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PENTECOST

**HOW TO RECEIVE AND EXPERIENCE
THE PROMISE**



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham
 Founder/President
 India Gospel Outreach

President
 India Bible College and Seminary

There was a time not too long ago when “Theology” was regarded as the queen of all sciences.

Theology comes from two Greek words: Theos (God) and Logos (Word), literally “God-Word” or Word of God”. Take the words such as psychology, sociology and biology. Psychology is the “study of the mind”. Sociology is the “study of society”. Biology is the “study of life”. Theology is the “study of God”.

Philosophers, theologians and mathematicians of the renaissance period believed “theology” as the queen of all sciences. Science meaning “knowledge” is simply a matter of knowing what is true, right and factual. They believed theology as the queen of such matters because it engendered (brought into existence or caused to develop) all disciplines with a proper order, reason and orientation.

Today, reason has been replaced by emotion. This attitude has even infiltrated the church. “Don’t give me dead doctrines and theology,” some will say, “just give me the Holy Spirit.” Though this sounds spiritual, it is highly foolish.

Of course, there is a place in our Christian faith for feeling, but not at the expense of “Truth” or sound doctrine. God is an emotional Being who creates us as emotional beings, but He is also a rational Being who has constructed the universe by rational laws. We are to love Him with our minds as well as our hearts.

To underestimate the value of good doctrine threatens the essence of our faith. Without Truth or sound doctrine, we can never know if we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit or an unclean spirit. A lack of sound doctrine allows Satan, the father of lies, to exploit and destroy gullible people while they feel warm and fuzzy. We combat Satan’s lies with the Truth, and Truth begins with sound doctrine.

In the Christian faith, doctrine or Truth is not

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE OR TRUTH

based upon decisions made by committees of priests and theologians, or majority voting but upon facts. Christianity is not an idea, but a historical faith. Its doctrines are based upon the actual work and consistent character of God through Jesus Christ and His people over 2,000 years of recorded time.

These works of God in history are recorded in the Bible by a host of authors who never knew one another, for all to read. Doctrines are formed on the basis of what God has done in real people, not upon an enlightenment experience someone had on a mountain top.

The life of Christ, his death and resurrection lie at the crux of our faith. People saw, touched and spoke to the living Christ. They experienced His healing, deliverance and mercy in multiple ways. More than five hundred people saw Him alive after His resurrection. If these events never happened, all of our religious emotion is wasted.

The Apostle Paul says this very thing in 1 Corinthians 15:17: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” Paul, a former enemy of Jesus Christ, and the other apostles were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the gospel because they had seen the resurrected Christ. Their doctrine was based upon facts, not feelings.

Our doctrines regarding God, Jesus Christ, sin, salvation, prayer, truth, repentance, baptism, the Holy Spirit, the holy life, eternal life and death, the Great Commission, the church, scriptural inspiration—all these doctrines depend upon historical facts, not arbitrary decisions made by people who get emotionally “charged” by them.

In Christian faith, religious emotion is never the beginning or end in itself, but the product of what God does in our lives. We can know what is or is not of God only if we have sound doctrines based upon God’s workings in history that help us to discern genuine from counterfeit.

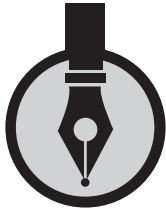
We develop sound doctrine as we regularly study our Bibles and its record of God’s work. Soon, we begin to sense that certain ideas in our culture are right while others are wrong. We become less likely to become cultural victims and develop a foundation for true transformation by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2).

The Bible, Truth or sound doctrine are profound gifts of God’s grace. Let us grasp them, thanking Him who has given His life to free us from the enemy’s lies. Let us also remember to pray and give so that hundreds of millions of people in India and around the world still without this truth will walk out of darkness and into His Light and embrace the Person of Jesus Christ.

Father God, thank you for the facts of faith recorded in the Bible for all to see. Help me to develop a core of truth that begins with sound doctrine. Help me to apply this sound doctrine to my life so that I may live a life that will please you and bless others as well as myself and those whom I love. In the Name of Jesus Christ, Who Is The Source of All Love, Life And Truth. Amen. ●

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PASTOR DR. T. VALSON ABRAHAM

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

JUNE THOMAS

ANN ABRAHAM

PUBLISHER & PRINTER

Lt. Col. V. I. LUKE (Retd.)

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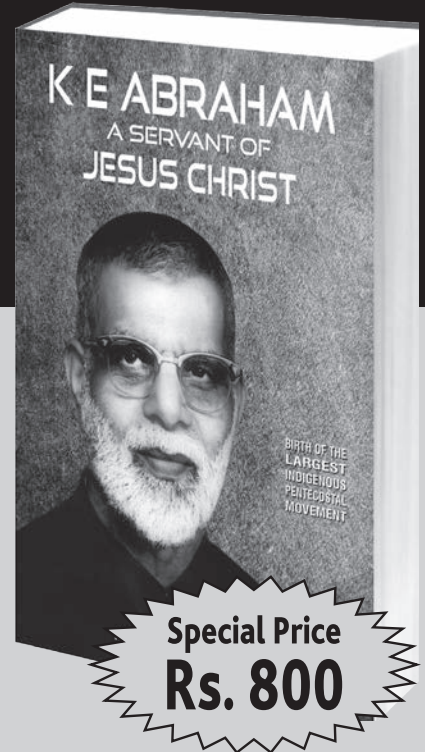
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

PRAYER FOR A GRATEFUL HEART

"Rejoice always,
pray continually,
give thanks in all
circumstances;
for this is God's
will for you in
Christ Jesus"

We all have many things to be thankful for.

Michael P. Green shares an imaginative story of a day when the sun did not rise.

Six o'clock came and there was no sign of dawn. At seven o'clock, there was still no ray of light.

At noon, it was as black as midnight.

No birds sang and only the hoot of an owl broke the silence. Then came the long black hours of the afternoon.

Finally, evening arrived but no one slept that night. Some wept, some wrung their hands in anguish.

Every church was thronged with people on their knees. Thus they remained the whole night through.

After that long night of terror and agony, millions of eager, tear-streaked faces were turned toward the east.

When the sky began to glow red and the sun rose, there was a loud shout of joy.

Millions of lips said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" because the sun had risen after one day of darkness.

The very consistency of God's blessings sometimes seems to dull our gratitude.

The wonderful thing about the mercies of God is that they are fresh every morning and new every evening, and we always take them for granted.

Apostle Paul's view is that we have to be grateful always.

Always means, regardless of time and circumstances be grateful

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:18-18).

Let me conclude this with the fitting words of John Mason. " Count God's blessings, don't discount them. Pray this prayer: God, you have given so much to me.

Give me one more thing--- a grateful heart."



HOLY SPIRIT AND CHURCH LIFE



DR. DOMENIC MARBANIANG

Christian Minister and Provost at Central India Theological Seminary. He is also author of several books on Amazon, Lulu, and Google Playstore. He prolifically blogs at Marbaniang.com

A busy church is not necessarily a living church. Having one's calendar full of events, activities, and programs might win admiration from people, but not necessarily commendation from the Lord. To one church He said:

"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead." (Rev.3:2).

To diligently work is certainly vital. Christ taught us to do the work of the Father when we have opportunity to work (John 9:4). He rebuked the wicked and lazy servant who gave unreasonable excuses for not working (Matt.25:26). Yet, it is more important for us to prioritize communion with the Lord, like Mary did sitting at His feet and listening to His message, than being busy with other things like Martha. Jesus told her:

"Martha, Martha, ...you are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41,42)

These other things might probably bring one some sense of self-importance, but anyone who stays close to the Lord's heart knows that what is regarded as important by men is not necessarily regarded so by God. In fact, "What people value highly is detestable in God's sight." (Luke 16:15)

The church must never forget that communion with the Lord in the Spirit precedes community work, ministry, and mission in the world.

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:6).

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Communion requires unity. The Bible celebrates unity among brethren (Psa.133:1)



but rebukes disunity in the church (1Cor.1:10-13). A church may have spiritual gifts and yet be unspiritual. The Corinthian church was a tongue-speaking church, but it was thoroughly carnal and childish (1Cor.3:1). It was a permissive, competitive, divisive charismatic assembly that compared and criticized preachers and was bereft of love.

“For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?” (1Cor. 3:3-4)

Paul exhorted them to pursue love, then spiritual gifts (1Cor.13,14:1). A loveless church may have beautiful music but no real worship; it may be full of givers and martyrs but no real ministry (1Cor.13:1-3). It is the love of the Spirit that binds us together as one body of the Lord.

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“Bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit....” (Eph.4:2-4)

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were all baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ and were all made to drink into one Spirit (1Cor.12:13). Imagine a cup dipped into a barrel of water that drinks into it—when we are dipped into the Lord, we were made to drink into the Spirit of God.

“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (1Cor. 6:17)

Jesus’ prayer for the church was not for material prosperity or political power in the world but for unity.

“That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be



one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me....” (John 17:21)

But we must be careful not to eulogize unity for unity’s sake. We live in a world that eulogizes tolerance as a great virtue. However, one must not confuse tolerance with love nor think that real tolerance means to ignore sin. Love is not indifference to sin. That was the problem of the Corinthian church. It was indifferent to and unappalled by the presence of sin in its midst (1Cor.5). Probably, these elders were successful in not offending someone and maintaining some sort of “peace” in the congregation, but it was at the expense of purity and certainly to the grief of the Holy Spirit who calls us to holiness and sanctification. We are called

“
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not to mere humanistic unity, like the one near Babel Tower (Gen.11); we are called to the “unity of the Spirit.” Sincere corporate worship, fellowship, love and forgiveness towards each other, honesty, discipline, watchful prayer, and rootedness in Christ’s word are crucial towards the same (Eph.5:1-21).

LIBERTY OF THE SPIRIT

Communion also implies liberty. Where there is fear there is bondage, but God has given us “not a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2Tim.1:7). He has not given us a “spirit of bondage again to fear” but “the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” (Rom.8:15). A Christian experiences true liberty of the Spirit in the body of Christ. This liberty is edifying and transformational—it liberates us to become more like Christ.



Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2Cor.3:17-18).

The church is not a social club or a spiritual theatre. It is not a place where people of similar interests meet to have a good time; nor is it a place where people go on Sundays to watch choirs perform music and speakers give lectures. The church is God's family, and we are all God's sons with responsible roles and places granted by His grace in the family. Liberty of the Spirit is liberty to behold the glory of the Lord and be transformed into the image of the Son from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. We must understand that, because of the Spirit of Christ within us, we can experience the liberty of the Spirit in

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any situation, even if we were in prison or worshipping behind closed doors in a persecuted country. A church that truly knows the liberty of the Spirit is Christ-like.

Where there is liberty there is growth and fruitfulness. A church constrained by worldly worries, torn by rivalries, and crushed by unnecessary financial burdens is like the seed sown among thorns; it fails to spiritually grow (Mark 4:18-19). But a church that has the unity and liberty of the Spirit experiences spiritual growth and maturity, growing up "in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share,

causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

The greatest enemy of spiritual liberty is carnal religion. Carnal religion is idolatrous in nature. It replaces true spirituality with carnal, tangible regulations and misrepresents spirituality as a visible demonstration of adherence to such man-made customs. That Galatian church faced severe attacks from carnal religion. Paul reminded them:

“Standfast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Gal.5:1)

He reminded them that they were redeemed from bondage of the law to be sons of God, they have the Spirit of the Son, they are children of promise, they are free. (Gal.4:6,7, 28-31). He longed for the Galatians that Christ be formed in them (Gal.4:18) but they were now becoming enslaved to “weak and beggarly elements” (Gal.4:9), “regulations—“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men” that “have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col.2:20-23).

The conflict that the Christian faces is not between the Law of Moses and the laws of the nations or the physically “clean” and “unclean” things. The conflict that the Christian faces is between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal.5:16-17) and the only solution to the conflict is walking in the Spirit

(Gal.5:16,25) in the communion, power, comfort, and guidance of the Spirit. Truth frees and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13).

PURITY OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom.1:4) and He does not tolerate sin in the Church. An early glimpse into this truth is given in Acts 5 where a couple, Ananias and Saphira, are struck dead by God for attempting to deceive the Holy Spirit by lying to the apostles (Acts 5:1-10). Church life and the Holy Spirit are one; therefore, one cannot sin against the church without also sinning against the Holy Spirit.

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which (temple) you are.” (1Cor. 3:16-17)

The Spirit is the guarantee of our salvation, guide unto all truth, governor of our decisions, and giver of all spiritual gifts in the body. Whether it is mission work, doctrinal decisions, or church discipline, all is through the Spirit and with the Spirit (Acts 13:2; 15:28). But it is not uncommon to see churches fall into sin and turn the house of prayer into a den or robbers. Just because God does not instantly punish sin as he did in Ananias and Saphira’s case does not mean that He does not or will not punish sin. He gives “time to repent” (Rev.2:21; Rom.2:4).

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion...” (Heb.3:7,8)

“But exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb 3:13-14)

We are only partakers of Christ if we

hold our first confidence firm “to the end”, if we “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” (Col.1:23). People who “despise the church of God” and dishonors the Lord’s body end up becoming weak and sick, some even dying (1Cor.11:22,30). It is better to be chastened and disciplined by the Lord than to be condemned along with the world (1Cor.11:32). The goal of discipline is holiness.

“God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.” (Heb.12:10).

But, when someone fails to respond with repentance, Christ comes and fights against them with the sword of His mouth (Rev.2:16). He destroys them by sickness and death (Rev.2:22,23). These are not the words that people might like to hear, but this is what the Bible says. These may not be the picture of Jesus and the Holy Spirit that people have become used to, but this is the picture given to us in the Scriptures. If we sow to the flesh, we will of the flesh reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we will of the Spirit reap everlasting life (Gal.6:7-8).

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” (1Thess. 4:7-8)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Cor.13:14) ●





HOLY SPIRIT AND CHURCH GROWTH



DR. J.N. MANOKARAN

A Civil Engineer by profession. God called him and his family to be a missional leader in Haryana as cross cultural missionaries for eleven years.

Since, 1997 they returned back to Tamil Nadu to help missionaries and pastors to build their capacities by teaching, training and writing.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons of Godhead. They are one in three persons. As attributes of Father and Son are: Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent so is the Spirit of God. The three are involved in all works together. Lead role is taken by one of them. The Creation, the lead role is God the Father, known as Jehovah. The Redemption of humanity, the lead role is Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross of Calvary, buried and rose again. The Holy Spirit, has the lead role in convicting people of sin, pointing them towards Lord Jesus Christ, sanctifying them and preparing the Church for His Coming.

1. EMPOWERED TO GROW, GO AND GLOW

The Spirit of God empowers the Church as a community to Grow, Go and Glow. On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured on all the 120 disciples who were gathered together. (Acts 2) That was the birthday of the Church. The Spirit of God will continue to work until Lord comes again, through the Global and Universal Church. The Church grows in number by people outside the church coming in to become the disciple of Lord Jesus Christ. The Church grows in spiritual wisdom, strength, power of God, and gifts. The Church moves to unreached areas and invite more people to Christ. The Church glows, shines as light to the world.

2. EMPOWERED TO BELIEVE

Satan has blinded all human beings, that they are unable to see or perceive Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious gospel. (II Corinthians 4:4) The Spirit of God works to open the eyes of the blinded unbelievers. The Holy Spirit is intensively involved in the salvation of individuals. As person is convicted that s/he is a sinner only through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also points a



sinner to Lord Jesus Christ who completed the redemption on the Cross of Calvary for the salvation. Without the work of the Holy Spirit – no one could become a disciple. Hence, Paul writes: No one can say: Jesus is Lord, without the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

3. EMPOWERED TO WITNESS

The Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to become witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8) The statement clearly speaks of power or strength with a purpose to witness. It is not to display strength or power like Samson did in the Old Testament, but enable, equip and embolden to witness. Most times, a believer needs boldness, strength, wisdom to witness for Lord Jesus Christ. Witness could be killed as a martyr. That means to witness is

The Holy Spirit is intensively involved in the salvation of individuals. As person is convicted that s/he is a sinner only through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also points a sinner to Lord Jesus Christ who completed the redemption on the Cross of Calvary for the salvation.

willingness to die for the truth. Millions of believers through out the history of the church have been witnesses and a considerable number of them paid the cost of witness by their lives.

4. EMPOWERED TO LOVE

The disciples are filled with the Love of God through the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5) The bitterness, revengeful attitude, vengeance, resentment, hardness, stubbornness in heart is removed and his love percolates the heart. Through this empowerment it is possible to fulfil God's commandment: Love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:31) In the world, where vengeance is considered as normal, forgiveness is radical. This is possible only by empowerment of the Spirit of God.

Kuldeep Singh was born in a Rajput family in Rajasthan. Along with his job as Customs officer, he was a volunteer with a right-wing organization teaching and training young people in physical drill, to make them proud about their



culture, heritage and ancient religion. In the same village, one family was serving as a missionary. Kuldeep Singh was angry about this development, the first day he met K.J. John, he gave him a tight slap. After two days, he slapped again, and two more time within a matter of ten days. He slapped him again for the fifth time, that very day he fell sick. His nose was bleeding and was unable to eat or drink anything. The investigation result was his left lung had become useless eaten by tuberculosis. Doctor assured him that he should be alright by taking medicine. However, for seventeen days, he was unable to eat or drink, nose bleeding did not stop. He died in the hospital around 3 AM. His body was brought home and placed on a mat as corpse is not laid on a cot. John used to get up around 5 AM for prayer. One person said: "Your enemy (Kuldeep) is dead." John replied: "I have no enemies." He rushed to Kuldeep home and started praying tears rolling down his cheeks, after getting permission from his wife.

The Holy Spirit is intensively involved in the salvation of individuals. As person is convicted that s/he is a sinner only through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also points a sinner to Lord Jesus Christ who completed the redemption on the Cross of Calvary for the salvation.

In few minutes, people noticed movements in Kuldeep's left index finger, then the next finger. In few minutes he was alive. The very next Sunday he started attending worship service by John and became a follower of Lord Jesus Christ and now serves as a pastor.

5. EMPOWERED TO EVANGELIZE

The same love of God compels believers to be actively involved in mission of reaching the world. (II Corinthians 5:14) The love of God transforms a person from being self-centered to be others-centered. Without this transformation, mission is impossible. Evangelism is doing good to others who are perishing. Personal evangelism, literature evangelism, mass evangelism, social work evangelism, prayer evangelism,

social media evangelism...are done with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

6. EMPOWERED TO GO

The Spirit of God set apart Barnabas and Paul for extensive mission throughout the Roman Empire. (Acts 13:1-2) The Church at Antioch was able to commission them as missionaries. The Church in Jerusalem did not commission missionaries. Philip from Jerusalem went to Samaria on his own, during the scattering of disciples due to persecution. (Acts 8) Philip was not commissioned as a missionary by the Jerusalem church.

7. EMPOWERED TO INTERCEDE

The Spirit of God empowers a believer to intercede. In the Old Testament, the priests had the privilege of intercession as their ministry. They interceded for the twelve tribes of Israel. In the New Testament all believers are called as kings and priests. (1 Peter 2:9) Hence it is mandated to intercede for others: the church and those unsaved and unreached. With human understanding a believer cannot pray for all things that need to be asked for. There are numerous things around the world that should be interceded for. The Spirit of God helps believers to intercede, especially to send harvesters into His harvest. (Romans 8:26; Matthew 9:38)

8. EMPOWERED WITH GIFTS

The Holy Spirit provides the gifts for his children according to Paul. The gifts are given for the edification and growth of the Church. It is not given to individuals to become popular or rich. "For to one is given through the Spirit the

utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1 Corinthians 12:8-11) Some gifts are for reaching out to those who do not know Christ. When mighty things are manifest as a sign to non-believers may have an opportunity to know the Almighty True God. The spiritual gifts also minister to believers in counselling, advising, directing, and rebuking. The list of Gifts are not listed on a menu card for the believers to choose, but is bestowed upon the believers according to God's will. God knows the person, the context in which s/he will minister; accordingly, he provides the gift. For example, a bible translator is empowered by the Holy Spirit to learn a new language, write grammar of that language to translate the Scripture.

9. EMPOWERED WITH FRUIT

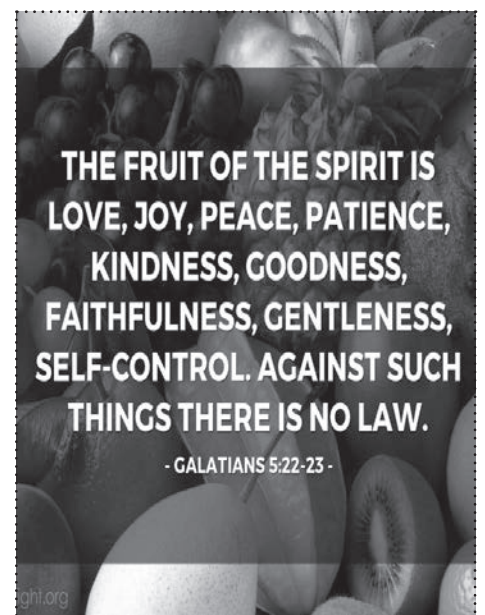
The blessed person is one who meditates the Word of God Day and night, is like a tree besides the streams. The tree is evergreen and provide fruit in its season. (Psalms 1:1-3) Fruit is not for tree to self-consumption but for others. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22,23) The Spirit of God builds individuals and community with the Fruit of the Spirit. The Fruit of Spirit is evidenced in all aspects of life. For example, Fruit of Spirit words would be: Loving words, joyful words, peaceful words, patient words, kind words, good words, faith words, gentle words, self-control words. It could be applied to relationships, leadership...etc.

10. EMPOWERED TO SERVE

The Holy Spirit empowers a person to serve. Serving the under privileged, poor, marginalized, sick, suffering... is not easy. With human strength it is impossible to serve among them. Missionary doctors like Paul Brand and Graham Staines, lived and worked among the lepers. Their compassion and love to serve the poor is extraordinary. After tsunami, there was a medical team that served surrounding the Nagapattinam area in 2005. The team was from USA. On the last day before their departure the city Rotary Club honoured them. The President of Rotary club said: "We have heard about love and compassion of Christ. These days, we saw in action. The doctors touched, knelt down to clean the wounds, bandage and spoke kindly with them. Which many local doctors refuse to do."

Challenge

The Holy Spirit enables, equips, and empowers the people of God so that they become useful instruments of God. Through them many come into His kingdom. ●





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UNIVERSAL BESTOWAL OF SALVATION AND HOLY SPIRIT

**DR. SHAIBU ABRAHAM**

Faculty, India Bible College
and Seminary, Kumbanad

Unlike the Old Testament model of salvation, the New Testament reveals a new paradigm for the salvation of the entire world. Salvation from God is now universally available to all people, regardless of their nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and languages (Rom. 10:12). In contrast, the Old Testament emphasizes that salvation was first offered to the Jews and then, through them, the redeeming grace was transferred to the Gentiles. The nation of Israel was chosen by God to be a special royal priestly class, supposed to be a light to the nations (Isa. 49:6), but they failed in their commission of being the herald of good news for all.

However, with the incarnation of God's Son and His ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection, a paradigm shift occurred in the mechanism of salvation. Now, salvation is offered directly to all nations and languages. Gentiles can become the new people of God (the new Israel) through faith in Christ. They are no longer strangers and aliens but citizens and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). Moreover, they have become worthy vessels to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that was eternally planned by God and revealed through the prophets of the Old Testament, especially in the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-29). The Acts of the Apostles narrates the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh."

Exclusivity of Salvation and Spirit in the Old Testament: In the Bible, God's plan of redemption of humanity was unfolded progressively, through patriarchs, the life of Israel and later through prophets and so on. In the OT, salvation frequently refers to being rescued from physical rather than spiritual trouble. The exodus event where the people of Israel delivered from slavery of Egyptians and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army (Exod. 14:1-23), can be termed as the best instance. Later stages, God repeatedly saved Israel from its enemies, through judges, kings and other leaders. In the psalms, we encounter individuals' prayers for salvation



from enemies that threaten their safety or life (Ps. 17:14; 18:3; 70:1-3; 71:1-4; 91:1-3). God did not save his people from physical danger as an end in itself; it was the necessary means for his plan to save them from their sins. However, these all events were mostly in relation to the nation of Israel. Seldom we find salvation provided to outsiders. Even though these are examples of national deliverance, they had a profound spiritual component as well. The OT clearly recognizes the need for salvation from sin (Ps. 39:8; 51:14; 120:2; Isa.52:13-53:12) but, it does not provide a final solution (Heb. 9:1-10:18).

Similarly, the Holy Spirit in the OT was given to specially chosen individuals to equip them for achieving great tasks and services; for instance, Jephthah (Jud.11: 29), Samson (Jud. 14:19 ff), Gideon etc. were endowed with power to accomplish God's work. Besides, Holy Spirit was provided to prophets

In the OT, salvation frequently refers to being rescued from physical rather than spiritual trouble. The exodus event where the people of Israel delivered from slavery of Egyptians and the destruction of Pharaoh and his army (Exod. 14:1-23), can be termed as the best instance.

such as Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah to proclaim God's counsel. The Spirit of God inspired prophets to "speak the word of the Lord," warn, exhorts and comfort the people; as the prophet Micah says, "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8). However, provision of the Spirit was not universally available in the Old Testament period.

Bestowal of Salvation and Holy Spirit to All: As we turn to the New Testament, the universality of salvation is a key theme, emphasizing that salvation is available to all people, regardless of their background, ethnicity, social status, or language. Besides, salvation is received only through Jesus



Christ, unlike salvation channelised through sacrifices and other practices. The New Testament presents the fundamental fact that God brings salvation in Jesus Christ which includes coming eschatological fullness of salvation. At the birth of Jesus, it was announced that he would save God's people from their sins and that he was the Saviour for all, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies, ultimately bestowing a fuller dimension of salvation through Christ. Luke reports, "But the angel said to them, '...I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord'" (Lk. 2:10-11).

Jesus began his public ministry with the preaching of salvation,

Jesus began his public ministry with the preaching of salvation, which also included the coming eschatological kingdom, the fullness of salvation; "Repent, for the kingdom of God/heaven is at hand!" Salvation was central to the message of Jesus, who was sent by the Father to "save the world" (Jn. 3:16-17).

which also included the coming eschatological kingdom, the fullness of salvation; "Repent, for the kingdom of God/heaven is at hand!" Salvation was central to the message of Jesus, who was sent by the Father to "save the world" (Jn. 3:16-17). The forgiveness of sin, and moral transformation, were decisive salvific events (e.g., Luke 5:17-32; 19:1-9). The gift of life and the promised relationship with the Father through Jesus are specific themes of salvation in the Gospels. In the same way, miracles of healing and particularly exorcism were also events of salvation, that demolished and destroyed satanic strong holds and his agents (Mat. 12: 28-29; Lk. 11:20-22). Jesus' suffering and death were decisive events in the process of salvation of humanity that achieved redemption of entire world, including the past and future generations. On the cross, Christ crushed head of the devil, disarmed the rulers



and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them (Col. 2:15), thus, breaking the chains of these powers on humanity. This means that no one is excluded from salvation, and all who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved (John 3:16). Furthermore, in the resurrection of Christ, victory over sin and death were achieved, and inaugurated the eschatological kingdom of God that has to come very soon with the return of Christ. Thus, salvation in its full extent including heavenly abode is guaranteed to all humanity. The New Testament underlines fundamental truth that God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). This emphasizes the inclusive nature of God's love and salvation, and the fact that salvation is not limited to a particular group or people.

The truth of the universality of salvation and the provision of the Spirit

In the event of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), it is not only that Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples of Jesus but the crowd that gathered in Jerusalem from more than fifteen languages, nationalities and ethnicities all over the world, heard the disciples speaking in their own languages the great deeds of God.

is fully realised in the Acts of the Apostles. Several examples of salvation being offered to all people, regardless of their background or social status are seen here. In the event of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), it is not only that Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples of Jesus but the crowd that gathered in Jerusalem from more than fifteen languages, nationalities and ethnicities all over the world, heard the disciples speaking in their own languages the great deeds of God. The Apostle Peter's sermon outlined the salvific plan for all nations and languages to all who call on the name of the Lord. It is mentioned that about three thousand people were added to the new movement.

However, the major emphasis of Peter's sermon in Acts 2 was the

provision of the gift of the Holy Spirit to all. Quoting Prophet Joel's prophecy, Peter explained that the events occurred there were the fulfilment of the prophecy of the pouring out of the Spirit in the "last days" (Acts 2:17a). Moreover, it is potentially universal - crossing all age, gender, and socio-economic boundaries - and is available from generation to generation (2:17b-18, 39). It is the pouring forth of the Spirit of prophecy (2:17b-18). He had also emphasised the fact that the gift of the Spirit was given to all through the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and his crucifixion and resurrection. After Jesus ascended to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to his followers, accompanied by extraordinary events and the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, which the crowd witnessed. He exhorted the crowd gathered there to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, promising that they too would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the church of Christ was formed and become the herald of salvation and Holy Spirit to all.

In Acts chapter 8, we encounter the story of the proclamation of the gospel to Samaritans, who were considered impure and untouchable by Jews, by evangelist Philip. The mission to Samaritans had been initiated by Jesus himself in his encounter with the Samaritan woman, as recorded in John 4. It is also mentioned that "many Samaritans from that city believed in him" (Jn. 4:39). Philip preached the good news of Jesus, exorcised demons, and performed physical healings (Acts 8:5-8). Later, the apostles

Peter and John from Jerusalem (Acts 8:14) prayed for the new believers and laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). The apostles also proclaimed the gospel to many villages of Samaria (Acts 8:25).

In the same chapter, we also find the episode of the salvation and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip, an event that was unimaginable to the first Jewish Christians. This event represents a paradigm shift in the history of salvation, pointing towards the inclusion of excluded categories of people in the Old Testament. The eunuch was an Ethiopian, a foreigner, and considered an untouchable and abomination to the Jewish community. However, through baptism, he became a member of the Christian community and was no longer excluded. This event not only demonstrates the inclusion of people from all categories, but also emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus as the sole criterion for being part of the community of God.

The conversion of Cornelius' household and the coming of the Spirit upon them serve as an epitome of salvation and the Spirit being offered to all, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or race (Acts 10:1-48). The Lord of all flesh took the initiative to bring salvation to Cornelius' household, even forcefully sending Peter to announce the good news of Jesus. Peter was weighed down by his adherence to Jewish ritual purity regulations and ethnic prejudice of Jewish nationalism. However, the Holy Spirit commanded him to go to Joppa with the men sent by Cornelius, paving the way for the outpouring of the Spirit upon Gentiles, just as it had been poured out upon the Jews.

The Cornelius event demonstrates the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation foretold by the prophets. It also confirms what was taught by Jesus: the good news of the kingdom is for all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). Until this point, many Jewish Christians believed

that salvation belonged to Jews only and they only could be followers of Jesus. To receive salvation, Gentiles needed to first become Jews through circumcision and follow Jewish customs. But the pouring out of the Spirit upon Cornelius and his household showed that God's grace was available to Gentiles without them having to become Jews first. Along with above mentioned theological implications, this event underlines the fundamental truth of Christianity: the equality of all believers in Christ.

It was never imagined by Jews that the Holy Spirit would come upon Gentiles, or Gentile would be part of the common-wealth of Israel. In fact, Jewish believers previously considered Gentiles as ritually "unclean." It is made obvious to Peter that "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (Act. 10:15). Now, God's grace is available to all people, and all believers regardless of their background, have equal access to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon both Jews and Gentiles alike, showing that there was no longer any division between them. Their baptism by the apostle Peter, beyond any doubt proved that all are welcomed into the community of believers. The apostle Paul too affirms this fact, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) further emphasized the universality of the gospel message, concluding that Gentiles do not need to follow Jewish customs in order to be saved, but are saved through faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit-filled Believers as Agents of Salvation and Holy Spirit to All: The New Testament unequivocally teaches that every believer needs to be filled with the Spirit, which is essential for effective Christian living. At the same time, it underlines the great importance of the power of the Holy Spirit for

mission. A major theological theme of the Acts is, the Holy Spirit is responsible for empowering and equipping believers to proclaim the message of salvation to the ends of the earth. One of the primary purposes of being filled with the Holy Spirit is to proclaim the message of salvation to a lost and dying world. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This verse confirms the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the empowerment for witnessing and sharing the message of salvation with others.

The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of mission (missio-spiritus), but also empowers believers for effective mission. The Spirit bestows his gifts (charismata) such as power of healing and exorcism, prophecy and other gifts for effective ministry. The charismata help missionaries to administer healing to the sick, cast out evil spirits,

carry out signs and wonders thus making them instruments of mission. The Acts narrates the story of the apostles being filled with the Spirit, carrying out extra-ordinary feats for the Lord around the world. It is worth mentioning the missionary journeys of Paul, which covered many nations, languages, races, and religious groups. Paul and his companions travelled thousands of kilometers to proclaim the good news to nations, performing various miracles to establish the gospel of Christ. As a result, many people became followers of Christ, and many churches were established. When they laid their hands on others, many were filled with the Spirit.

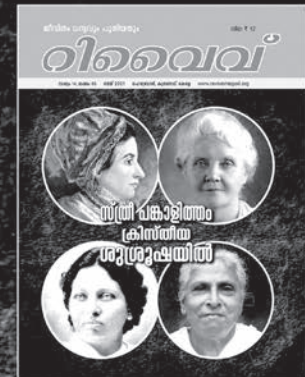
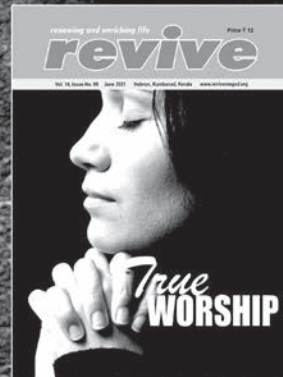
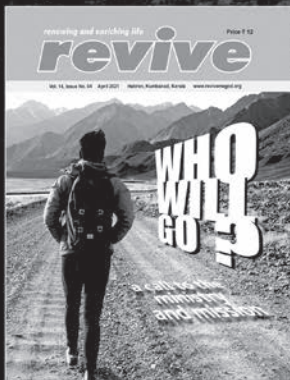
The powerful and fruitful missionary activities of the apostles serve as a sure model for us. They proclaimed the gospel, healed the sick, and performed miracles, thereby saving people of various nations, languages, cultures, and religions. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are empowered not

only to carry forward the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth but also facilitators of the reception of the Spirit to all. The Great Commission of our Lord clearly outlines the need to disciple all nations for Him.

As we conclude, the New Testament tells the story of salvation to all; the Holy Spirit is available to everyone who believe in Jesus. We are given with a commission to become carriers of the Gospel. Above all, we are empowered to lay hands on others and be instruments of the baptism of the Spirit. ●



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Grateful for the Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit



Rev. GIBSON JOY

Pastor, Counselor,
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There are many themes that run through the Bible, like a singular thread that one can follow to understand in a broader fashion the plans and purposes of God. There is no other theme that runs more strongly and steadily than the presence of God. Like a story, the Bible follows with God in the beginning creating and filling his creation with his presence, the loss of relationship and being cut off from his presence because of sin and the ultimate restoration of God's dwelling with humanity as in the beginning described in the last chapter of Revelation.

We see that this desire for God to be with His people and them with Him, that leads him to even pay the ultimate price to make a way for that to happen.

What does the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit tell me today that I am grateful for?

I am a Child of God

One of the most precious realities of having the presence of God in us is knowing that we are His children. We are not strangers, cut-off from Him. We are not alienated anymore because of sin. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us urges to go to God with the confidence of a child and call him "daddy" or "papa". Like Paul says:

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Galatians 4:6-7

I have a two-year-old in the house. And it warms my heart to call him dada. There was one day when we had this exchange for along time. I would say, "JJ" and he would reply "dada". And it was wonderful to savour that moment. I wonder if God too enjoys that when his children come and call him "Abba". Just like "dada"



in our culture, “Abba” would have been the first words out of a Jewish baby. And the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, invites us to exercise that kind of confidence before God. No longer held back by the shame of bondage, or the slavery to the law that continuously reveals our inadequacy. But His Spirit in us that makes us adequate as Children of God and co-heirs with Christ. What is our inheritance in Christ? I believe there is nothing more precious that one can receive than the presence of God himself. Our inheritance is to be with Him, to walk with Him, to be his Temple where he lives by His Spirit – And this is an eternal inheritance.

I belong to Him

Along with the joy of being a child of God is also this aspect of belongingness. Too many people nowadays walk about with an orphan mentality. Expecting to go through life on their own, developing their own ways to cope, to survive, and submitting to the ulti-

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Along with the joy of being a child of God is also this aspect of belongingness. Too many people nowadays walk about with an orphan mentality. Expecting to go through life on their own, developing their own ways to cope, to survive, and submitting to the ultimate meaninglessness that a life without God espouses.
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mate meaninglessness that a life without God espouses. Too many people struggle to fit in, going about life looking for a place where they will be accepted and belong. We seek out communities, groups where we can be part of. When it comes to God, it becomes difficult for us to even comprehend belonging to him. How could a God so holy choose people like us and further say that we belong to Him? At one point God called the people of Israel his *treasured possession*. Through Hosea he calls them the *apple of his eye*. In Ezekiel, God uses the language to marriage and betrothal to describe his relationship with Israel. Even the covenantal language used by God, “I am your God. You are my people”, communicates this element of God cherishing his people as his very own. “And



you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth ", Paul said, "the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13) The seal of the Holy Spirit described by Paul is the seal of ownership. That we are no longer our own. We belong to God. The evidence of our belonging to God is not some material possession, or a third-party declaration – it is his very own presence in us that he has given to guarantee that we belong to him and have a future with Him.

When one goes through life's ups and downs, anxieties and stresses, fears and uncertainties, rejection, frustration, and confusion – this is an important truth to savour - that through the cross, God made a way for His Holy Spirit to be in me,

When one believes in Christ, God puts his Spirit in them – to make them a new creation, to free them not only from the ultimate penalty of sin but also from the power of sin that made them slaves to its bidding. "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you."

showing me that I belong to Him forever. Nothing can separate me from His love. Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us. His Spirit is in us declaring that we are his children, we belong to Him. The Father looks on us with favour because of Jesus' sacrifice and the presence of the Holy Spirit in us counting us as co-heirs with Christ. There is nothing hindering us from declaring boldly with joy – "I belong to Him. He is with me. I am not abandoned. I am not alone. I am His and he is mine."

I have a future with God

Paul speaks on many occasions of the believer's inheritance in Christ (Rom 8:17; Eph 1:14; Col 1:12). This inheritance has not only to do with their present position in Christ but also their future destiny. Our destiny has been altered because of the cross. No longer are we looking forward to a future of condemnation, separation from God, or even destruction. But through his sac-



rifice on the cross, he has now opened a way for us to be reconciled and look forward to a future of harmonious relationship with God, made right by God himself. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of this inheritance. The down payment that God himself gave us so that while we go through this period of evil and injustice, we will remember that this is not our ultimate destiny. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, lives in us. Through His Spirit in us, he has made us partners of his divine nature continuing the work that he has finished on the cross. That death blow to sin and evil that he dealt on the cross. As his Church, through His Spirit, we begin to change and alter destinies even in the world we live in. Whether it is helping individuals, families, societies, in our workplace – we are constantly called upon through His Spirit to unleash his life, goodness, righteousness and healing upon the world we live in. We also know that through His Spirit, that same newness of life that he has

“
Our destiny has been altered because of the cross. No longer are we looking forward to a future of condemnation, separation from God, or even destruction. But through his sacrifice on the cross, he has now opened a way for us to be reconciled and look forward to a future of harmonious relationship with God, made right by God himself.
 ”

brought to us and that which he made us partners of, will be ultimately completed when he comes again and makes all things new.

Sin no longer has a hold on me

The selfishness and unbelief that sin is rooted in, is something that tends to plague us daily. We do echo the words of Paul on many occasions, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”. But may we today echo the rest of his words as well, “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 7:24) What was the reason for his kind of a triumphalist statement that Paul makes in the face of the seeming inescapability of a lifestyle of sin? There seems to be only one answer – the presence

of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. He explains that law helped to reveal sin but didn't help to overcome sin. Only in the power of the Spirit can one experience this death blow to sin.

When one believes in Christ, God puts his Spirit in them – to make them a new creation, to free them not only from the ultimate penalty of sin but also from the power of sin that made them slaves to its bidding. “You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.” Romans 8:9 The realm of the flesh as Paul describes it here was the realm in which we were living under the influence and power of our sinful nature and desires. But through the presence of His Spirit, we have been ushered into a new realm – the Spirit realm. Where it is the Spirit who influences our nature, minds, and lifestyle. Moving from indwelling sin to now having the indwelling Spirit, it now gives us the great reservoir of Spiritual power and insight to live the life that God has created us to live. Even amid our many failures, we can still count on the Holy Spirit working in us progressively, tearing away at the unrighteousness and making us righteous from the inside out. So everyday we can declare because of the presence of His Spirit, “I am free from sin. It no longer has a hold on me”.

I am destined to be like Him

What follows from a life free from sin is a life destined to be like Jesus. Too often the Christian life can seem like a drudgery if the only focus is on living a life free from sin. That is not the main goal. There is always a

How is the world going to see Jesus? Through the presence of His Spirit in us making us more like him. As the Church, his Spirit is at work making us mature so that we can reflect more fully the presence and power of Christ in the world.

life beyond turning away from sin. It is a life of turning towards Jesus. This destiny is two-fold.

Firstly, it is the ultimate destiny of experiencing a resurrection like Christ's when we die. This is the hope that we have because of His Spirit in us. Knowing this truth, leads us to understand that physical death here is not the end. But His Spirit will work in our bodies and renew us at the end, and we will live again. Paul describes Jesus's resurrection as the first fruit (Colossians 1:15-20). The first of many to follow. This is our destiny to be raised to life like Christ and live forever with Him.

Secondly, this destiny has to do with the life we live in the world. It not a passive life, living huddled and in fear of sin and the world. Through the presence of His Spirit in us, we are challenged to live no longer as slaves to sin but as Children of God (Rom 8:14-16). Like Keith Green once said, “We are called to be little Jesuses in the world we live in”. The church a hub of the Kingdom of God in the world we live in. All this is brought about by the presence of His Spirit.

This is God's plan both individually

–“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Romans 8:29 – and corporately - And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2:22 “...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13

How is the world going to see Jesus? Through the presence of His Spirit in us making us more like him. As the Church, his Spirit is at work making us mature so that we can reflect more fully the presence and power of Christ in the world. This is our destiny. To be active in the world as His Children, destined to be like Him.

These wonderful truths have been brought about by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. Gratitude is one way for us to enter and experience these truths not only as exciting rational truths but also a living reality in our lives more fully. Through faithful gratitude as we pick these truths and express our thanks and surrender to God, let us experience the power of the Spirit not only as a passive presence in our lives, but an active influence in everything we do as individuals and as the Church of God. ●





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