



Sunday, October 5, 2025

John 1:19-34

Last week, as we stepped into the middle of John 1, we were reminded that God is both full of grace and full of truth - not like cream and coffee that blend together, but as two perfections that stand complete in Him. He is full of grace - there's no room for more. He is full of truth - there's no room for more. And He moves perfectly between the two, applying each as the moment requires.

And He models this for us too, especially in a world that often bends truth or distorts grace. As followers of Jesus, we're called to live in that same tension - letting the Holy Spirit guide us when to speak truth firmly and when to extend grace freely. It's never all grace with no truth, and never all truth with no grace. It's both, perfectly balanced in love.

Today as we step into the next section of chapter 1, we see John return back to John the Baptist for a moment and walk us through some rich theology.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning, please turn with me to John 1:19-34. If you are able to I also invite you to stand for the reading of God's Word.

John 1:19-34

'Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

23 He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord,” ’as the prophet Isaiah said.”

24 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

26 John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. 27 It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

This passage is incredibly important to understanding the theology of the salvation and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. As we walk through it this morning, I want to show you something that I believe will bring both clarity and freedom as we seek to live Spirit-empowered lives for Jesus Christ.

Last week, when we introduced the previous section, I made the comment that even though John speaks about John the Baptist, he really just wants to speak about Jesus. And here again, John brings the John the Baptist back into the conversation - not because he wants us to focus on him, but because he wants to make it absolutely clear: John the Baptist is not the Messiah. He is simply the one preparing the way for the Messiah, Jesus. John the Baptist cannot offer salvation, but he simply prepares the way for the only One who can.

We see this play out in the interrogation from the levites and priests that comes next. They ask John about his identity and John leaves no room for confusion by saying: ‘I am not the Christ.’ But they keep pressing: ‘Then who are you? Elijah? The Prophet?’ - using language that, while not explic-

itly 'Christ,' - was still often tied in Jewish thought to the coming Messiah. John wouldn't have it though. He simply yet emphatically responds, 'No.'

When pressed a final time, John the Baptist quotes Isaiah to explain: 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' In other words: I'm not the guy. But everything I do will point towards Him.

It seems that this answer satisfies them for a bit, but they continue to dig into John by now asking why he is baptizing people with water. Again, John does not skip a beat and he makes the same point in a different way by essentially saying that by baptizing people he is not saving them, but simply preparing them for salvation. Then he points ahead by saying: 'There is one coming after me... and He will baptize not just with water, but with the Holy Spirit.'

Now this is the first major element we need to walk through, because for some, this can sound like there are multiple baptisms. After all, we see John baptizing, then Jesus baptizing, and now this talk of Jesus baptizing with the Spirit.

But John's baptism was unique. His was a baptism of repentance - a way of preparing people's hearts, helping them recognize their sin and their need for the coming Messiah. Once Jesus stepped onto the scene, that baptism was no longer necessary. The preparatory work of John the Baptist was finished, because now Jesus was there, and He Himself was calling people to follow Him.

From that point forward, water baptism shifted. It was no longer about preparation; it became about identification - declaring that you belong to Jesus, united with Him in His death and resurrection. It was a symbol of what Jesus would soon make real - not just immersion in water, but immersion in His Spirit, filling us from the inside out with new life.

It's that immersion in the Holy Spirit that John says is the real event - the event that water baptism points us to. But in John's day, that hadn't happened yet, so he's pointing the people forward to a future moment when Jesus would immerse His followers fully - not just in water, but in the very presence, power, and person of God Himself. A baptism that doesn't just wash the outside, but transforms the inside - bringing new life, new power, new creation from the inside out. And so, today, water baptism stands as our visible reminder that what John prophesied has been fulfilled. We've already been immersed into Christ by His Spirit - made alive, renewed, and empowered from the inside out.

So, if you're tracking with me this morning, what John is doing here is pointing people forward to the moment when Jesus would make this promise a reality - when He would pour out His Spirit on all who believe.

So again, if you're paying attention if John is pointing us towards when the Holy Spirit would come, what naturally comes to mind? Acts 2 and the most historic day of Pentecost of course.

This is why Acts 2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit is so important. Because it's the fulfillment of what John was talking about! This is the moment when Jesus pours out His Spirit on the world - on all who believe. It's the inauguration of a new era - the era of the Spirit - when God's presence would no longer dwell in temples made by hands, but now in the hearts of His people.

And it was such an important moment that even Jesus Himself pointed toward it, telling His disciples that He would have to return to the Father so that He could send the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7

'Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.'

You see, while Jesus in His physical form was limited by time and space, the Holy Spirit can now dwell within every believer - saving, empowering, and equipping us to live for the Kingdom of God.

And so, in Acts 2, as the disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions to wait, they found themselves in an upper room in Jerusalem when suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind tore through. Tongues like fire appeared and rested on each of them, and the believers began speaking in other languages. They didn't understand what they were saying, but the people gathered for the Feast of Pentecost - pilgrims from all over the known world - heard the disciples declaring the wonders of God in their own native tongues.

Here's the key: the disciples didn't realize it, but they were preaching the gospel. The Holy Spirit had arrived, and the promise of Jesus - to baptize His people with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit - was fulfilled in that moment. From that point on, and for all time, every person who would receive salvation through Jesus Christ would also receive the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

As Paul later explains to the Corinthians, in that very moment the Spirit began placing believers into

the body of Christ. We are baptized into one family, made alive in Christ, and sealed with the Spirit as the guarantee of our salvation. Water baptism shows it - but Spirit baptism makes it so.

And what's incredible is that the Spirit didn't stop in that upper room - that was just the start. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples:

Acts 1:8

'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

And that's exactly what happened - to a tee! The Spirit came first in Jerusalem - on the disciples and those gathered for Pentecost. Then the gospel spread into Judea, reaching the surrounding regions. Then into Samaria - crossing cultural and ethnic barriers that no one thought possible. And finally, to the ends of the earth - all nations, all languages, all peoples.

What Acts 2 shows us is that at salvation, we receive full access to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. But it also shows us that throughout the believer's life there will be ongoing moments where His presence fills us afresh, empowers us deeply, and even baptizes us anew for mission.

So it seems to me then that Acts 2 reveals this beautiful reality: the moment we are saved, the Spirit takes up residence within us - filling, regenerating, and empowering us to serve the Kingdom of God as part of His family. It's both the beginning of salvation and the ongoing rhythm of empowerment.

This is exactly what John was so excited about and it's what the prophet Joel saw - a day when God's people themselves would become the very temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that because of Acts 2, as Christians we now become hosts for the Holy Spirit. And He tells the Corinthians that:

1 Corinthians 6:19a

'...your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God...'

And in his letter to the Romans, Paul makes it even more clear by saying that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead now dwells in you!

Think about that for a moment! Upon salvation, you and I receive the exact same power that raised Jesus from the dead - living, breathing, working within us.

So, somehow, John the Baptist knew this was coming. He could see that his baptism of repentance was just the shadow - but the substance, the real thing, would be Jesus baptizing His people in the very Spirit of God.

And Paul reinforces this to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:4-6

‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.’

So dear church - as Christians, you too have the fullness of the Holy Spirit within you. There’s no such thing as having only part of the Spirit, or a weak Holy Spirit living inside you. You have every bit of the same Holy Spirit that lived in the Apostle Paul - the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead - living and working in you today.

So what all of this means is that when John said, ‘He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit,’ I believe that he was pointing straight to Pentecost - that incredible moment in Acts 2 when Jesus poured out His Spirit on His people. For the first time in history, God’s presence would no longer dwell in a temple made of stone but in the hearts of His people. That moment launched the Church and propelled the Gospel forward! And from that day forward, every person who turns to Christ receives that same Spirit at salvation.

Paul explains it like this in:

1 Corinthians 12:13

‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.’

That’s unity language. It’s salvation language and empowerment language in one verse. The Spirit doesn’t just fill individuals; He forms a family. He makes us one body - brothers and sisters joined together in Christ through one faith, one Lord, one baptism, and one Spirit.

But please hear this - that doesn’t mean the Spirit’s empowering work is a one-time event. No, absolutely not! Acts also shows us that there are moments - sometimes unexpected, sometimes even

daily - where believers are freshly filled, freshly anointed, freshly empowered or even freshly baptized for what God is calling them to do. That's why we keep coming back, asking for fresh fillings - not because we lack the Spirit, but because we long for His power to move in us again and again.

At the end of the day, if you are in Christ, you already have the fullness of the Spirit. The question isn't, 'Do I have the Spirit?' The question is, 'Does the Spirit have me?' Am I yielded? Am I walking in His empowerment? Am I using the gifts He's given me for His Kingdom?

The reality is that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you right now. So the call today is simple: will you yield to Him? Will you let Him fill every corner of your life? Will you step into His power, walk in His gifts, and live as the temple of the Holy Spirit that you already are.

Now, I don't want us to get lost in debates that have divided the church for centuries - where some emphasize the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as happening hand in hand with conversion, and others see it as a later experience of empowerment after conversion. And whereas this debate isn't going anywhere anytime soon, my hope is that if I've done my job today, we can clearly see that when John uses that specific term, he's actually talking about both salvation and empowerment - pointing us toward Acts 2 and the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, just as the prophet Joel said centuries ago. Not just for salvation, but for empowerment - so that we might be His witnesses.

And that fact alone should move us to worship. Because it means that the same Spirit who fell on that upper room now fills you. The same fire that ignited the church now burns in your heart. The same power that propelled ordinary people into extraordinary mission is available to every believer today.

So the question isn't whether we've been given the Spirit - we have. The question is: are we walking in His power? Are we yielding to His lead? Are we listening to His promptings? Are we letting Him add His super to our natural?

That's what this is all about. Yes, you have the Holy Spirit in you - but does He have you? That's the question.

And at the core, I think we can all agree on this - the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us, and we must yield to Him if we want to walk in His strength and power. And that yielding to the Holy Spirit is a posture of the heart. It's a daily, even hourly choice, to say, 'Spirit of God, have all of me.'

So again, the call today is simple: you already have all of the Spirit - but does the Spirit have all of you?

Blessing

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you

May He cause His face to Shine upon you

May He be gracious towards you

Lift up His countenance upon you

And may He give you peace

In Jesus name, Amen.

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