

FROM DEATH TO LIFE: The Work Of The Holy Spirit

Sunday, August 11th, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.

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Imagine, about 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven, there was a room filled with people. People who had seen Jesus after he had risen from the dead, and before he ascended back into heaven, heard Him promised His disciples, "I'm going to send you the Holy Spirit and you're going to receive power when He comes upon you." Acts chapter 1 verse 8. That was the promise. In fact the Holy Spirit had been promised for hundreds and hundreds of years to come in this very special way. Jesus announced He's about to come.

About 10 days later, as I said, they were waiting and praying in that upper room and the Holy Spirit came. 120 believers were in that upper room on the first Pentecost and suddenly while they were praying they heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind. It doesn't say they felt a wind, they heard the sound of it coming into that room. And then a vision of little flames of fire that came down and went over each of them and every believer had a flame hovering above their head in this vision and the Holy Spirit filled their hearts, came into their lives in a whole new way never experienced before and they were never the same again.

That moment thrust them out to turn the world upside down with their preaching about the good news of Jesus. Pentecost changed everything for the church. They weren't hiding anymore, they were out of hiding, filled with boldness, filled with power, accompanied by God's presence. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Now turn with me in your Bibles this morning to the very first chapter of the Bible and I want to look at Genesis chapter 1. We know that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity of God, who is three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He's the third person. But you might think, "Well, I should know all about him, but you know what? I have some questions. I don't know all that much about the Holy Spirit."

Maybe you're new to our church, new to Pentecostal churches or charismatic churches, and you really haven't heard a lot of teaching about the Holy Spirit. Now, someone here might say, "I know all about the Holy Spirit. I've been in a Pentecostal church for years. I've been filled with the Holy Spirit. I've been in great spirit-led meetings. I understand all of that." That's great.

Listen, I've been in Pentecostal churches for the last 35-plus years and I can tell you something now, I need the Holy Spirit today, more than I needed him yesterday or 5 years ago. I need a fresh outpouring and a filling of the Holy Spirit today. I need it right now. So I'm asking for the Holy Spirit, give me more and more in my life.

This morning, I want to talk to you about going **FROM DEATH TO LIFE: The Work Of The Holy Spirit**. A book that I try to read on a regular basis, about once a year, is a book called The Way to Pentecost by Samuel Chadwick. It was written over a hundred years ago and it's a marvellous book. If you've never read it, I encourage you to get it on Amazon for a few dollars.

The Way to Pentecost by Samuel Chadwick. I want to read you a paragraph out of that book. Samuel Chadwick said these words, ***"Our Lord came that we might have abundant and abounding life and it is found in the gift of the Spirit of Life. The gift of God is living water, springing up into everlasting life. Living water is the water of vitality from the eternal source of life. The law is good but weak through the flesh, ineffective through human infirmity."***

The Holy Spirit strengthens the inward man. The Spirit of Life dwells in men, permeates their being, sanctifies their nature, quickens their powers, vitalizes their mortal bodies and radiates their life. They live -- really live! They live the life that is life indeed. Pentecost turned anemic believers into exuberant saints. People said they were drunk and so they were, but not with wine.

They were vivacious with abounding vitality. Pentecost wakens people up. It vitalizes latent powers and makes the most of every faculty and latent gift. Those who would have life, abounding life, victorious life, satisfying life, glorious life, must get to Pentecost. Life is the best medicine for every kind of sickness. It cures all ills, ends all weariness and conquers death all the time."

And the Holy Spirit is the life-giving spirit. Do you need some life this morning? Yeah? You need a little bit of vitality? Maybe you're feeling like your steps have been dragging, like you have been struggling to get out of a desert place. I tell you, the Holy Spirit is the answer. The life-giving spirit, his presence in our lives.

Now look at Genesis chapter 1. I want to read the first five verses. **"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. [3] And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. [4] And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. [5] God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." (Genesis 1:1 – 5)**

That's all we need to read as we start this message this morning.

Look at that verse. It says, **"The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."** The earth was created, but as yet it was nothing like the beautiful world of light and order and life that we now know. In that first moment of creation, the whole thing was shrouded in thick folds of gloom, with not the slightest inkling of what was about to happen. A black water-covered ball suspended in the darkness of space.

The Bible describes it with these words. It says that the earth was without form and it was a void, or it was empty. One translation puts it like this: **"Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness."** (The Message) That's quite a scene to open the great book, isn't it? That's how it all began. But it is a pregnant scene. It is a scene filled with anticipation, because the Bible says that the Spirit of God moved. Literally, the word there means brooding. It was brooding. The Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters.

And the creation that we read about in the rest of Genesis chapter 1 resulted because of the Holy Spirit brooding over creation as God spoke everything into existence. From the very beginning, the Holy Spirit was active in creation along with the Father and the Son. When God formed man out of the dust of the ground in chapter 2, it says that the Lord God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and it says man became a living creature. The word breath there is another Hebrew word, **"ruach."** It means the Spirit of Life. God's Spirit animated the soul of man that He had created and gave him life. So that when we read in Job chapter 33 verse 4, these words, "The Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." That's what it's referring to.

The Spirit of God has formed and made me and His breath gives me life. In Psalm 104 verse 30, we are told more about the Holy Spirit's work in creation. This is what Psalm 104 says, **"When**

you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” [Psalm 104:30]

Not only was the Holy Spirit there in the first formation of the earth and the creation of man, but the Spirit always is the creator of life. It says **“You sent forth your Spirit and they were created.”** Who is the they that the Spirit creates? Well you have to read the whole Psalm and it clarifies it, but verses 18 to verse 26 tells us that it includes wild goats and rock badgers and beasts of the forests, young lions, man and whatever lives on the earth and in the sea. Every new generation that comes forth on this planet, the Holy Spirit is breathing life. The Holy Spirit is sustaining and he's the life-giving Spirit.

Now I want to walk with you through the Word of God for a few moments and just expound on this that we find in Genesis 1 verse 2, expound on it through everything that the Bible shows us about how the power of the Holy Spirit gives life.

Firstly, he gave life to the world.

1) HE GAVE LIFE TO THE WORLD

He gave life to the world at the creation as we've just been talking about for the past few minutes. God created the heavens and the earth and you know God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and all three persons of the Godhead we are told in the Bible, they were all involved in creation. It was the Father's will and design. It was done at the command of Jesus. He is called the Word of God and in John chapter 1 verse 3 it says, **“All things were made through him (Jesus), and without him was not any thing made that was made.” [John 1:3]**

Which by the way, that verse once and for all settles the argument with the cults that Jesus was not a created being. He is eternal because otherwise that verse would not be true. Nothing was made that he didn't make. You can't make yourself. He was eternal. Jesus is eternal and he was there in the creation, the Word of God bringing forth everything that we see today and it was the Holy Spirit who animated everything with life.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit brought this world and everything into being and the Holy Spirit is the life-giving Spirit, the Ruach, the breath of God. He gave life to the world.

2) HE GAVE LIFE TO ISRAEL

This is the story all the way through the Old Testament. The giving of life to a nation whom God called and do you remember Ezekiel's vision in chapter 37 of Ezekiel? Ezekiel in the Spirit saw a picture, he saw a vision of a boneyard. It was a place where there had been a battle and all these soldiers had fallen and over time their bodies had just gone to corpses and finally down to skeletons lying around.

It was just a whole field full of old dry rotting bones and you remember that God spoke to Ezekiel and he said, “hey Ezekiel, could these bones live?” And Ezekiel gave one of the best answers that you should learn and memorize so that when God asks you a question, you can answer it the same way. He said, “Ezekiel, can these bones live?” And Ezekiel said, “you know Lord, I don't know, but you know.” God said, “Ezekiel, speak to the bones.”

And so Ezekiel prophesied to the bones and suddenly there was this rattling in his vision and the bones began to come together. That must have been a sight. Little ankle bone from over here comes flying across to join up with a shin bone and a knee bone and you've heard the song, right?

Up through until you got a whole army but they're skeletons. Just this entire army of skeletons stood there and that's all it was.

And God said, "Now let there come flesh and sinew" and so that began to happen. On these old skeletons comes back flesh and sinew and muscle until they are a magnificent looking army. But guess what? All their eyes were shut. They were just an inanimate army of still corpses. They looked handsome but there was no life.

And then God spoke to Ezekiel. He said, one more time. He said, "Now Ezekiel, prophesy to the breath. Come from the four winds and breathe on these slain that they may live." You say, "The miracles already happened. The bones have come together." No, no, no. They're still not alive. And then when Ezekiel prophesied to the breath, to the spirit and called, the Holy Spirit came and suddenly the eyes popped open and they began to march.

This was a mighty army. And God said to Ezekiel, "You know what I just showed you? I just showed you the miracle of Israel." He said, "It's in death that Israel had been given up into captivity and the nation was just a shadow of its former self."

It had really died. The nation was gone. And he said, "Ezekiel, can the bones live?" "Only you know, oh Lord." And God did it. He raised Israel up again. It was a prophecy through Ezekiel that reminded Israel of what God had done in the past. Israel was dead and gone in Egypt. But God brought her back to life out of slavery in Egypt and made them a nation. So it was a prophecy from the past.

It was also a prophecy about the immediate present that God was going to bring the nation back from captivity in Babylon at the end of 70 years of captivity. He would bring them back and he would rebuild the nation, which he did miraculously.

But you know that Ezekiel's words were also a prophecy for the distant future. For the end times. God in the last days would again bring Israel back to life after she was scattered to the four corners of the earth.

The existence of the state of Israel today is a miracle. She is one of the wonders of the world. She has been hated by people for generations. Today that little state of Israel is surrounded by enemies and yet God has preserved Israel. Brought that nation back to life when it was dead and gone. Today you go to Israel and I know the troubles the last few years have been terrible. But listen, still that area is blossoming like a rose under the hand of God. That nation state is strong. God has done this by a miracle of his own hand. Brought her back to life.

How? By the Holy Spirit. Speak to the breath that these slain may live. The Holy Spirit has done it. He has come from the four winds to gather God's people back together and make this miracle state. It's happened throughout history. The Holy Spirit has given life to Israel.

3) THE HOLY SPIRIT GAVE LIFE TO DEAD PEOPLE

Dead people. Literally. The Bible gives us a number of accounts of people who were raised to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now we don't see that happening every day, do we? But in the Bible there are these accounts of people who were literally brought back from the dead.

A man by the name of Lazarus. He had been in a tomb for four days and his family who loved him, they said, don't open the door. He stinks. Likely rigor mortis had set in, corruption was already setting in. He was dead and gone and Jesus stood at the door of that tomb and he said, "Lazarus come out." And Lazarus came out alive and well.

How? By the life-giving spirit. The Holy Spirit gave life to the dead. Another person in the ministry of Jesus was a young lady that we know as Jairus's daughter. We don't know what her name was. Her dad's name was Jairus. She was dead. She was on a stretcher. She was being carried to the funeral and Jesus raised her from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And then of course most vitally to our faith is the resurrection of Jesus himself. And the Bible makes it very clear he was raised by the power of God's Spirit. He was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit.

When you get to Revelation chapter 11, the very last book of the Bible, and it's talking about the end times that are still to come. It talks about two witnesses on the streets of Jerusalem who will be martyred. They will preach the gospel. They will preach for God, but they will be killed for their preaching.

And it says that their bodies will lay in the streets for three days. But after three and a half days, it says, the Spirit of Life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet and great fear fell upon all who saw them. God is still going to be raising people from the dead right at the end of times.

How will he do it? It says the Spirit of Life from God entered them. He gives life to dead people. He brings people back even from the dead.

How many know you have loved ones who've died but you're going to see them again because the Spirit of God is going to raise them up in the resurrection. We will all be together. Amen. Listen, it's not just a spiritual sense there. It's not about us floating around as disembodied spirits.

No, God's going to raise our bodies again because he can do it by the life-giving Spirit. He's going to gather us. People who've been scattered in the sea, they were buried at sea. People who died in house fires and became nothing but ashes. God will bring it all back together by the power of the Holy Spirit and we will be raised. Amen.

We're going to stand together before the Lord. The Holy Spirit gives life to dead people.

4) HE GIVES LIFE TO EVERY NEW BELIEVER

He gives life to every believer. In John chapter 3, Jesus was speaking to a man by the name of Nicodemus. Nighttime meeting. He was a religious leader who came to Jesus under the cover of darkness and said, Jesus, you've got to tell me what all this means in your teaching. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus and he said to him, **"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."** (John 3:3) That work of being born again is completely the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit comes, we talk about it as the work of regeneration. The Holy Spirit comes into our life and gives spiritual life so that we awake to God. Before that, the Bible says we are spiritually dead. Before I came to know Jesus, I wasn't sick in my sin, I was dead in sin. But the Holy Spirit brought new life. He regenerated me. He came in and he spoke in so that there was spiritual life and I was born again. My life started all over again.

Listen to the words of Jesus in that chapter, John 3 verses 5 to 8.

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7] Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be

born again.' [8] The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5 – 8)

See that? Being born again is the work of the Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who does this to us. When a person calls on the name of Jesus, trusting in him alone to be their Saviour from sin, the Holy Spirit who has called them and convicted them, given them the gift of repentance and the gift of faith to believe, now the Holy Spirit regenerates them.

That is, he raises them from their old life, dead in sins and imparts spiritual life for the first time. Their spirits are made alive to God. What does Paul say? "Old things are passed away. Everything is made new." It's the Holy Spirit.

If you've never had that experience, if you are not born again, don't tell me you've tried Christianity yet. Unless you've been born again of the Spirit of God, you may have religion, but that's all you have. You're still dead in your sins. There is no true Christian without that life-giving work of the Holy Spirit.

It's a miracle every time. He gives life to every believer. And then number five, finally, he gave life to the church.

5) HE GAVE LIFE TO THE CHURCH

The church was filled with life and power when the Holy Spirit came into that upper room. Into every believer's life, the church exploded out into the world. The church is the creation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent him to us, another like himself, and listen, without the Holy Spirit, there can be neither Christian nor church. The real work of the church always is simply to depend upon the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit must do all the work.

So we see these five activities of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. The Spirit that brings life from death. Firstly, he gave life to the world in the creation week. Secondly, all through the Old Testament, and even down to the present day, he has given life to Israel. He gave life to raise the dead, physically raise dead people to life again. He gives life to every new believer when they are born again, and he gives life to the church.

Listen, how many of you know church is an awful place if the Holy Spirit's not here? Seriously, we're wasting our time, number one. Without the Holy Spirit, we may as well pack it up and go home. The church without the Holy Spirit is gloom and dreariness. It's us all trying to make something happen, but the Holy Spirit's presence changes everything.

As you read through the stories of the Bible, you will also find the Holy Spirit giving life to barren wombs, to weary hearts, to failing armies, to hopeless causes. The Holy Spirit is the life-giving spirit, and listen, the need of this hour that we live in is the life of God.

The world need's is the life of God, otherwise it continues dead in trespasses and sins without the life of God. It's the church's need, otherwise we will be dead in form and ritual. And it is every believer's need, to save us, not only from our sins, but to save us from being dead in apathy and self.

How many know that Christians need a regular breath of life from the Holy Spirit to keep animating us? Now I want to encourage you this morning, whenever the Spirit of God has come bringing life, it is almost always at the moment when everything seems most dead, extinct, without hope. That's where God does his work, when everything appears to be dead and gone. Think about it, he gave

life to the world when it was what? Without form and void, inky blackness, a soup of nothingness. That's when the Spirit hovered over it and brought forth all this life.

He gave life to Israel when she seemed to be dead and gone. Israel, the greatest wonder of the modern world. He gave life to the body of Jesus when he was laid cold, stone dead in a tomb for three days. Rigour had set in, but in an instant Jesus came walking out of that tomb. He comes when everything seems to be over.

The Holy Spirit gave life to you to believe and to be saved when you weren't looking for God. Because the Bible says there is no one who searches for God. If you find yourself this morning actually on a search for God, guess what? The Holy Spirit's already working in your life. Because nobody does that naturally. We are gone in our trespasses and sins, but when we are at our lowest point, dead in sins, that's when the Holy Spirit came and regenerated us.

He gave life to the church when she was waiting, leaderless, Jesus had ascended, gone, outnumbered, overwhelmed, suddenly. And listen, every revival of the church in history has come when she has been at her coldest, in the darkest moment. That's when God moves in and revives by His Spirit. When the life-giving Spirit comes into your life, no more religion, there's an awakening.

There's a new desire for God and for His Word, a new love for Jesus, an urgency, a vibrancy in our walk. When the life-giving Spirit comes into a church, no more business as usual. No more predictable going through the motions. No more pew-warming Christians going through Sunday morning just like they always have. No more sermons that instruct and amuse the mind for an hour but never touch the heart. When the Holy Spirit comes, He awakens the church.

We need the life-giving Spirit of God, don't we? Let us seek Him. Again, to quote Samuel Chadwick, who I started out reading from his book at the beginning this morning. Let me read to you again from Samuel Chadwick. He said,

“The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him, wisdom becomes folly and strength weakness. The church is called to be a “spiritual house” and a holy priesthood. Only spiritual people can be its living stones and only the Spirit filled its priests.

Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth until He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energizes. Human resources of learning and organization, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them. Listen to this. The church always fails at the point of self-confidence.”

Church can be going along. God doing great things. And then suddenly there comes this idea. We got it now. We can do this. The beginning of the end. We must always be depending upon the life-giving Spirit. This morning, I urge you. If you feel that you lack the fullness of spiritual life, what is the answer? If you have to admit that your heart is not on fire for Jesus like it once was. If the things of the world have distracted you from full devotion to God.

Maybe you've come and you've seen other Christians who seem so alive and vibrant. You say, I'm not there. I can act like that but it's just not in me. If that's you this morning, what is the answer? The Bible gives us the answer in Hosea chapter 6 verses 1 to 3. Let me read you these words.

“Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. [2] After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will

raise us up, that we may live before him. [3] Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

This is a call to repentance and it is a prescription for revival. But look at what's there in verse 2. Hosea chapter 6 verse 2. He says, **"After two days, if we call on the Lord, if we seek him after two days, he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up."** There is clearly an allusion there to the resurrection of Jesus.

Hundreds of years before the event and again the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the hope of the church. He is promised to bring new life to God's people. When? When God's people seek to him. When we cry out to him. Whenever there's a dearth of spiritual life in my heart, in my family, in my church. What is needed is resurrection life again.

The Spirit of God is brooding over the church, over his people, just as he brooded over the void at the beginning of the world. Think about it. In the very beginning, all there was for God to work with was potential. Only what he saw in his master creator's eye. There was no material even available in the beginning when God spoke. This God of creation brought forth the entire universe *"ex nihilo"* in Latin. That is out of nothing. He had nothing to work with and he made all of this.

You look around your life and you say, how is God going to turn these circumstances around? My life is a mess. My family's in chaos. My hope is gone. The dreams that I once had are a faded memory. But the Spirit of God is brooding on the face of the waters.

You look into yourself, Christian here today, and you say, I feel so spiritually dry. The Word of God isn't alive to me like it once was when I read it. My prayers seem to just bounce off the ceiling. I've been caught up in habitual sins and love of this world and it's not what I want to be. But I can't seem to get back the victory that I once had. But the Spirit of God is brooding over the face of the waters.

You look at the church and you say, where's the power of God? Where's the pulsating experience of the dynamic Christianity we read about in the book of Acts? Where's the power we read about in past revivals through history? Why aren't we seeing so much more salvation and healing and the gifts of the Spirit every time we gather together? But the Spirit of God is brooding over the waters.

If we will but cry out to Him, call on the life-giving Spirit, let us confess our sin, let us acknowledge our need and receive Him, the Holy Spirit who bring life. You know, nothing is impossible right now in this moment, nothing, because the Spirit of God is here. If you'll open up your life to Him right now, open up your mind and your heart, say, Holy Spirit, come and resurrect this body, this spirit, this soul, resurrect me to new life. And He will do it. He's brooding over the waters.