

# He Lives In You

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West Side Church of Christ  
Searcy, Arkansas  
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## Scripture Reading

*“As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:15-18).*

*“If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ lives in you, then God will raise your bodies from the dead by the Spirit that lives in you” (Rom 8:9-11).*

## ***SPIRIT IS PRESENCE, POWER, & PRODUCER***

We just did a series looking at the fruit the Spirit gives. Then, as sort of a transition piece, we looked at our need to be broken down before we are built up, so that God can till the soil from which the Spirit will produce his good fruit.

Tonight, we begin a short series on what it means to believe in and connect to the Spirit’s presence and power, in addition to his producing. And to show you I’m not picking these out of thin air, I want us to return to our familiar passage but see it in an unfamiliar translation. Galatians 5:22-23 in J. B. Phillips translation reads this way:

The Spirit however, produces in human life fruits such as these: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance and self-control—and no law exists against any of them. Those who belong to Christ have crucified their old nature with all that it loved and lusted for. If our lives are centered in the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit.

Did you notice all three of these “P’s” in this text?

Right there at the end we see PRESENCE: “our lives are centered in the Spirit” so they should be “guided by the Spirit.” Just before that we see POWER: “Those who belong to Christ have crucified their old nature with all that it loved and lusted for.” And right at the beginning we see the Spirit as PRODUCER: “The Spirit produces in human life

fruits such as these.” The prophets of old predicted that one day, God declares “I will recreate my people full of my power, and they’ll know I am in them, my presence will go before them, and dwell within them, changing them from the inside; and this will happen when I pour out my Spirit upon them. This will give them a new identity. It will produce a new way of thinking, living, being, and knowing.” We are talking about a total transformation. This sounds so amazing. I want this! Who has access to this? Are you ready for some great news? Every Christian you know.

Tonight, we focus on presence.<sup>1</sup>

### ***A PLUNGING IN GOD’S SPIRIT: THE PROPHETIC HOPE***

I’d like you to turn in your Bibles to Luke 3:15. “As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” That little phrase at the end can be translated a number of ways.

Some versions say “With the Holy Spirit”, others say “in” the Holy Spirit. Now hold that thought for a moment. And remember, John the Baptist says “the way to tell the difference between me and Jesus, between what I offer and what He offers, is that I do water stuff only. I baptize with water and I baptize in water; but you’ll recognize Jesus because he plunges people “with” or “in” God’s Holy presence, power, and productive Spirit.

The term “Holy Spirit” (both words together) only appears a few times in the Old Testament. It’s used only 1 time in the entire book of Psalms (51:11), and only two times in Isaiah (both in chapter 63:10-11). But the concept is there because the Spirit of God is the *presence* of God.

The presence of God is crucially important in the Old Testament. You didn’t take a step without God’s leading and presence. There was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night—that meant God is with you to lead you and guide you. When the ark of the covenant was carried into battle, it meant God is with you to fight your battles for you.

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<sup>1</sup> I am greatly indebted to Dr. Richard Oster of Harding School of Theology for much of the material in this sermon. His presented lectures for the Twickenham Church of Christ (in the late 90’s or early 00’s) as well as his comments in course lectures (01-03) formed the notes from which this sermon began.

On the top of the ark were angel wings touching: that represented the mercy seat where God sat; and this was supposed to stay in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and the Temple. So if you are looking for the concept of God’s presence, you will find a whole host of words: wind, breath, power, glory, presence, and spirit. And the the verbs are given, received, poured out, and plunged. The *concept* of God’s Holy Spirit being present when the Messiah comes abounds in the Old Testament especially Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel.

In Exodus 33-34, Moses wants God’s presence. Don’t leave us! Show us your face! Go with us! But God’s presence has to be muted. Mediated. Moses has to put a veil over his face, and God only showed his hind parts. It’s a partial presence to a partial people; but it’s still so powerful that Moses face shone like the sun!

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet says that the Spirit will rest upon the Messiah (who is the agent of God) (see Isaiah 11; 42:1-3). In Isaiah 32 (especially verses 15-16), Isaiah acknowledges that things are dreary for God’s people, but the Spirit will be poured out from heaven, and things will be more prosperous. Renewal would involve an experience of the presence of God. The Spirit would not only be upon the Messiah but would fall upon a group of people—God’s people (Isaiah 61:1-4). Although God’s people (Israel) experienced the presence of God partially (Isaiah 63:9-13), they longed for the day when they could experience God’s presence in a fuller sense. This longing and hope lies in the background of John the Baptist’s quote.

The book of Ezekiel concentrates on the Spirit of God in chapters 36 and 37. In these chapters, Ezekiel reflects on the wilderness wanderings, and how Moses was able to catch a “glimpse” of God, while Israel was able to partially enjoy God’s presence (see Exodus 33). Moses begs God’s presence to stay with the people since it is the only thing that separated Israel from all the nations around them (Exodus 33:12-16). Ezekiel agrees, claiming that you can’t be God’s people if you don’t have his presence among you (Ezekiel 36:25-28). So God says, “I will put my Spirit in you.” This is why John the Baptist told his audience to be patient. Without a plunging into God’s Holy Spirit, there is no re-grouped “people of God.” God promises that he will return and bring his presence with him. In Ezekiel 37, the promise is illustrated by a vision of wind or breath filling a valley of dry bones and causing dead bodies to live again. This is the imagery of God’s Spirit (same word for wind or breath) filling his people.

In the book of Joel, a similar story is told. While things look dreary, God promises “I will pour out my Spirit” (Joel 2:24-29). In Acts 2, Peter quotes this passage showing that God was not doing something totally new, but was keeping his promise to restore and refill his people. The “people of God” did not begin on Acts 2. God’s special group was formed in Genesis 12 when God promised Abraham that he was called because his

seed would be the people of God; eventually, “all the nations of the earth” would be blessed because of Abraham’s seed, a time when those of Israel who fail to accept the Messiah will be rooted out, and Gentiles who accept the Messiah would be “grafted in.” Acts 2, then, is the restoration of the people of God who believe Jesus is the Christ, so that the commission to Abraham in Genesis 12 can begin. God has always been interested in reaching and saving the Gentiles (Acts 1:8; Isaiah 49:6; Luke 4). The coming of God’s Spirit meant that the people of God were re-grouped and given power to fulfill the commission to save the whole world.

The New Testament Gospel of Luke makes clear that the Holy Spirit was not a new idea. The first two chapters of this gospel show characters that match the description given in Joel (young men and young women; old men and old women) and all of them have the Holy Spirit poured out on them. If you knew your Old Testament and were reading Luke for the first time, you would ask “why are all these unknown people filled with the Holy Spirit all of the sudden?” The answer is that we are at the threshold of the coming of the Messiah.

All of this background means that when John the Baptist made his statement, he was saying basically “If I am not doing Holy Spirit stuff, then I can’t be the Messiah.” We should listen carefully. To try to produce a form of Christianity without the Holy Spirit is not Christianity! The age-old promise is that followers of Jesus will have the Holy Spirit!

### ***ALL CHRISTIANS PLUNGED IN GOD’S SPIRIT: THE NT REALITY***

And that brings us back to this little narrative in Luke 3. “I baptize with water,” says John; but the Messiah—he will “plunge you in the Holy Spirit.” I know there is a viewpoint out there that says John is talking specifically to the apostles about some limited miraculous gift of some kind. But I want you to compare this language with the predictions of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel (that longed for all of God’s people having God’s spirit all the time, full of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, living and moving in the Spirit), and also with later other New Testament texts.

Look at the first two chapters of Acts. In Acts 1, Jesus calls the coming of God’s Spirit “the promise of the Father” (see Lk 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5; cf. 2:33, 39). He says “wait here for the promise of the Father” alluding to all these texts. In Acts 2, there is the sound of a rushing, mighty wind—an allusion to the Spirit language of Ezekiel. There appear tongues as of fire over their heads reminding us of the pillar of fire of the Old Testament. Peter says this is the pouring out talked of by Joel. When Peter reaches a crescendo in Acts 2:38, he promises that in the act of water baptism, in the plunging in

water, you will also receive God’s Holy Spirit. And he uses the language of “promise” again – a promise to all that afar off (alluding to the language of the prophets, the hope that all would have access to the presence of God).

The Spirit is the presence of God. The presence of the Spirit means the presence of God. Before we can talk about the power of God or the producing of God’s fruit in your life, we need to secure in our minds that God is ever present with us. And His Spirit is that security. But we still have to make sense of this “plunging” or “immersing” language connected with the Spirit.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12:13 and see what Paul tells the whole church of Corinth: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

You’ve probably already guessed the translation issue here. This phrase, just like in Luke 3, can mean “in, with, or by”. But however you translate it, it’s the same phrase in both places. Paul is telling us what John was telling the people. Do you know what Jesus brings with him to all of Jesus’ people? God’s presence, God’s power, God’s productive Spirit. And every one of us who was plunged into the water into obedience to Jesus was not only ‘given’ God’s Spirit—like a piece of pie that we hold in our hand, but we were plunged into God’s Spirit, and made to drink of that Spirit. I can’t help but notice some parallels here. First of all, this verse reminds us of how total transformation covers both the inward and the outward. All believers take the Lord’s Supper—reminding us as we fill our inward self with Jesus’ blood, and all believers have been immersed in the water that washed our outward selves. Supper goes inside you; baptism outside you. In the same way, the Spirit of Christ now has access to every part of you, and you have access to every part of Him.

This language of plunging or baptizing connecting water and spirit is all through the New Testament. It is not a coincidence that Nicodemus is told you must be born of “water and spirit” in John 3. It is not a coincidence that Paul tells Titus that God in his mercy saved us, not by works of righteousness we have done, but by “the washing of regeneration and the renewal of God’s Spirit.” It’s not a coincidence that “water and life” are connected in John 4 and John 7, so much so that “living water gushing forth from within the believer” is a symbol for God’s Spirit.

It seems clear to me that every Christian has God’s Spirit. It’s vital! In Ephesians 1:13, Paul says we are marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit. John says a very similar thing in 1 Jn 4:13: “This is how we know that we live in him, and he in us: He has given us of His Spirit.” Paul is most emphatic in Romans 8:9-11: “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ lives in you, then God will

raise your bodies from the dead by the Spirit that lives in you." If you read on through verse 14, it becomes clear that it is impossible to do Christianity without a plunging in God's Holy Spirit.

To be baptized in or by the spirit of God is to have the presence of God. To have the presence of God is to belong to the people of God. And to belong to the people of God is to be a saved follower of Jesus Christ.

All baptized believers are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in them.

### ***PRESENCE MEANS POWER FOR TRANSFORMATION***

What if we believed that every Christian has been totally immersed, totally plunged into the living active powerful Holy Spirit of God! With access to his presence, power, and the fruit of God's kingdom He produces. That would change a person, wouldn't it?

It sure does. You see, God has wanted to show his glory ever since he met Moses on the Holy Mount. And for Christians, the veil is removed. Isn't that what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3? Listen to this as we close:

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.