



Life Group Study Notes

“Covenant of Blessing: The Blessing”

May 1, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What kind of gifts make you happy?
- What is something you are looking forward to this year?
- What is something good that happened to you recently?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Apart from Jesus Christ we live in a state of sinfulness which bars us from the greatest blessings of God. In fact, we stand in a place of guilt that calls for our condemnation. This will take place upon death and at the resurrection which precipitates the final judgment of God toward humanity.

However, in Christ we are forgiven and reconciled to God. Because Jesus lived a sinless human life, he was qualified to pay the penalty for our sins. He suffered for our unrighteousness, so that we might receive the gift of his righteousness. The means by which we access this great gift of grace is through repentance and faith. In repentance we turn from sin toward God with a desire to honor and follow him. In faith we trust in what Christ has done for us and honor him as Lord of our lives.

Because we have been reconciled to God and given the blessing of righteousness, God has qualified us to receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Spirit we receive God's presence and power. His presence comes and dwells in us when we first turn to God through Christ. His power comes upon us when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians about the gift of God's Spirit and how important he is to us. He makes clear that Christ has redeemed us from judgment and made us righteous, so that we might receive the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 3:13-14 ESV Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us —for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

In Acts Luke records the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church. This was the empowerment of the early disciples.

Acts 2:1-4 ESV *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The purpose of this empowerment was to serve powerfully and effectively as witnesses to Jesus Christ. Jesus had spoken about this earlier.

- [Note: The experience of the tongues of fire was not repeated in subsequent fillings with the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts. This means that it should not be included as part of an authoritative teaching on being filled with God's Spirit. Likewise, we should not expect that every believer will have the same experiences when being empowered by God's Spirit. The primary significance of being filled with God's Spirit is empowerment to be effective witnesses. On the other hand, speaking in tongues does occur in several other accounts in Acts when people are initially being filled with the Spirit.]

Acts 1:4-8 ESV *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ...He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But 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 end of the earth."*

This same empowerment is available to all believers even to this day. Peter, who was filled with Spirit at the initial outpouring, was moved by the Spirit to preach to the crowd that had gathered. Consequently, many came to repentance and faith in Christ. Peter went on to proclaim God's promise to fill every follower of Christ with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38-39 ESV *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

This promise is for you. We all need to receive fresh fillings with God's Spirit for our own sake and for the sake of others whose lives we will impact.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- Have you ever been empowered by the Holy Spirit? If so, what happened? What were the results of being empowered?
- When was the last time you experienced being filled with God's Spirit? How did that impact you?
- How have other people been affected when you've been filled with the Holy Spirit?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God for a fresh outpouring of his Spirit upon our church.
- Ask God for a fresh empowering in our lives and in your own life.
- Ask God for increased boldness, wisdom, and effectiveness in being a witness to Jesus.