

Building... with the Spirit

1 Corinthians 12.4-11

Amington (Online)

Sunday 13 September 2020

Build, build, build (7)

Energy

A couple of weeks ago I had a little heater and a lamp here that weren't doing a lot – until I plugged them in. If an electrical item isn't working, the first thing we do, is make sure it's plugged in and switched on, so it gets the energy it needs.

But how do we 'get' the energy *we* need from God? How do access this Holy Spirit, this *wind, breath, energy* from God?

Ask

Well, there's a complicated ritual for it. You need special artefacts that have been blessed by a priest like me. It only works on one day a week – Sunday – and only in one place – a church building. You have to say exactly the right words, or nothing will happen. If you do all *that*, you will be given the Holy Spirit. Right?

Wrong! No! Receiving the Holy Spirit is the easiest thing in the world. Listen to these words of Jesus:

‘If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

Luke 11.13 (NIV)

All you have to do, is ask.

No special ritual. No special words. No special artefacts. No special building. No special person. No special day.

Simply, *ask*. ‘Father, please give me your Spirit.’

And then God will get out his counting glasses and his ledger, and start working out how much he can afford to give you. If you have a bit too much one week, he’ll give you a little less the next. Right?

Wrong! No! Jesus says, **‘how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit!’** This isn’t what you say about someone who is stingy! This is what you say about someone who is generous, who gives lavishly.

Simply, *ask*. ‘Father, please give me your Spirit.’

Fill

Pray that prayer once, and you'll be set up for life. It's like winning the lottery – once you hit the jackpot that's it, you don't need any more. Right?

Wrong! No! The Bible tells us to *go on being filled* with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5.18). Why? Because God is *never* going to run out, and he is *never* going to stop giving.

The Holy Spirit is not a scarce resource that's going to run out, like a precious metal. The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God, so when we ask God to 'go on filling us' with his Spirit, we are asking for *more* of his presence with us. We are asking to be *closer* to God. And that can't run out!

This prayer, asking God to give us his Spirit, isn't something we pray once, but something we should pray *every single day*. After all, you *breathe* every day. Don't you?

Overflowing

The best thing about the Holy Spirit is that it's one of those little pleasures in life that's all about *me*. It's about me and God. The Spirit is all about changing *me*. Right?

Wrong! No!

What happens if you take a glass and start filling it from a jug of water? After a while it gets half full, then three quarters full, then it gets full – and *then it starts overflowing*.

God doesn't want to give you his Spirit once. He doesn't want to give you his Spirit every day. He doesn't want to give you his Spirit and fill you to the brim.

God wants to give you his Spirit, every day, and fill you so you are overflowing with his Spirit and his presence. He wants to impact and change you, and through you, people and the world around you. Those of us in God's family are part of a big, grand vision for transforming the whole of creation.

What happens?

Sounds huge doesn't it? Scary? Daunting? Probably, yes. But all that bit, that's up to God. The big picture is his. Our part is to make sure we are open, that we have open hearts and open minds, open ready to receive the Spirit when we ask.

What will happen when you ask for the Spirit? To be honest, I don't know. Certainly nothing bad, and probably something new.

What's most common is that not a lot happens – at first. It can feel like praying into thin air. But asking for the Holy Spirit is one of the most powerful prayers you can pray. Because if you pray it every day, if you open yourself up to him working in your life, you will bear the fruit of a godly character, you will grow in faith, in acts of service, you may be given new gifts and talents, or those you already have may be enhanced. You will be closer to God, you will be made more like Jesus, you will start to see the world as he does.

The Holy Spirit brings all kinds of different things to us – much like electricity powers many different devices – but it's the same Spirit at work in all of us.

Word and Spirit

Last week I said that when we read the Bible a miracle happens: God speaks to us, through these words, by his Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, this is simply a big, heavy book. It isn't alive, it's several hundred very thin pieces of paper, printed with ink. But by the power of the Holy Spirit these words become living and active, powerful, dynamic, life-changing.

And that's what happens when he fills us too. The dead, dry, and dusty is filled with energy and power – we become alive.

*Before Jesus left his disciples **he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'** (John 20.22). Father, may you send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, upon us now. Give us the gift you promise to give. Fill us with your power, fill us with Jesus' life, fill us with your Holy Spirit. Help us join in building with you, building with Word and Spirit, becoming the people you are calling us to be. Amen.*