (Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13).

In the time we have remaining, I just want to ask two questions of the text and of us.

1. How does this passage in Joel show God's overflowing generosity? I want to ground this truth in Scripture. How does it demonstrate God's overflowing generosity?
2. What difference does it make for us that we have this new covenant blessing of God pouring out the Holy Spirit on us?

## **How Does This Passage Show God's Overflowing Generosity?**

First of all, let's look at four points in the text that demonstrate God's overflowing generosity:

1. The words "**all flesh**" in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17. "All flesh" speaks about the extent to which God is pouring out His Spirit. He's pouring it out on all types of people. Again in the Old Testament—mainly prophets, priests and kings—a few select people received His Spirit. But here we see something that is sometimes called "the democratization of the Spirit" as it refers to all kinds of people—young, old, male, female; with no regard to social status. We kind of get that because we're a democratic society. We understand "All people are created equal."

However, there are places in our society where we still have some tiered things going on. You find that out when you fly and walk past the Admiral's or Captain's Club and you realize, "I don't have anything that's getting me in there where all the special people are." Then they start boarding the plane and you're in group 17 and all the really

important people are in group one. Then you walk on the plane and you walk right through first class before you get to your seat—which for me means that my knees are up against the guy in front of me. You get the impression that there’s a separation. But with God’s Spirit there isn’t. God’s Spirit is poured out on all kinds of people—all people.

But it’s not an absolute all. We need to understand this from the text. Those on whom God is pouring out His Spirit are those who have called upon the name of the Lord. Looking again at Joel 2: 31, Joel mentions that this great and awesome Day of the Lord has not been erased. It’s still out there. Judgment is still coming one day and who will make it through those fires? Who will make it through those flames? Who will survive? He answers the question in Joel 2:32, *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

I love how the New Testament writers like Paul pick up on this. For instance, in Romans 10:13 Paul says the same thing, *“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”* He’s referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you ever had any doubt about the divinity of Christ and His place in the Godhead as fully God with Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, this should clear it up for you right here. Joel says, “Call on the name of Yahweh.” Paul—saying the same thing—states, “Call on the name of Jesus Christ.”

So friend, if you have not done that this morning, I urge you to call on the name of Jesus. Know the Spirit’s presence and work in your life. Know the forgiveness of sins that He brings when you confess your sins, repent of them and trust in Jesus as the full atonement for your sin. Know His indwelling presence in your life. All those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. All of them will know the outpouring and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I love how at the end of Joel 2:32 we understand that those who call upon the name of the Lord are those whom the Lord has called. The survivors—those who make it through the Day of the Lord—are those who God has called to Himself.

So the gospel is for all kinds of people. Paul takes us farther in the New Testament and makes it clear—it’s not just for Jews, it’s for Gentiles as well. What a joy it was just a

week ago to worship in Honduras with my brothers and sisters there and realize this is true. The Spirit has been poured out on all kinds of people.

2. The second evidence from the text is **the way that God's Spirit is distributed—it is poured out**. Joel says it twice
  - in verse 28, *"...I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh"*
  - and again at the end of verse 29, *"...in those days I will pour out my Spirit."*

It's a picture of abundance. God is not doling it out with a little medicine dropper—it's buckets, a waterfall being dumped out on God's people. John said about Jesus that *"he gives the Spirit without measure"* (John 3:34). He's not saving some of the Spirit to give us later. We get all of the Spirit that we will ever need when we come to faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit indwells us. It's poured out.

3. **It's God's Spirit**. What is being poured out? God says, "It's My Spirit"—the content of what is graciously and generously being given to us if God Himself. More than a gift from God, we are given God Himself to dwell in us through faith. Note God's initiative in Joel 2:28-30, *"I will pour out...I will pour out...I will show wonders."* God is doing this. It's His initiative. It's the good deposit (2 Timothy 1:14) that the New Testament talks about, guaranteeing our adoption as sons and our inheritance (Romans 8; Ephesians 1).

Francis Chan does well in his book *Forgotten God*, which is about the Holy Spirit. You can just take that title in and of itself to understand the message that's being said there—that so often in our churches the Holy Spirit is forgotten. We're big on God the Father and God the Son but the Holy Spirit often is the forgotten God. Are we living as God's people? Are we living individually as God's people with an explicit reliance on God the Holy Spirit? God says, "This is My Spirit dwelling within you."

4. Look at **the effect of this generous gift**. God says, "They shall prophesy, they shall dream dreams, they shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). There's an abundance of Spirit-initiated, God-glorifying activity. In a time before the Canon of Scripture was complete, that would have meant unmediated revelation from God. I think in our day and age it means that through the Holy Spirit we understand the revelation of God in His Word and we have insight into the Person and purposes of God through the Bible. We're able to

speaking biblical truth to one another. There's a quality of relationship with God that only the prophets had access to in the old covenant that now all God's people have access to. There's a richer, more satisfying relationship with God. **It's a deeper relationship** with greater intimacy— a sweet fellowship and communication. There is restoration of the kind of relationship Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden, walking in the cool of the day with one another and with God Himself.

So all these things are evidence of God's overflowing generosity: that it's for all flesh, that it's poured out generously, that it's God's Spirit within us and that there's a greater effect and a deeper relationship.

### **What Difference Does This Generosity Make for Us?**

So what difference should all this make? What difference should it make for us that God has poured out His Spirit on all His people? What difference should this new covenant, this greater ministry of the Holy Spirit make? Again four items:

1. **It should be an occasion for worship.** The fact that we have the Holy Spirit poured out into our lives should be a reason for worship. Gratitude to God for this blessing ought to erupt from us. We have the elite status. We're going to the head of the line. We're in first-class in God's economy. I love that Pastor Huff chose songs this morning that so well reflect our ability to worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In fact, as we said in our Call to Worship, not only do we worship God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit is our empowerment for worship. God is looking for worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:22-24).
2. **It ought to be a motivation for holiness.** We are actually in a better position than most of the Old Testament saints to live a life of obedience because the Holy Spirit has been poured out into our lives. The Holy Spirit is dwelling within us, which very few of them experienced. Paul says in Romans 8:4 we are to *"walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

I would encourage you to listen again to Pastor Sunday's Pentecost message, "Be Filled with the Holy Spirit." Listening to that again this past week reminded me that it was a

very practical message. We have the Holy Spirit—now how does that work out in our lives? What does it mean? We are all candidates for God’s sanctifying grace. He is an equal-opportunity Sanctifier.

3. **It should be a source for confidence and boldness in witness.** Having this new covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit generously poured out into our lives, dwelling in us—ought to empower and embolden us for gospel witness. How did this little ragtag group of disciples go from scaredy-cats to roaring lions? How did Peter—who wouldn’t even admit to a servant girl that he knew Jesus—stand before the chief priests and say, “I don’t care what you’re going to say. I’m going to keep speaking Jesus’ name,” and eventually go to his death for Christ? It’s the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Their boldness for witness came from the Holy Spirit and His work in their lives. It ought to be the same for us.
4. **It ought to be a constant comfort.** Jesus told His disciples that they were better off if He left so that a new Counselor and Comforter would come and be with them. Listen to how Paul puts it in Romans 8:12-17:

*<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

It is a comfort to know we are the children of God. The Holy Spirit’s ministry is to witness with our spirit, reminding us, “Yes, you are a child of God. No, you didn’t do this yourself. You were bought by the precious blood of your Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. You are His. You were adopted as His child. I am the deposit guaranteeing that.”

I want to close this morning by asking a question that Trevin Wax asked in his recent article “The Gospel of the Holy Spirit.” It’s a very simple question. He simply asks, “How important is the Holy Spirit in your understanding of the gospel?” He writes:

*“Too many evangelicals see the good news that we are saved *from* sin and *from* God’s wrath and stop there. We forget that we are saved *for* a relationship with God (to know Him and love Him) and *for* His mission (His redeeming work to*

seek and save the lost). And it's the Holy Spirit that enables that relationship and empowers us for mission."

That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that has been poured into our lives. May we as New Covenant Bible Church be centered on the gospel because we are people who are empowered and transformed by the Holy Spirit of God Who has been lavishly, liberally and generously poured into our lives by our gracious heavenly Father. Amen.

Let's pray.

God, we give You thanks. We praise Your name that in the fullness of time, You not only sent Your Son, Jesus Christ Who came to make atonement for our sin and open up the way to eternal life, but You also sent with Him Your Holy Spirit. You sent Him to be near us, to comfort us, to be a demonstration of Your love that it might be poured into our hearts and that He might be a guarantee of our inheritance with You. God, for this we praise You and thank You. We pray that we would live in a greater way in the light of this reality. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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