



"The Freedom the Spirit Gives"

Sermon Series: "The Way of the Spirit"

Acts 19:1-22

Dr. Jim Bankhead

July 3, 2011

As everybody knows, this is July 4th weekend and it is the week that we celebrate our nation's freedom. Dr. Barnes has been leading us through the series in terms of "The Way of the Spirit" in the Book of Acts. My theme this morning, I'm going to need ya'll to help me this morning and so I'm going to ask you to read some scriptures with me and there is some other stuff I'm going to ask you do as well. If you don't want to do it, read.

Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. In this message, it comes from and grows out of that passage in Acts 19 and its title is "The Freedom the Spirit Gives."



I want us to have some fun this morning. Now some of you went to school and you swore you would never, never enter a school again. I'm not going to apologize to you, since this isn't going to last until about twelve o'clock, but you're in Dr. Bankhead's class this morning. Traditionally when I first entered the ministry, the preacher was technically a teaching elder and so this morning we are going to do interactive teaching that maybe you are not use to, but

you'll get over it. Okay, so I need you to help me.

I want to welcome you to the class and what I want us to do is first examine our familiarity with the Bible. I was praying about this message and I kept remembering that all of the studies that show people in churches, not just Presbyterians, across the country, know every little scripture. We'll have bits and pieces here and there, but in terms of the whole of scripture there is illiteracy in fact. In fact, there is a book by Peter Prothero, he is a professor of religion at Boston University. He started doing a basic questionnaire for his freshman that entered his class on religion in general and everybody flunked and some of you are going to flunk church this morning.

If you have any questions, please raise your hand and if I don't see you, particular those in the balcony or if I don't see you in the choir – just wait for me to stop then holler, "Jim" and I'll stop and I'll try to answer your question. We'll see how much freedom of the Spirit you have. I have several purposes for you this morning.

Once is to consider Paul's question in Acts 19. He shows up, Apollos has been ahead of him and has plowed the ground in Ephesus among some of these believers, these disciples. He shows up and I'm not sure why he asked the question, something must have prompted it, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believe?" There is no indication as to why he asked that question, he just asked it and they said, "We didn't even know there is a Holy Spirit." One of the things for us to consider that question. Then I want us to review the scriptures on the reality of the Holy Spirit on what he promises and does and the freedom he gives. Then my last purpose is to challenge with what Jesus says to do is be filled with or to receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, I've got to give you a little background on your teacher this morning. I usually don't refer to myself as Dr. Bankhead, but I thought I'd impress some people here this morning by doing that. I normally say my name is Jim. For forty-three years, I have sought to become familiar with the scriptures. This is after I graduated from seminary. I had bits and pieces, didn't know how it all fit together, I read books that said the scripture says this and I would look at the scriptures they quoted and yes, it says this. Then I would read another book that said the opposite thing and said this is what the scripture says and they would quote scripture and I said, "Yes, but how do you...?" So, I put all those books away and I wanted to become familiar with what scripture says so I can critique what these contrary books are saying.

Then I ran into the promises of God. I thought wow, if half of these promises are true and excitement and encouragement began welling up inside of me. Then I realized well, in scripture people had to do certain things to participate in His promises, so I started also researching scripture to see what Jim Bankhead has to do if these promises are going to be lived out and fulfilled in my life and experiences. Then I began discovering what the scripture said about the Holy Spirit. I came to a point where I asked, "Is the Holy Spirit real and how can you know?"

I grew up in a Presbyterian Church going every Sunday morning and night and every Wednesday night, and on Sunday mornings we always said the Apostles' Creed and there is this little phrase in there that says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." Actually, it says the Holy Ghost. That is all I knew about the Holy Spirit. I didn't know anything else about that, so I started researching scripture and the amazing things that the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

You are in my class and the first thing we are going to do is we've got a pop quiz. We're going to assess your familiarity with the Bible. I've tried to make this as simple as I can, so that most of you will feel like I haven't flunked church this morning, but Dr. Barnes will be back and he will encourage you all, okay.

How many books in the Bible?

Answer: 66 (in the protestant Bible)

If you grew up Catholic, you have more than 66 books. The protestant version of the Bible did not bring the Apocrypha forward, 2 Estradas and all these books.



What are the two main parts/sections of the Bible?

Answer: Old & New Testaments

What is the first book in the Bible?

Answer: Genesis

Genesis is a Hebrew word that literally means 'in the beginning.'

What is the last book in the Old Testament?

Answer: Malachi

It is a little prophecy book and it is also the one where you don't rob God of his tithes.

Name the four Gospels.

Answer: Matthew, Mark, Luke & John

The class didn't know the four titles. They thought Joan D'arc was Noah's wife. That is for real.

What book follows the four Gospels?

Answer: Acts

It is technically called the 'Acts of the Apostles.' Really it is the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' but through the Apostles working in them and those they trained and one of the things I would urge you to do is to read Acts for yourself, if you are not doing that and look for all the times and things it says about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit.

Who wrote the Book of Acts?

Answer: Luke

I used to think it was St. Luke, but it was Luke who was a physician.

What is the last book in the Bible?

Answer: Revelation

I didn't hear an 's' on the end of that by anybody. You all are really....there is no 's' on it. It is the Revelation.

Who wrote the Book of Revelation and where was he?

Answer: John of Patmos, he was in exile, most of them except one tradition says they were all executed in some horrible fashion.

According to the New Testament, what was Jesus' mission or main purpose?

Answer: I'm

going to say it this way, to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth. In fact, in the text that Betty read it says that Paul spent two years instructing them in the Kingdom of God. The overall structure that the New Testament talks about is the Kingdom or the Governing of God. He governs by His Word, His Spirit and His Body. So, we pray every Sunday, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." So everything Jesus is doing, Paul is doing and the Apostles are doing is to establish the Kingdom, the Governing of God in people's lives.

Who were the first four disciples?

Answer: Peter, Andrew, James & John

What was their profession?

Answer: Fishermen

It is actually two pairs of brothers and they were partners in the fishing industry on the Sea of Galilee and Jesus recruits businessmen to follow Him.

What was the first thing Jesus taught & trained them to hear and put into practice?

I say it that way, because I'm quoting something out of Matthew. "Come and follow me, I'll make you fishers of men." These sayings of mine in fact the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses this picture of two houses, one built on rock, the other built on sand. He compares the one

built with rock, “He who hears these sayings of mine and puts them into practice is like a man who built his house in the rock, the storms came and the house stood because it was founded upon the rock. The foundation was hearing these sayings of mine (in Matthew 5:6-7) and putting them into practice. Then He compares that with those you hear them, but don’t practice them with a house on sand and when the storms hit, the house collapses. I got hooked on that. I was in a stormy relationship and I wasn’t surviving and got hooked on, okay, I’ve got to have help and those sayings became the survival book for me. I wondered how to I practice this in this stormy relationship and it healed me first, drained off the poison that was in my heart because of the rejection in the relationship, fashioned a love in me for her and happily healed her and she has been my primary partner in Christ. A part of my calling in Christ and my burden, in fact I got an email from a friend from 20 years ago that said, “I think Jim only knows one Book of the Bible, Matthew,” because of the healing that occurred in my life and my marriage by practicing those sayings in a stormy relationship.

To whom did Jesus first appear when He was resurrected? Answer: Mary Magdalene and the other women. It is interesting, Jesus gives them the message about his resurrection – women to take it to the men and there are implications about that, that I won’t go into this morning.

How many people does the Book of Acts say were still following Jesus after He was rejected, arrested, tried and crucified? Answer: Acts 1:15 says, “a group numbering about one hundred and twenty.” Remember those huge crowds at the first of the Gospels, five thousand, three thousands, throngs enter Jerusalem. When the fires of rejection hit, everybody bales out except these 120 men and women.

What did Jesus promise His disciples they would receive after he ascended? Answer: Holy Spirit. In fact, multiple times in the Gospels, in great detail on John 14:16-17, Jesus talks about this Counselor, this Paraclete, this Comforter that’s coming and will not come unless I go away. He promises them that they would receive the Holy Spirit.



Now I want you to participate with me. **I want us to read together verses in Acts about the Holy Spirit.** Let’s read this question together.

“Did you receive the Spirit when you believed” i.e., when you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? (Acts 19:2) My interpretation is when they trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior and when you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Read again.

“John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 1:5) John the Baptist says that first about Jesus, before Jesus comes on the scene. Jesus says it

about Himself at the end of the Gospels and in Acts when He appears to them. He uses that and tells them they are going to be baptized, those followers, the 120, after He ascends.

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...!”

(Acts 1:8) Let me stop right there. I shared this with the 9:30 group. We can be urged, commanded, cajoled, guilted into being witnesses. I remember a student at SMU who had been won to Christ by a great student ministry and had started her out sharing her faith with others on the SMU campus. She won hundreds of her fellow students to Christ. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen in my life. She wasn't an outstanding speaker or anything like that, she just took that responsibility and ran with it. I year or two after she graduated, she came back to see me and she was absolutely burned out. She had, in my judgment, she had picked up the responsibility to witness and felt this burden and sense of guilt that she had to witness. So, she did it and with high return in terms of the affect on other people. This text says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..” and the result of the Holy Spirit at work is, “..you will be my witnesses.” We can witness in our own strength and power and we will burn out. We cannot sustain it. The scripture does not say, be a witness, be a witness, be a witness, be a witness. The scripture says to be filled with the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit and as we allow the Spirit to work inside of us that will come out of us. He will enable us to do it and not burn out in the process.

Read this with me.

“The Scriptures had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David...” (Acts 1:16) I'm going to come back to things from this.

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit & began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4) One of the things the Holy Spirit does is as we allow Him to work in us, He empowers and enables us to speak in situations we would not normally speak in.

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit... and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:17-18) Spirit poured out, they speak – male and female, servants and owners.

Let me extract from that things, this isn't everything, but just some of the things that the scripture says specifically that the Holy Spirit will do.

He will baptize you with His presence. (MT 3:11; MK 1:8; LK 3:16; JN 1:33; Acts 1:5) Now, I grew up in a Presbyterian church. Nobody ever gave a message on being baptized with the Holy Spirit. I was in seminary and I've been asked that question, is the Holy Spirit real and how in the world do you tell? I begin reading books, listening to tapes, listening to friends and some of those friends were charismatic and some of those were Pentecostal and worked very diligently everything I knew, seeking the Holy Spirit and eventually burned out, gave up and thought this is hopeless. I was sitting on the floor of a professor's office in Clinton, South Carolina. I had taken a year out of seminary and began researching all this for the first time in my life and something happened in the room that I didn't understand when it happened. It was as if presence filled up

the room. I'm sitting there and I'm analyzing. I know my emotions and I know I tamp them down and this was different from any emotion. There was this sensation, bodily sensation all over me and I began to think – I can analyze it. It went on I don't know how long, but remember thinking to myself, am I suppose to speak in tongues? I didn't. Is Jesus going to appear? He didn't. It went away. I had a friend who grew up in a Pentecostal church and I went I asked what was this. Well, being Pentecostal, baptism and the Spirit equals speaking in tongues, because I hadn't spoken in tongues, he didn't know what it was and for the longest time I didn't know what it was. Now if you grew up a Baptist, you are going to be immersed in this Spirit. It was an immersing sensation. If you grew up a Presbyterian, you would be sprinkled with the Spirit.

I am basically a skeptic. All of this comes out of my basic skepticism to say, “Lord, I want to see and experiencing it myself.” Now, that gets me in a lot of trouble. I had this professor friend, one of the most brilliant men I had ever met and he was beyond a skeptic from my skepticism and everything was at arm's length. I wasn't jumping into anything unless it was safe or real. So, I had preached a message in this little church on the power of the Holy Spirit using some of these texts. After the service, he walked out with a sort of quizzical look on his face. He called me the next Tuesday and said, “We've got to talk.” I said, oh, oh to myself. He is going to wear me out. We met on Thursday at a Burger King and he said, “I've got to tell you something. I was riding down the road and somebody put their hand on my shoulder as I was driving and it was this warm sensation all down my arm and I turned around and there was nobody there and it scared me so severely that I drove off the side of the road and had to stop because my heart was racing.” He asked me, “What was that?” I answered, “Because of the warmth I suspect that was the Holy Spirit.” He said, “Yeh, but it didn't fill up car and it didn't fill up the room.” I responded, “Yes, but you are just new at this and if it had, you'd probably of had a heart attack, it scared you enough to just be sprinkled or dipped.”

I have listened for people who have been touched by the Holy Spirit's presence and it is all over the map. Different things for different people and I can't put the Holy Spirit in a box and the way is like wind that blows and I can't control it and I can't make it happen.

I had a women one time in a worship service come up to me and say, “I had this warm sense of presence all over me and had nothing to do with you sermon.” (audience laughter) Why does everybody laugh at that? I knew what that was. I knew the Holy Spirit had anointed her apart from anything I was saying, because He had anointed me and other people. He will baptize you with His presence. He will teach and empower you to practice what Jesus says.

In the John passages, Jesus says, **“When the comfort of the Counselor, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit comes, he will bring to your memory all I've taught you.”** My experience is He brings it for situations that I need. I remember being first out of seminary and was terrified every Sunday to preach. I had read and it appealed to me, Joshua 1:9 and I was just eaten up with my fear and all of a sudden, in the middle of mind, “Have I not commanded you, be strong and of good courage. Be not frightened, neither be dismayed for I the Lord your God am with you wherever you go.” My fears started dissipating and going away. It would come to mind and there were other times that I have condemned myself and I've felt total failure and just these thoughts of condemnation

would come and all of a sudden in the center of my head, Romans 8:1 would come to mind. "There is therefore no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus." Forgive me Lord for condemning myself when you do not forgive me. Condemn me.

The Holy Spirit can speak a specific word to you that is personalized for you. I'm driving down the road yesterday. Some of you might think I'm crazy. I'm going down to do a premarital session with a couple that I'm going to perform their wedding ceremony this weekend. This church requires a fee be paid and they had mailed the fee and it is a very nice check and I'm riding down the road and I'm praying, Lord what do I need to do with this couple? I don't know them. I don't know why they've come to this church to be married? I don't know anything about them? What do I do? Tear up the check? Who me? It was a nice check. I just had a conversation with my wife about how we are going to these bills and it came back, tear up the check.

Now, I have to tell you, years ago I wanted it to be proven that this is the Holy Spirit speaking to me. So, prove it to me first and then I'll do it. I kept saying that and didn't get very far and I came to a conclusion one day, when those kind of words come to me, I want to learn to act on them, even if I make a fool of myself. So, the second time it came back I said okay. I showed up yesterday thought, why would He have me do that? They must be very poor and have come to this rather wealthy church and they probably need this money. I show up, no, they are not poor. Probably for me, because I've been sort of hungry for money here lately. Probably for me – to tear up this check. So, I showed up and I said I want you to go home and first thing I told them I'm going to tear this check up and if you want to do anything after that, that is fine, but this check is torn up.

The Holy Spirit can give a Word that you may resist. This text we read they resisted the message Paul was giving about Jesus and He can give a specific Word and it is usually going to be repeated to you a couple of times – that the Holy Spirit will not force you to do anything. It is always a decision on our part, whether we will do it. He infills and entire group that is praying and obeying Jesus. Do you realize that this group in Ephesus is twelve people who have been praying. The ground has been prepared because Apollos has been there and they have surrendered and submitted to the rule of God through the ministry of John the Baptist. They haven't heard anything about a Holy Spirit and it is twelve of them seeking more. So, Paul prays for them, lays his hands on them and all twelve are filled with the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, the whole congregation is praying together. They've already surrendered They've already been rejected and the Holy Spirit falls on the whole congregation. So, it happens for individuals. It happens for groups. He speaks to and through people. When the Holy Spirit comes, He enables people to speak when they would not normally speak. Sometimes He enables you to speak a language that you've never learned. Sometimes He enables you to speak a word of encouragement and you might not even know that it is the Holy Spirit giving you that Word to speak and you speak it to somebody and it is a healing word to them and an encouraging word to them and you had no idea. It just came to you and you spoke and it is the Holy Spirit who does it.

Read this with me.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1) You know the Old Testament, second book is The Exodus and it is God’s freeing work. God’s liberating work. His freeing work of people who are oppressed. One of the things that the Holy Spirit has taught me, He gives you His freedom and anything and everything that holds you captive. I’ve had friends who have had addictions and this isn’t always true, and one day something will happen and it will be lifted. They’ve gone through treatment programs many of them, but always falls back into it and it is just lifted. I’ve had a professor friend that was sexually addicted, alcoholic friends. That is not in every case, but sometimes it is just lifted by sovereign act of the Holy Spirit. My fears lifted off of me every time I have an opportunity like this my fears will begin to come up and I pray and it is lifted.

Several years ago, a young women, her husband brought her to me, and wanted me to help her. He was in ministry. It turned out over weeks and months that it came forth that she had been horribly abused by both her father and her brother as a child and the abuse was so severe that it split her personality. Today, we call it disassociating personality. She had these separate personalities inside that I had never encountered in my life. She was eaten up with horrible bitterness toward her abusers. She lost her marriage. She lost the children through the process. We tried everything and all I knew to do was point her to Jesus and to His Holy Spirit. Five or six years later I got an email, after I had moved to Texas and she said, “I need to tell you that I came to a place where I knew the Holy Spirit wanted me to forgive my dad and brother. I wanted you to know that I have been healed of my bitterness us them.” Anything and everything – it might not happen overnight. It might use human resources to cause it to happen. Might need a bump from somebody or circumstantial help. But the Holy Spirit will be the sovereign one.

I remember in my little church in Alabama when I first went there, it was the most oppressive situation I had ever been in and I knew God had called me to it. I was sitting in a tiny room one day and I was depressed, agitated and angry and I said, “Lord, it feels like I’m trapped here and I want freedom.” I remember thinking, okay Lord you called me here, you want to show me something in this confining, captive, oppressive situation that I don’t understand and I don’t know anything about. Show me what you want to show me.

It didn’t change my circumstances at all. In fact, it got worse. But about ever three years, as He changed and brought freedom inside of me, the circumstances got wider and wider. It took three years for it to occur and I began to see the pattern as I described it in my journal. I felt oppressed. I felt captured. I felt abused and was. He brought healing and freedom. It can be a job. It can be finances. It can be a marriage. It can be with children. It can be with parents. It can be with a denomination. It can be with a church. The Holy Spirit gives His freedom from anything and everything that holds you captive.

One of the things I had to do was I began to see all these things in scripture. I thought, well what did they have to do to receive the Spirit’s freedoms? I looked at the Gospels first. They were all

committed and trained to practice together what Jesus said for three plus years, under His oversight they were apprentices of Jesus and in the Gospels He adds greater and greater responsibility and resistance over those three plus years – trained to obey Jesus. At the end of those three plus years, they are tested by the fires of rejection of Jesus. In fact, I came to the conclusion that they were in despair, they were disoriented and disillusioned when Jesus was executed. They experienced the power of Jesus’ resurrection personally. It lifted them out of that disillusionment, despair and disorientation. They stuck together through the fire, continuing to obey scripture when there was all sorts of pressure to divide and run away. As Act 1 says, “They were praying together, asking, seeking, knocking for God’s guidance without Jesus’ presence.” They couldn’t ask Jesus what to do now.

They saw Jesus praying one time in Luke 11. Probably after the first year, year and a half of following Him and they asked him to teach them to pray. I want you to read what he says, this is just a part of Luke 11. Read this with me.

“So I say to you: ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9) It doesn’t say how long to ask. In fact, it is continuous present, imperative - ask and continue ask, seek and continue to seek, knock and continue to knock.

“For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Luke 11:10)

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake? Of if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?” (Luke 11-13)

“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 11:11-13)

Ask and continue to ask, seek and continue to seek and knock and continue to knock. How much will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. It is our responsibility to ask and continue to ask.

Read this with me.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1) He is writing this to a congregation who started off in the freedom of the Spirit and fell back in to legalism.



NOW, HOMEWORK:

Don’t you all remember this is Dr. Bankhead’s class.

--Seek with all your heart to open up to the Holy Spirit

--and to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16)

--as together we learn to live by “The way of the Spirit”!

For some of you, maybe this will motivate you to do what I did. Go through the Book of Acts on your own with a notepad and write down ever reference you can find to the Spirit or the Holy Spirit. You will be amazed at what you will discover and what the Spirit of God will do for you and in you.

Let's Have a Awesome Year in the Freedom the Spirit Gives!

So, let us have an awesome year in the freedom the Spirit gives – after we celebrate the freedom our nation has and some of you may want to pray with the elders after hour service.



Let us pray together.

Father, I thank you for the unique privilege that you by your Spirit opened for Cissy and me to come here. I thank you for this opportunity to share a little of what you have shown me in scripture about you and your Spirit. Lord continue to convince us of your reality and anoint us and dip some of us and sprinkle some of us and immerse some of us in your Holy Spirit as we seek the way of the Spirit together and all God's people said. Amen.