

Theme: To Receive the Holy Spirit.

Text: Acts 8:17b -- "...and they received the Holy Spirit."

Proposition: To receive the Holy Spirit it is necessary to have a simple, strong, sure faith in Christ, with that faith supported by prayer and given evidence of by a vital and active concern that others, too, share this faith.

Dates written: August 23-24, 1962.

Dates and places used:

Aug-26, 62 - Montrose, Colo.
July 11, 65 - Alamosa, Colo.

July 11

Theme: To receive the Holy Spirit

Text: John 14:17 - "...and they received the Holy Spirit."

Proposition: To receive the Holy

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Date written: August 23-24, 1907.

Places and places read:

St. Louis, Mo.
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Introduction:

1. The musical production "Peggy and Bess" has in it a song which primarily is composed of the words "It ain't necessarily so." We might well use that phrase to give our evaluation of what seems at first glance to be said in the Scripture we have read today.

2. In order to do this intelligently we need to recall the Scriptural story. It begins by telling that a man by the name of Simon, who lived in Samaria, had amazed the population there by his practice of magic. He claimed that he was a great man. Many people listened to him, were awed by his magic and his claims, and said that he had the power of greatness, as if from God himself. When Philip, a disciple of Jesus, came along preaching the good news about Christ and his kingdom many of these people believed him, and were baptised as a symbol of their beliefs. Even Simon believed and was baptised. After this Simon was continually impressed by the miracles and signs that took place under Philip's preaching.

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2. In order to do this intelligently we need to recall the biblical story. It begins by telling that a man by the name of Simon, who lived in Capernaum, had entered the population there by his practice of magic. He claimed that he was a great man. Many people listened to him, were awed by his magic and his claims, and said that he had the power of greatness, as it from God himself. When Philip, a disciple of Jesus, came along preaching the good news about Christ and his kingdom many of these people believed him, and were baffled as a symbol of their belief. Even Simon believed and was captivated. After this Simon was continually impressed by the miracles and signs that took place under Philip's preaching.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard of the conversions and baptisms in Samaria they sent Peter and John there. These two apostles prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit, then laid their hands on them, and the Holy Spirit did come upon them. Seeing this, Simon offered Peter and John money if they would show him how he might likewise have the power to bring down the Holy Spirit. Peter told him that money cannot buy such power; that one's heart must be right with God if he were to be able to do this; that Simon should repent of his wickedness and pray to God that he be forgiven his intent to make money from a great spiritual gift, and from his offer of money to Peter and John. Peter told Simon that he could see in him only bitterness and iniquity, or sin. Simon then asked Peter to pray that nothing like the punishment of bitterness and sin might come on him.

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This Scripture points out some things that are not necessarily so

or that hinder in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

1. Verses 14-25 of our Scripture read like a tour of confirmation by a modern Episcopal bishop, who alone can receive members into the churches of his diocese. The local minister, or priest, like Philip in the Scripture, preaches and teaches the gospel ~~the~~ thereby persuades and prepares persons to accept Christ; but only the bishop has the power to accept or confirm them as fit communicants of the church.

a. A similar concept seems to be in this Scripture, but it is certainly contrary to most of the New Testament. It even disagrees with most of the other evidence in Acts, where this story appears, on the matter of receiving the Holy Spirit. There is some, but actually very little, evidence in The New Testament to support the idea of the apostles at Jerusalem as an official governing body of the early church, who from their numbers sent envoys, or bishops, with authority to lay on hands and ~~confer~~ confer the Holy Spirit. In

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fact, the ~~bulk~~ bulk of the ~~ex~~ New Testament evidence is contrary to this concept. Our passage obviously does not tie up the reception of the Holy Spirit with baptism, which Philip already had done. It does seem to tie up the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands.

b. This must be a misconception which we sometimes read into the book. For instance, in Acts 9:17, it is recounted that Ananias, an ordinary Christian and disciple, laid hands on Paul, who then received the Holy Spirit. This obviously denies the need for a special agent through whom God sends the Spirit, be he apostle, bishop or minister. Further, In Acts 2:4 there is the account of the Holy Spirit ~~not~~ being poured out on the apostles at the first Pentecost with no human agent at all in view; and with no ceremony of laying on of hands. This passage ^{today} describes the receiving of the Holy Spirit which happened to come about when the condition of the hearts of the Samaritans was right. This coin-

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2. In our Scripture the extensive reference to Simon, the magician and false Messiah, points to another negative in this matter of the reception of the Holy Spirit: that money can not buy the Holy Spirit's entrance into life, nor can it secure special power to confer on others the Holy Spirit.

a. From references in Acts, and from evidence in ancient, early-christian writings, there seems to be little doubt that the Simon of our Scripture claimed to be the Messiah, the long-prophesied Savior, the Christ. Evidently in Samaria he instituted a movement that was destined to rival christianity. He was a thinker who included in his concepts a system by which God

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worked through various powers, which or who were the necessary mediators or go-betweens from God to man and from man to God. Simon claimed that he himself was the greatest of these mediating powers. He backed up this claim by feats of magic which greatly impressed people and won him many followers. We know this much about Simon not only from the Scripture but from such early christian historians as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. Justin Martyr indicates how successful Simon was in fooling people by telling a story that Simon went to Rome during the reign of the emperor Claudius. There, wrote Justin, the senate honored him "with a statue erected upon the Tiber between the two bridges, with the Latin inscription, Simoni Deo Sancti, 'To Simon the Holy God'" We have had this statement explained more recently by the discovery on an island in the Tiber, ~~εφξαν~~ ~~ακταρ~~ the name of which is "between the two bridges," an altar with the inscription Semoni Sanco Dei, in honor of the ancient Italian tribal god Semoni. Justin Martyr

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probably misinterpreted the purpose of the altar, but was accurate in knowing it was there. Anyway, one of the things that the personality of this Simon points out to the ages is that it is foolishness and vanity to suppose that God depends on any special individual or on their acts of magic, skill or power, to mediate and show himself and his truth to other human beings.

b. The special influence of Simon on history has been something else, the thing that we mentioned when we started out: that money cannot buy the presence of the Holy Spirit, or the power to bring the Holy Spirit to others. Simon seems to have been thinking that he might buy such power, or the information how to get it, and then charge royally for his use of it. Peter lambasted him strongly, and told him that unless he repented sincerely of this wish and thought he would forever be bound by the power of sin and would eventually perish. Evidently Simon listened to Peter, and was moved to repent,

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c. The word "simony" today is used to refer to the attempt to use money to buy or achieve special religious or spiritual ends and goals. Commonly, we think of simony as being the buying or selling of ecclesiastical position; such as of paying, either by cash or gifts, for special appointment to church office of some sort. Both professional full-time religious workers and voluntary lay workers can practice simony. Simony is a word which is associated in our thinking with words like hypocrisy, deception, selfishness. Simony is something to be despised; yet something we tend to practice too easily.

d. Simon gave to history the lesson that it is a great deception to think that you can buy God's special favor, to imagine that the Holy Spirit comes most on him who pays or gives the most.
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c. The word "simony" comes from the Greek word for money, which was used to refer to the attempt to use money to buy or achieve special religious or spiritual ends and goals. Commonly, we think of simony as being the buying or selling of ecclesiastical positions such as of paying, either by cash or gifts, for special appointment to church office of some sort. Being professional full-time religious workers and voluntary lay workers can practice simony. Simony is a word which is associated in our thinking with words like hypocrisy, deception, selfishness. Simony is something to be despised, yet something we tend to practice too easily.

d. Simon gave to history the lesson that it is a great deception to think that you can buy God's special favor, to imagine that the Holy Spirit comes down on him who pays or gives the most. (material in points 1 & 2 above based on or related to Matt. 27:1-10)

The Interpreter's Bible)

3. We see, then, that the total New Testament message on our subject shows that these things --the laying on of hands, special position within the church, special appointment by God, the use of money to achieve distinct closeness to God, ~~XXXX~~ -- are not necessary to, and have no special relationship to the reception of the Holy Spirit. What, then, are

II. The prerequisites to receiving the Holy Spirit.

1. The word "prerequisite" is familiar to most students, to many military personnel, and to many others. If you look through almost any college catalog, or study the description of some specialized military study, you usually find that list mentions certain prerequisites which are demanded before taking any specific course. This simply means, of course, that you have to be prepared by prior study or experience to enter the study involved. The prerequisites are the study courses and experiences which so qualify you.

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I. We see, then, that the total New Testament message on our subject shows that these things--the laying on of hands, special position within the church, special appointment by God, the use of money to activate distinct classes to God, etc.--are not necessary to, and have no special relationship to, the reception of the Holy Spirit. What, then, are

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2. Our Scripture suggests at least two prerequisites for receiving the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, these are not the presence of apostles or other special people, baptism or the laying on of hands, or the offering of money. The two prerequisites for receiving the Holy Spirit which this Scripture shows are (1) belief in the good news of the Kingdom of God through the name of Jesus Christ, and (2) prayer. The Samaritans first believed in the Kingdom as taught and demonstrated by Christ. They were then prayed for, and surely were praying themselves, that the Holy Spirit might come upon them.

3. Another factor was Philip, the preacher and teacher, the person, who told them about Jesus in the first place. The individual that Philip was and any office that he held were not the important things. What counted was that here was a person concerned to acquaint people with Christ and the Holy Spirit. This was the important aspect, too, of the apostles in Jerusalem and of Peter and John whom they sent --

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concern to share the things of God. Even at Pentecost the desire of each for the other as well as for himself was undoubtedly a factor, a prerequisite to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

4. What is this Holy Spirit about which we're talking so much? Many books have been written, many words spoken about it. For us, now, the Holy Spirit may be described as being within the mind and spirit of the individual an awareness and strong assurance of the presence, strength, help and love of God, It is this awareness and assurance which gives meaning and purpose to life, which are unknown without the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is so real and so wonderful that great joy, great peace, great certainty, are present within you when you receive and have it. The Holy Spirit is God universal and present within the individual life. The Holy Spirit diminishes fear of death and establishes eternity.

Conclusion:

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Conclusion

1. We have studied Acts 2:1-4.

From **this** passage we have been led to think about how the Holy Spirit can and cannot be received.

2. We have said that the offices of special leaders and church authorities, the performance of special acts and rites, and the use of money are all ineffectual and useless in the effort to receive the Holy Spirit.

3. By the Scripture we have been led to think of faith in Christ, of prayer, and of concern for others as prerequisites for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us.

4. We have reminded ourselves that the Holy Spirit is God himself, present in our hearts.

5. We conclude that to receive the Holy Spirit the necessary thing is a simple, strong, sure faith in Christ, which is supported by prayer and given evidence of by a vital concern that others, too, share this faith. Then ~~xxx~~ will the Holy Spirit naturally and powerfully descend upon us.

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the power of Thy Holy Spirit. We
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Descend upon our hearts today,
Holy Spirit, this we pray.

Amen.

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