

T “Ours for the Asking” //

Luke 11:11–13, Hebrews 3:2 //

Rushing Wind, #4

Easter: week after next.

- Bunny theme (?)
- 82% of unchurched people said they would go to an Easter service if invited by a friend or neighbor (8 out of 10); they are 50% more likely to do it during the Easter season than any other time.

What I’m going to share with you today is something I’ve had to learn in my life over and over again.

- ~~It reminds me of a guy I heard about one time... walking down a street downtown and saw a sign that says, “Luxurious vacation cruise, only \$100. Bring cash” and then an address... “Do they serve lunch on this cruise?” It’s one thing to be ignorant; it’s another thing to be repetitively dumb.~~

I feel kind of like that with what I’m going to talk to you about today. I don’t know why I have such a hard time with it... the desperate need we have of the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15:5);

How willing God is to give it. In this series, we have looked at this verse a lot... I want it burned into your minds. Luke 11:11–13, “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; [12] or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- Notice the position Jesus puts us in, in this story. We’re like a child. And not like a teenage child—that gets drafted into

the Hunger Games and has to survive on their own; we’re like an adolescent or a toddler.

- My kids are at the age where if I don’t give them food, they don’t eat. In relation to spiritual power, that’s where we are. Absolutely desperate.
- But God, in this story, is the ever-watching, merciful Father, who loves to give if we just ask.

Tell you something I’ve learned: when you become aware of those two things: *your great need*, and *God’s great willingness*, you become a person of great prayer.

- A lot of you have a problem maintaining a disciplined prayer life, and a lot of times we talk about that as if it was a self-discipline problem. And yes, you need to work on your self-discipline. But prayerlessness at its core is a gospel problem. The reason you don’t pray is you are either **unaware** of your need or **unconvinced** of God’s willingness to help.
- When you really believe those two things, prayer becomes as instinctive and natural to you as breathing.
 - Nobody in here has to breathe out of self-discipline. Nobody in here was awake for like 3 hours and then said, “Whoa, I forgot to breathe today! I haven’t breathed all week!” Even the least disciplined of you breathes continually. Your body knows how badly it needs air and how plenteous it is.
- It is my frequent tendency toward pride and my unbelief that keeps me from breathing in the Holy Spirit.

Here’s what I want to explore with you this weekend: the connection between prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. I want to show you that He really is “ours for the asking.”

There’s a verse I want us to pray as a church:

“O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the

midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” Habakkuk 3:2

Three primary things I’m going to show you about that verse. (1) That every major spiritual awakening in the Bible was connected to intense times of prayer; then I’m going to show you (2) 5 things in the Bible that the Holy Spirit does when He comes, **which are things that only He can do**; then lastly (3) I’m going to give you a couple of examples of what this looks like in the Bible.

Some of what we say will apply to us as a church; and some will apply to in your area of ministry—in your family, your workplace.

I. The Connection between Prayer and the Power of the Holy Spirit

Every major spiritual awakening in the Bible is connected to an intense time of prayer

- In **Josh 24**, the renewal of the covenant, a spiritual high for Israel, begins by saying that they, as a congregation, “stood before God.” (24:1); In the book of **Judges**, Israel goes through these cycles where their hearts would grow cold and they would wander from God; God would punish them; then they would cry out to God and God would raise up a champion to deliver them. Desperate prayer always precedes God’s deliverance in power.
- The **dedication of the temple**, another high point for Israel, begins with this heart-rending prayer by Solomon, and God sends down fire from heaven and fills the altar with his glory. Solomon then tells the people that God has said to him, “Whenever my people wander and my blessing is removed, **2 Chronicles 7:14-15** *...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.*” When does God show up? When people pray.

- In **1 Kings** Israel was in a place where they were half-divided between worshipping God and worshipping Baal, and Elijah got on his knees and prayed that God would make Himself known to the people, and God sent down fire from heaven removed any doubt in the Israelites’ hearts. The renewal under **Nehemiah** happened as the people listened to the word of God, confessed their sins, and called out on God’s name.

New Testament: I showed you a few weeks ago that Luke goes out of His way to show that the Holy Spirit comes in answer to prayer:

“...and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, [22] and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove” Luke 3:21–22.

When the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, Luke makes sure to note where the church was and what they were doing: *“And these all with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.” Acts 1:14.* They prayed in this place for 10 days, and the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost.

Acts 4, they were dealing with pretty intense opposition. So, they got together to pray: *“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31*

Every major spiritual awakening in the Bible is connected to an intense time of prayer.

- It’s not hard to predict: one always goes with the other.
- The church that I grew up in scheduled revivals once a year. Revivals are not based on a calendar; they are based on conditions.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, *“The inevitable and constant preliminary to revival has always been a thirst for God, a thirst, a*

living thirst, for the knowledge of the living God, and a longing and a burning desire to see him acting, manifesting himself and his power, rising and scattering his enemies.”¹

“Our problem,” Lloyd-Jones said, “is getting to a place where we realize how absolutely impotent we are. At first,” he says, “we persist in thinking that we can set the situation right. We think if we just write a new book; preach some better sermons; start some new mission works; adopt a new program—this will stem the tide of the enemy. But we come to realize at long last that it’s not working... at least not effectively to stem the tide and save our children or our community...”

“And then we remember the promise, that when the enemy comes in like a flood, it is the Lord who will raise up a standard against him.

- Explain metaphor: Quote (from Isaiah 59:15) Standard means that the battle is going the other direction
- Think of the Christian’s experience like a battle, and the enemy floods in... we try and try and we win a battle here and there, but nothing repels the enemy

And so we throw ourselves upon the mercy of God. It’s not so much an organized prayer emphasis as it is an act of desperation. And then, and only then, does the power of the Holy Spirit come flooding upon us and into us.

“And he does in a moment, Lloyd-Jones says, “what incremental organization can hardly accomplish in half a century.”²

Are you at this place, yet? You realize that what you’re trying is not working: in your marriage; you’re your children?

Are we at that place? In our church; in our community? We don’t need better strategies and programs or better sermons. We don’t

need another scholar, another athlete who will be an outspoken Christian.

All those things are good. But you need something more.

What we need; what we hunger for; in our lives and in our church and in our ministries; is the mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God who accomplishes in people’s lives in a moment what otherwise takes a half-century.

II. 5 Things the Holy Spirit does when He’s present (that only He can do)

1. **He convicts** *“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” John 16:8-9*
 - The Holy Spirit makes eternal realities real.
 - He makes sin seem distasteful.
 - He makes Jesus and His righteousness seem beautiful.
 - He makes judgment seem imminent.
 - For years I would hear all of these appeals to come to Christ and they had virtually no effect on me. No appeal, no scare tactic really worked. I’d get scared or feel guilty, but it would fade away. When God finally opened my eyes, though, it was like I couldn’t come to Christ fast enough. Everything had changed. I’d been awakened out of sleep; out of a dream.
 - Imagine you are dreaming... house is on fire.
 - That’s the conviction of the Holy Spirit. That’s what happened to me. God became real. Judgment became real. Sin was stupid. Jesus was beautiful.
 - After you are saved. The sign of being filled with the Spirit is that sin seems distasteful; eternity seems close and Jesus seems beautiful. **John Piper** says that the sign of the fullness of the Spirit is quick and frequent conviction over sin.

¹ Collin Hansen, *A God-Sized Vision*, 15. From Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, 35.

² *Ibid.*, 14.

2. **He creates awe** Acts 2, the Holy Spirit fills the church and...
“And fear (awe) came upon every soul...” Acts 2:43
- On people inside and outside the church.
 - The Holy Spirit creates a sense of awe, fear, worship, before God. Before God’s Spirit comes there might be knowledge about doctrine, but then He comes and that knowledge is swallowed up in this sense of presence.
 - I learned something this week:
 - In the OT, you see this recurring phrase whenever people were awakened, “the fear of the Lord.” In the New Testament, you rarely see the phrase “the fear of the Lord,” which is odd, because it’s so important in the Old Testament. I mean, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs 1:7). The Lord keeps His covenant with those who “fear” Him.” (Psalm 103:17).
 - Old Testament scholar John Murray says that is because the phrase “fullness of the Spirit” is synonymous to the “fear of the Lord.” They are interchangeable.
 - Both refer to a profoundly spiritual encounter with the presence of God that goes way beyond simple intellectual beliefs or external religious observances. It has to do with a sense of awe in God’s presence. An awareness of His largeness; His glory.³
3. **He transforms appetites Phil 2:13**
- He gives people a heart, a taste, for the things of God.
“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Philippians 2:13
 - **Illustration:** Thai food. Durian. Cottage cheese (Keith: cottage cheese and buttermilk; I’d rather chew on navel lint. You can put cottage cheese in front of me and I’ll never choose it.) You can’t just “change your appetites.” Your taste buds have to change. When that happens, you

freely choose things you previously hated. (you could never make me eat Durian before. But when my tastes changed, I craved it!

- That’s what the Spirit of God does for people. He births in them a desire for God. ***A lot of people feel like Christianity is a “have to” religion.*** That shows they’ve never encountered the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God doesn’t just compel you to do what is right; He gives you a love for what is right so that you do it naturally. (I don’t have “have to” kiss my wife, eat a Ruth’s Chris steak or take a nap. I get to do all those things.)
 - Paul, in the book of Galatians, explains that the Spirit of God does in our hearts what the demands of the law never could. The law can tell you to do what is right, but only the Spirit can give you a love for what is right.
 - The Spirit gives you love, joy, peace, etc... which are things the law could command but not produce.
 - The way the Spirit does that is not by telling you a bunch of stuff you need to be doing, but opening your eyes to the glory of God and what He’s done!
 - We talk about repentance as a “change of mind about our sin,” as if we are primarily the ones changing our minds. GOD changes our minds; our tastes, so they change on their own.
- I pray for this for my kids.
 - Reading about John the Baptist: filled from his mother’s womb. That’s what I want for my kids.
 - I used to think exciting testimonies were cool: drugs: “I was a prostitute; about to kill someone and I heard a voice from heaven...” I would be jealous of those. I thought those were the best.
 - And then I had kids. I want my kids to have a nice, boring testimony. Here’s to a generation of kids at the Summit Church having nice, boring

³ John Murray, “The Fear of God” in *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics*. See also Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 73-74.

testimonies! That comes from the fullness of the HS.

4. **He manifests God's power (1 Cor 14:25)**

- In 1 Cor 14 Paul gives you a description of the Spirit-filled service. He says unbeliever comes into contact with the church and the Spirit of God is on the members and they are speaking supernatural words of insight and prophecy into him and *"...the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you."* **1 Corinthians 14:25**
- Does that happen to unbelievers here? It should.
- Moses, speaking with the people of Israel: *"For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?"* **Deuteronomy 4:7**. That's how other nations would know!
 - I'm talking about people coming into contact with you, with our church, and you having supernatural insight into their lives. Knowing just what to pray and what to say in a way they say, "Only God could know my heart like that." Or you pray for them, and God answers your prayers in a way that people say, "Wow. God was in that." They realize His presence is upon you.
- *We're going to talk more about this in a few weeks, but let me just say this...* I got my Ph.D. in theology and I have served for all of my ministry in a Southern Baptist church... **the Holy Spirit is despised in the religious Academy; He has been domesticated by the church.** But He is desperately needed. He is the only true source for awakening and our greatest asset in convincing a skeptical age of God's glory. NOTHING replaces Him.
- *Oh, how we need Him!*

5. **He empowers the church (Eph 4:10-13)**

- This is another thing we're going to talk about more in weeks to come, but Paul says in Ephesians that in the Holy Spirit God gives gifts to the church *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,"* **Ephesians 4:10-13.**
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to help one another really know God. In a Spirit-filled church, everywhere you turn you are being spoken to, and ministered to, by Jesus. You can't go anywhere without encountering the voice of Jesus. How would you like to always be in the presence of Jesus? To always have His voice of reassurance; His counsel; His guidance and help and mercy surrounding you? That's what happens in a Spirit-filled church!
- The Holy Spirit turns people into the eyes and ears and mouth and hands of Jesus.
 - If you spend any time around here you know that I am a big Tim Keller fan. It's gotten to a place that I have read him so much I plagiarize him accidentally. **Sometimes I have never even heard** him talk on a particular topic... That's what you do with Jesus. You are so in awe of him and have immersed yourself so much in Him that you just imitate Him.
 - *Plagiarism of Tim Keller is illegal; plagiarism of Jesus is spiritual maturity.*

Those are the 5 things. I want them all.

That life-giving presence, whether we're talking about in our church, your family or in your personal ministry, comes only through intense prayer.

My last section here is...

III. A Couple of Biblical Examples Showing how the Holy Spirit comes into the church

One from the New Testament; one from the Old (or, the Hebrew) Testament:

Acts 7:54–56, “Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But (Stephen), full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

- Do you think that last statement helps or hurt his cause with the angry people?
- Tim Keller says provides a pattern for being filled with the Spirit:
 - **Stephen lifts his eyes to heaven in prayer;**
 - **God gives Him a glimpse of Jesus’ glory** (*What did he see about Jesus?* There’s an odd detail. He saw Jesus standing. The reason that is odd is because every other place in the New Testament that talks about Jesus at the throne of God talks about Him sitting. But here He’s standing. What’s happening is that all the religious leaders are calling Stephen a heretic; but Jesus, the prince of theology, stands up on behalf of Stephen before God’s throne, and says to God, “He is mine... They call him a heretic and a fool; I call him mine.” Stephen gets a glimpse of Jesus’ standing for Him; Jesus’ glory; and suddenly the opposition against him doesn’t seem that significant. “If He is for me, then who are these people against me? If that is the treasure and glory He has prepared for me, then what is this light and momentary affliction?”)
 - **Then seeing that glory, he proclaims it!**
- There’s your pattern. As you pray, God opens your eyes to see His glory; that’s the fullness of the Spirit. You are

transformed; you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and then you proclaim Jesus with confidence in power.

- BTW, the next verse says there was a young man watching all of this, whose name was Saul. And it was this sermon, and Stephen’s testimony, that so impacted him that in just a short time he would become a believer, change his name to Paul, and the greatest missionary the world had ever known (Acts 7:58).
- I had this thought this week: one of the things I pray daily for our UPG’s is for Apostle Paul’s to raised up (**someone who was militantly against that becomes a culture’s greatest advocates**) And this week I had this thought: Maybe right now one of them is studying in one of our Universities or works in one of our hospitals or research labs and maybe, just maybe, one of our “Stephens” will have a chance to proclaim to them...
 - Stephen was a regular person, not an Apostle.
 - And notice this: Stephen testified in pain. *Paul was not converted through seeing Stephen delivered; he was converted through seeing Stephen full of the Holy Spirit testify to Jesus’ glory in the midst of pain.*
 - You see, maybe instead of just praying for deliverance, you should pray for the ability to see the glory of Jesus in your pain so that you can testify to Him in confidence in the power of the Spirit and bring one of the future Apostle Paul’s to faith.
 - Maybe God will allow you to go through pain or unfair persecution so that you can testify to Jesus in power.
 - And I don’t say that callously, I know your pain is real and I would not wish it on anyone, and God hurts with you in the pain... I’m just saying that God may be up to more than you even realize.

Exodus 33: God has declared His intention to take Israel up by His power into the Promised Land

- (vss. 5–6), Israel they rid themselves of their idols⁴
- (vs. 13) Moses asks God and to see His glory and experience His presence. Then Moses says to God, (vss. 15–16), *“If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. [16] For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” Exodus 33:15-16*
 - They repent of their idols and their sins;
 - Prayer to see God’s glory
 - God’s presence comes upon them so strongly that the rest of the nations see it and know that they belong to God.
- Matt Papa’s comment to me. Why do you ask? “The one time I experienced it, it felt like this.”
- The one time I experienced it, it was filled with repentance and prayer.
 - Campbell

Summit, I believe God has a revival coming to us. I feel it. I sense it. I want it. It will be characterized by 2 things:

- **Repentance:** What habits, what sins are you hiding?
 - Remember the story of Achan? Israel goes out to fight and loses because of the sin of one of their leaders?

⁴ Some commentators say that the taking off of ornaments was an act of contrition. Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 334. Others say it was indicative of their repentance from idolatry. *“Many scholars think that the taking off jewelry related in some specific way to idolatry. There seems to be a parallel in Genesis. When Jacob renewed the covenant at Bethel, he told everyone in his family to take off their jewelry, and then he buried it all in the ground, along with all their idols (35:2-4). By taking off their jewelry, they were rejecting their pagan idols and recommitting themselves to serve the one true God. The Israelites did the same thing at MT. Horeb. And they did it eagerly. God told them to ‘take off’ their ornaments, but the Bible says that they ‘stripped’ them off, indicating how ready they were to get right with God.”* Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Preaching the Word Commentary* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 1020-1021.

- **Not trying to send you on a personal witch-hunt, just to say that when God’s presence becomes real, sin becomes intolerable.**
 - Every great revival in history has been characterized by repentance. A great book I read recently called *A God-Sized Vision* that chronicles the great revivals of the 400 years says, *“The great revivals in China and Korea in the past century have been characterized by this. Awareness of God’s holiness impels believers under conviction of the Holy Spirit to seek Christ’s forgiveness. Sin’s horror becomes unbelievably evident.”*⁵
 - **Summit members:** are you grieving? Quenching the Holy Spirit. Don’t be Achan.
 -
- “But I do have things like Achan...”: There is forgiveness. Jesus was slain for your sin. You just embrace Him and His death for you.”
- **Prayer:** Where we finally realize that what we need is not a new program; better ministry; not even a new strategy; when the enemy comes in like a flood, we need God to raise up a standard against Him. And we cry out to God. We realize He hasn’t changed, and the one who prayed for God to forgive the ones crucifying Him is the same God we call upon today:
 - Jonathan Edwards, the key figure in the 1st Great Awakening in our country, said that at first a few sermons were preached; a few mission efforts were organized... *“(Then) God in so remarkable a manner took the work into His own hands, and did as much in a day or two that, under normal circumstances took the entire Christian community, using every means at*

⁵ Collin Hansen, *A God-Sized Vision*, 183.

their disposal, with the blessing of God, more than a year to accomplish.”⁶

I want to see that. Don't you all? I close with this story:

- ~~NYC 1857: Jeremiah Lanphier was hired to visit the local neighborhood and bring people to Christ. He became very discouraged and frustrated. When he was frustrated he turned to prayer, and really found himself experiencing the presence of God. One day He put out a sign and invited people to come in and pray — no preaching, no sermon: just praying. The first Wednesday, 6 people showed up. The second Wednesday, 20 people showed up. The third Wednesday, 40 people showed up, and somebody said “let's do this every day.” Two months later, the whole auditorium was filled with hundreds of people praying, every day at noon. So they started other prayer meetings at noon. Soon the entire downtown area — every theatre, every church — was filled with men and women praying. Reporters estimated up to 10,000 people were praying everyday in lower Manhattan. Churches began having evening services and people started coming and receiving Christ. In a 9 month period 50,000 people came to Christ at a time when the population of NYC was about 800,000. That would be like 100,000 people coming to Christ in RDU in 9 months. That's what I'm talking about. That is the presence of God coming near.~~⁷

Here's what we've figured out. Our growth rate for the past 10 years has averaged out to 34.5% a year. (We have grown by 34.5% every year since 2002: Between 2008 and 2009, we grew at **37%**; between 2009 and 2010 it was **36%**; between 2010 and 2011 it was **20%**; between 2011 and 2012, it has been 37%.

If we maintain that growth rate for the next 10 years, if we grow at the same rate the next 10 years we have in the first, by 2022 we

will have 111,401 people at the Summit Church. **Newsflash:** we can't sustain that growth. There is no auditorium, not enough campuses to contain that many people in one church. You are like, “What? Are you doubting God?” No. Hear me out. You know that means? To maintain even the same amount of growth we've had, we need to see God bring revival to other churches, too. We can't do this alone. We don't want God to bring revival just to us; we want to see Him bring revival to the Triangle. The focus is not on how big we get; the focus is on them knowing Christ.

You need to be awakened so that *they can*.

Here's our prayer: It's 2500 years old, from the prophet Habakkuk:

“O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” Habakkuk 3:2

Amen?

- “**Open our eyes** that we may see you, God.
- We don't want to just hear ‘**reports**’ about you, great things you did in the past; we want to experience you firsthand for ourselves.
- Let us **fear** you, God, so that we repent of all known sin and are very sensitive to your conviction and let us **burn** with passion for the glory of your name.
- **In your mercy** let us make it known to those who are lost all around us.
- Revive us **again!**”

⁶ Jonathan Edwards, quoted in Hansen, 179. I smoothed the language out for flow.

⁷ From a sermon Tim Keller preached on Exodus 34.