

# God's Holy Spirit: The Key to Good Mental Health

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Good afternoon everyone. It's nice to see everyone together again, and I'd also like to give a warm welcome for all those in DVD land, as I like to call it, those who will be watching this sermon on the DVD or on the website later.

Brethren, as I think we are all aware, the seven annual holy days that God gives us in the Bible basically lay out the major events in the plan of God. It gives us God's plan and basically for all of mankind, because He created mankind with the thought in mind of expanding His family. He created us in His image ultimately for the purpose of all of us having the opportunity to eventually be born into His family. As we see, the annual holy days lay out for us the whole plan of how this is going to happen.

As we talked about last time on the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the whole analogy of leaven, you might say, defines the problem for us. In other words, for us as carnal human beings, the real problem we have is sin. We have sin in our lives and in the whole world. The reason we are so easily leavened and so leavened in who we are is because of the very nature of who we are as human beings. We tend to have a very evil, destructive, wicked nature because of Satan's influence on us.

The Feast of Pentecost, that we are here to observe today, defines for us in many ways what you might say is the solution to the problem. Because to fix that problem, it's not something we are able to do on our own. This evil nature is not something that we can overcome within ourselves, because we don't have the raw materials to do that. We don't have anything to use in the battle to overcome that. But this holy day lays out for us the giving of God's holy spirit, at least one of the things that this day pictures. It really gives us the solution for this problem.

So what we're going to look at today is the original Pentecost and how this was fulfilled. Turn to the Book of Acts and let's start looking at this. We're going to start in Acts, chapter 1, and summarize a few verses that we will skip over. After Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead after His sacrifice, and He is presented before the Father, He spent forty days with His disciples working with them before He finally ascended to heaven to be gone. In those forty days, He gave them some instructions. As you know, what we are about to read here are some statements He made at the very end of that process, that forty days.

Just to try to get the context here, we know the way that we render Pentecost is basically fifty days from the wave sheaf offering. What the wave sheaf pictured was Jesus Christ, after being crucified, being resurrected, going up and being presented before the Father and accepted by Him. Pentecost is counted from that day, fifty days forward. That's how we arrive at the Day of Pentecost. I mentioned that because if Christ spends forty days with His disciples after He comes back down, before He finally

ascends into heaven; when He left it was approximately ten days prior to when Pentecost would be fulfilled. This is covered in the first couple verses of the Book of Acts, chapter 1, but I'm skipping over that.

Let's start now in Acts, chapter 1 and verse 4.

**Acts 1:4.** *And being assembled together with [them], He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;  
5) "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (NKJV)*

What He is referring to is Pentecost, it would be approximately ten days from when He is making this comment. That's why He is telling them to wait around for this.

What is interesting is if we look at the next couple of verses, notice what is on the apostles' minds based on the question that they asked and what's on Christ's mind. It shows us some very different perspectives of where they are coming from.

**Acts 1:6.** *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (NKJV)*

They're asking the age-old question that has been debated ever since this took place. "When is the end going to come? When is the date of Christ's return?" That was the primary thing on their minds.

If you think back through our own lifetimes and even through the history of the church since this happened, has that not been a major theme? Has that not been one of the main things again and again where people have set dates and predicted, "Here's the date it will happen?" It didn't turn out the way they expected, and have we not made that mistake in our time throughout church history?

There's one individual in Church of God circles today that has predicted this year that Christ was going to return today. This was the date of His return. Of course, this same individual said that Pentecost last year was going to be the day that Christ returns. So now we have two years in a row that it hasn't happened. The point I want to bring out is has that not been from a carnal human perspective, something that has been very much a focus for us? Of course, we look forward to the return of Christ and the fulfilling of these promises. We're supposed to, but often times our perspective is on solving our physical problems. We want Christ to return because that's going to make all my physical problems go away or save my skin. These guys were no different. They're kind of thinking with the same type of perspective.

But notice how Christ responds to this particular issue in verse 7.

**Acts 1:7.** *And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority." (NKJV)*

Essentially what Christ is saying to them is, "Guys, that information is on a need-to-know basis, and you don't need to know. That's not really important here." If we compare this with other comments that Christ made in the gospels to them, what He is saying here is, "This information is on such a need-to-know basis that I don't even know this information. It's only the Father that knows this. I don't know myself the exact date when I'm going to return."

Notice, He then turns to them with something much more important. In verse 8 He says:

**Acts 1:8.** *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (NKJV)*

He points them back to, "I'm not that concerned about exactly when I'm going to return, but here's the solution to your problem, because your real problem is that you are carnal, evil human beings. You have corrupt human nature and to solve that problem, you need the spirit of God. You need the very mind of God in you to be able to transform and change and enable you to have the opportunity to be born into this family. That's what is really important." Again, He's not saying that prophecy is not important. I'm not suggesting that, but I'm saying that His focus is much more about changing them than exactly when Christ is going to return. Think about it. If we're not molded into His image and developing His mind and His character, does it really matter exactly when He returns? That becomes irrelevant if we haven't gotten our act together, because we wind up in the wrong resurrection anyway, if you think that one through. So this becomes a lot more important than just exactly when He returns. Again, you can see that not a whole lot has changed in two thousand years if you look at where their perspective was versus His. Isn't that a similar pitfall that we fall into today?

Turn now to Acts, chapter 2. We can pick up with the story of Pentecost. Again, this is approximately ten days later from the time when He made that original comment.

**Acts 2:1.** *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (NKJV)*

If you notice, it's an interesting way that it states ... "*The Day of Pentecost had fully come.*" I'm just going to state this as opinion and speculation, because I did a little research in commentaries looking at that particular phrase as to why it was worded like that. I've never, at least in my studies, noticed a comment like that to any other holy day. What a lot of the commentaries said is that this is a reference to how Pentecost is rendered. Remember, this is the one holy day that we actually count to find out when it is. Every other holy day is ... on this day of this month you shall have a holy convocation. It's a set date on the calendar as you go through every year. Pentecost

you actually count as to when it is, and that's why the date varies. When it said, "*It is fully come,*" they were counting fifty and when the count was done, Pentecost had fully come. It seemed logical to me and there were a number of commentaries that indicated the same thing. Let's pick up in verse 2.

**Acts 2:2.** *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. (NKJV)*

I have to admit (or maybe confess) that I've read through this and thought there was a great wind blowing. That's not what it says. It said there was a sound like there was a great wind blowing. In other words, the sound that they heard, that was the best way they knew how to describe it. It was like a strong wind that was blowing.

If we look at another comment that Christ made earlier in His physical life, there is an interesting parallel that takes place. If you have a ribbon, put it in Acts 2, because we're going to come back to this in a moment. Turn with me to John, chapter 20 and we will look at an interesting comment that Christ made to the apostles that I think ties into this sound effect that they heard. John, chapter 20 and let's start reading in verse 22.

**John 20:22.** *And when He had said this, He breathed on [them], and said to them, "Receive the holy spirit." (NKJV)*

When you think about this, when He made this comment it says that He breathed on them. It was like He blew on them and said, "Receive the holy spirit." So when they actually receive the holy spirit, what do they hear? It sounds like a big wind. It's almost like He is fulfilling this. It's like God is blowing upon them in terms of the sound effect that they heard.

Turn back to Acts, chapter 2 and we will pick up in verse 3.

**Acts 2:3.** *Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and [one] sat upon each of them.*

4) *And they were all filled with the holy spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.*

5) *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout man, from every nation under heaven.*

6) *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.*

7) *Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"*

8) *"And how [is it that] we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"*

9) *"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*

10) *"Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,*

11) *“Cretans and Arabs – we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”*

12) *So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”*

13) *Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.” (NKJV)*

Now as you can imagine, this is an incredible scene that is playing out here. They hear this sound of a mighty wind, and now they're seeing tongues that look like fire dancing around. Speaking in tongues is taking place. They're all sitting there saying, "How is it that we all hear in our own language, and we know the guy speaking couldn't know all these languages? How is this possible?" As you can imagine, the scene that played out here, I'm willing to bet that none of us have ever been to services on a holy day and had an experience even close to this. I know I certainly haven't. I've been in the church all my life and I've never seen anything like this. I've never even heard anyone claim to have experienced an event like this. You can see that God really gets everyone's attention performing a number of miracles. It's incredible how He gets their attention.

As I mentioned, I've never heard anyone claim an event like this, but there is a statement I've heard a number of times, and we're going to examine the logic of it. A number of times throughout my life I've heard the comment, not just looking at this story or other miracles that took place in the Book of Acts, but the comment goes something like this: "Wouldn't it be great if we could have the faith today that they had back in the early first century church? Maybe then we could have all these miracles too. Wouldn't that be incredible! If we could just have the faith they had back then. We could see things like they saw in the New Testament Church or the miracles they saw in the Old Testament."

Let me ask you a question. I understand where people are coming from in making that statement. I've heard it many times. Is that reasonable logic in making that statement? Yes, there are times when the Bible does comment about having the faith for God to intervene in our lives, but is that really an issue that if we had the faith today, we would be seeing these types of miracles? Is that really the primary issue as to why we've never experienced something like this versus why they have? Well, let me ask you a question. Which requires more faith, to believe in God when you've experienced a lot of incredible miracles like this, or to believe in God and to trust in Him when you haven't? There is a common Biblical example that we are probably all familiar with and it addresses this particular question. Turn to John, chapter 20 and verse 24.

**John 20:24.** *Now Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.*

25) *The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (NKJV)*

In other words, "I'm requiring some hands-on tangible evidence or I'm not going to believe this."

**John 20:26.** *And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"*

27) *Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand [here], and put [it] into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."*

28) *And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (NKVJ)*

In other words, when Christ provided him with the physical and tangible evidence he wanted, Thomas says, "Now I believe the story. This is Christ; He's really come back to life." Notice the next verse and how Christ comments.

**John 20:29.** *Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed [are] those who have not seen and [yet] have believed." (NKJV)*

Christ is saying it's a greater act of faith for those who have not seen and believed the claims. In fact, if we look at the very definition of "faith," isn't it defined as *not seeing and believing?*

Let's turn to Hebrews, chapter 11 and verse 1.

**Hebrews 11:1.** *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (NKVJ)*

In other words, the very definition of faith, the way this whole concept is defined is when you haven't seen the tangible physical evidence and yet you believe.

So you can see that this idea of, "Well, if we just had the faith that they had, we would see all the miracles that they had." That's not really valid logic, because that's not the way it works. In fact, what we're going to see is in many cases, the reason these miracles happened was for the exact opposite reason. It wasn't because they had so much faith. Frankly it was the exact opposite.

Let's go back to Exodus, chapter 4. We're going to see an example that illustrates this very idea. We will break into context here, so I'm going to summarize what has led up to this point. I'm sure we're all familiar with the story of the burning bush. Moses is walking around and he sees a bush that is on fire and it catches his attention and he goes to check it out. It turns out that God is in the bush. That was God's way of getting his attention. Then God explains to Moses, "Moses, I have a job for you." He is basically drafting Moses; "I've got a job for you and here's what I want you to do." He's explaining to him that He is going to use him to lead Israel out of Egypt, out of captivity and into the promised land. Then Moses poses a question to him. He says, "No, wait a

minute Lord, so I go to the people and I tell them that You appeared to me and You told me to do this job and You've sent me to do this. Why are they going to believe me? How do they know I'm not just a crackpot who's drunk and making wild claims?" That's kind of what they were saying in Acts, chapter 2. "Well, these guys are just drunk; that's what the issue is. There's no miracle here. It's just a bunch of drunken guys up here claiming things." Well, Moses is basically posing that same question. "So I come to them and I tell them that you've sent me on this job. Why is anybody going to believe that? Why are they going to take that for real?" Here's how God answers that question.

**Exodus 4:1.** *Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"* (NKJV)

In other words, "I don't believe you, Moses. You're just making this stuff up."

**Exodus 4:2.** *So the Lord said to him, "What is in your hand?" He said, "A rod." 3) And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take [it] by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5) "that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."* (NKJV)

In other words, "These miracles are proof that you are for real, that the claims that you're making are valid." That's the point He is getting across. Continue on in verse 6.

**Exodus 4:6.** *Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand [was] leprous, like snow. 7) And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his [other] flesh. 8) "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. 9) "And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour [it] on the dry [land]. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry [land]."* (NKJV)

He gave these three different miracles, not for the purpose of, "Hey, Moses, these people have so much faith I'm going to bless them with miracles and you go show them all of this." No, it was the exact opposite. It was, "They're not going to believe anything I'm claiming, and this is basically going to be proof that God is backing me up."

If you think about that, and I'll look at this a bit humorously; I'll put it like this: Narcissistic personality disorder is not just a twenty-first century concept. If you look at just the greater Church of God today, we have a lot of people who like to claim titles to

themselves, do we not? We've got a number of apostles, we've got prophets and we've got way more than two witnesses who claim to be such. We've got people that claim all manner of titles to themselves.

Human nature or narcissistic personality disorder, as we call it today, is not just a twenty-first century concept. Human nature has existed throughout the history of mankind, so basically God had to have a way in showing these individuals that were coming in His name that they are for real. They're not some guy with a big ego making boisterous claims. God had to have a way with Moses showing up to be able to prove that God really appeared to him, that he is really doing this and he's not just a guy on an ego trip making big claims and trying to get a name for himself. That's why you see these huge miracles that are taking place, even if you just look at the major miracles that took place with the plagues of Egypt. The guy parted the Red Sea, and of course, God did this through him. When you're leading all these people and the Red Sea parts; "Okay, I think he's for real! I've never seen that before in all my life! The ocean parts!" So you realize then that God is really backing him up. How else could he pull this off? This has got to be legitimate. That's basically how this was happening.

If you think about this, today we have the Bible. Today we have the coded word of God and basically this is our instruction book and it trumps everything and everyone. The reason I mention that is, today the evidence of credibility is don't believe me, believe the Bible. In other words, you can take this book and you can compare what a person teaches, how they live and how they act. If it matches, you've got something. If it doesn't match, we've got a problem because this is the source.

Moses is the first writer of the Bible. He wrote the first five books. It doesn't make any sense for Moses to say, "Don't believe me; believe the Bible." They say, "What Bible are you talking about, Moses? Oh, you mean that book that you've started writing? Okay, it proves something because you teach inconsistent with your own writings? What does that prove for me? Maybe it proves you're not a hypocrite, but other than that, what does it do?" It's not evidence of much. We have to understand that when you're looking at all these miracles that take place from the prophets and the apostles in the New Testament, these guys were writing this book. It doesn't make sense for them to say, "Don't believe me; believe the Bible." "That book that you're composing for yourself? That doesn't prove anything for me."

That's why you see so many of these miracles. Don't think of it as evidence of, "Oh, they had so much incredible faith. That's why they saw all these miracles." Quite frankly, it was somewhat the opposite. It was to be able to prove that all of this was legitimate. If we look in 2 Corinthians, we see Paul explains this as well, not only applicable to the prophets in the Old Testament, but applicable to the apostles, because these were the guys who composed the New Testament. Turn to 2 Corinthians 12:12.

***2 Corinthians 12:12.*** Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. (NKJV)



If you read through the book of Acts, you'll see numerous examples of this. It even makes blanket statements saying, "And the apostles performed many signs, wonders and mighty deeds." You'll see examples of them resurrecting people from the dead. They were not just anointing people and having them be healed, they are saying, "Stand up and walk," and the people are standing and walking. Peter tells Ananias and Sapphira, "You're going to drop dead," and they dropped dead there in front of him. Paul tells a guy, "You're going to lose your sight." He loses his sight. These various things have all happened, because, does it make sense for Paul to say, "Don't believe me; believe your Bible?" He wrote the majority of the New Testament. Okay, so it proves something that you preach in accordance with the letters that you wrote yourself? That doesn't really prove anything. Even as the New Testament mentions, there were times in the first century that they dealt with people who claimed to be apostles that were not. This is how God basically had to separate those who were legitimate and those who weren't.

Again if we look back at all these miracles, don't think of it in terms that it was because they had so much faith. No, it was because the measure of credibility today which is, "Don't believe me; believe your Bible," really doesn't work for those who were writing the book. They're bringing direct revelation from God, so God has to have a means to be able to prove who is legitimate and who just has narcissistic personality disorder and likes to claim a lot of titles to themselves and are trying to make a name for themselves.

With that in mind, turn to Acts, chapter 2. Apply what we just read to the scene that we read earlier in Acts 2. Notice that God starts off this holy day by getting everyone's attention performing a number of miracles. They hear this sound of a mighty wind. They see tongues like fire dancing around and they have speaking in tongues. Well think about this, the holy spirit is about to be given on this day. This is a totally new concept for them. There were a few people in the Old Testament that had God's spirit, but that was a very small number. What is happening on this day is that they're going to be told that the very mind, essence and nature of God can be implanted in them as carnal, physical human beings and can live in them and give them the opportunity to obtain salvation and be born into God's family. That's an incredible claim.

How do you validate this is real, that this isn't just a bunch of drunken guys, as they were saying, making stuff up? This is a legitimate thing that God has asked them to come and to teach. Well, He gets everyone's attention performing all these miracles and you say, "Okay, this isn't just a guy with an ego problem because how did he pull this off?" You realize that God has got to be backing this up. That's why He performs all of the miracles. Again, think about the claims that he is making. They are saying, "The very essence and nature of God, His very spirit is going to be put into human beings." How do you back that up and prove that it's legitimate? This is how He did it. Let's pick up in verse 14.

**Acts 2:14.** *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words,*

15) *“For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is [only] the third hour of the day.” (NKJV)*

He’s saying, “Look, these are real miracles that are taking place here. You’re not just dealing with drunken guys.”

**Acts 2:16.** *“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: (NKVJ)*

In other words He’s saying, “This event has been prophesied about and this is being fulfilled in front of you”.

**Acts 2:17.** *‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

18) *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.*

19) *I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

20) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*

21) *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (NKJV)*

If we look back at everything that Joel said here, you might say that this is just a type fulfillment of this coming to pass. Notice he mentions that God’s spirit is poured out on all flesh. Did it get poured out on all flesh at this point? No, it’s been poured out to a select few, and then later in God’s plan when everyone is brought back in the second resurrection, then it will be poured on all flesh and everyone else who lived through all this time does get to receive His holy spirit. They didn’t at this time. What I’m saying is that this was only a partial fulfillment of everything Joel was saying. Pick up in verse 22.

**Acts 2:22.** *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—” (NKVJ)*

Notice again, this ties into the concept we’ve already covered. How was Jesus Christ attested to them? They witnessed all these miracles. Think about what Christ said from the perspective of the audience, those hearing Him say this. This guy is claiming that He is the God of the Old Testament, that He is the one who actually created man, and created the physical universe. He made Adam and Eve and He spoke the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai to Moses. He’s the one who interacted with Abraham. He brought the flood in Noah’s time and had him build the ark. He’s the one who did all of this and now He is born into a human being and I’m looking at Him. I saw him grow up as a child into adulthood. That’s an incredible claim; is it not? How do you validate that? Again, we’re not just dealing with narcissistic personality disorder here. This guy is for real. He really is the Messiah. He walks on water, he turns water into wine, he

can take a few fish and a few loaves and feed thousands of people, He can command the wind and the seas and they obey Him. Lazarus had been dead long enough that he was starting to stink, and He brought him back to life. I think this guy is for real! How did He pull all of this off? Again, He was attested to them through all these miracles. That's when they saw all of this. There's got to be something to this man and the claims that He is making, because how does He make all of this happen if God is not backing Him up? Let's pick up now in verse 23.

**Acts 2:23.** *“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*  
24) *“whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*  
25) *“For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.*  
26) *Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.*  
27) *For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*  
28) *You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’*  
29) *“Men [and] brethren, let [me] speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. (NKJV)*

This is just a side note, but what he is saying is that David didn't go to heaven when he died. David is described as a man after God's own heart. He is one of the major heroes of the Bible, but he is in his grave awaiting the resurrection. He didn't ascend to heaven when he died. Let's pick up in verse 30.

**Acts 2:30.** *“Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,”*  
31) *“he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.*  
32) *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.*  
33) *“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.” (NKJV)*

What's happening here and all these miracles that you see is that the holy spirit is being poured out and physical human beings are receiving this. This is what you're witnessing.

**Acts 2:34.** *“For David did not ascent into the heavens ...” (NKVJ)*

Now notice here again, we have the man after God's own heart, one of the major heroes of the Old Testament. When he died he didn't ascend into heaven. He is in his grave and he is awaiting the first resurrection.

*34b) ... but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,*

*35) Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"*

*36) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

*37) Now when they heard [this], they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?" (NKVJ)*

In other words, they realized that there was a problem. They realized, "How do we solve this problem within ourselves?" In verse 38, he gives the answer.

**Acts 2:38.** *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (NKVJ)*

As I mentioned, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in terms of the analogy of leaven and how that affects us, you might say it defines for us the problem. In other words, it is sin. We are innately wracked with it. Our whole environment tends to infect us with it and we are severely leavened ourselves. It's just the nature of who we are, and we have an evil, wicked nature within us that we're not able to fix on our own.

Here's the solution to the problem. He's saying that the way to solve this is that you have to repent of your sins, be baptized and receive the very nature of God. To be able to do that, this is what enables us to become more like God, to think like Him, to have more of His mind and His character. It is receiving that spirit within us.

If you want a title for the sermon, it's ...

### God's Holy Spirit: The Key to Good Mental Health

If you think about what the problem is, you could say we have a mental health problem. We're all kind of inherently mentally ill, because if you look at our nature, what are we? We are inherently evil; we are inherently wicked and inclined toward destructive behavior towards ourselves and others. It's just who we are. If you look over the multiple thousands of years of human history, isn't that the lesson? Isn't it oftentimes world history classes are somewhat the study of war? It's the study of all the wars and conflicts and how evil man has been to mankind. That's kind of our history and that's regardless of race, cultures or language. It always seems to end that way because we are inherently evil inside. That's just who we are, because with repentance we don't just repent because we made some bad decisions and mistakes and sins in our lives. We certainly all have, but we're not just repenting because we've done a few bad things. We're repenting not of just what we've done, but of who we are. Who we are is

inherently evil. To change that, we don't have the raw materials of ourselves to fix the problem.

That's why we need a Savior. That's why He had to give a sacrifice to cover our sins and allow us to be forgiven, and that debt to be released, to change who we are, our behavior and how we think and act. That required something else to come in to enable us to change. That's the spirit of God. That's what enables that change in our behavior and our thinking. For the motivation to take place, we have to receive that very essence of God.

Let's take a closer look at that. Turn to John, chapter 14. We'll see some instruction that Christ gave His disciples at the end of His human ministry.

**John 14:15.** *"If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

16) *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever –*

17) *"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

18) *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."* (NKJV)

In other words, He's saying, "You're not capable of doing this on your own." That's kind of the basic premise of Christianity. We can't do it on our own. We do not have the ability. But He's saying, "I'm sending you a helper and this is the spirit of God. It's the very mind and essence of God and I'm going to put that within you. That's going to enable you to make changes in who you are, how you think and how you act that you are not capable of doing on your own. This is going to sustain you and enable you to make this transformation."

Turn to John, chapter 15. It explains this in a little more detail.

**John 15:1.** *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

2) *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every [branch] that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

3) *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

4) *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

5) *"I am the vine, you [are] the branches, He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

6) *"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned.*

7) *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

8) *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."* (NKJV)

He is expounding on this same concept, saying that He is the vine and we are the branches, and we have to be attached to Him and nourished through His spirit, through His mind to be able to spiritually live. To be able to grow and change and have His character and His mind requires this attachment to Him, because we do not have the capability of doing this on our own. He says, "Without being attached to the vine, you're going to wither and die." We can't do anything on our own. It's like going out here and taking one of the plants or vines and snipping one of the branches off from the main base. What's going to happen over a little time? It's going to wilt, dry up and die. The same thing happens with us. If we don't depend upon that spirit and continually yield to it, to have it change us, we spiritually dry up. We basically wither just like a vine that has no connection to nourishment. We dry up and die if we try to rely on ourselves. As Jesus Christ explained to them, this wasn't just true of the disciples; this was true of Himself as a physical human being as well. He had to depend upon the Father in the same way or He would have had the same thing happen to Him. Turn with me to John, chapter 5 and verse 19.

**John 5:19.** *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.*

20) *"For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.*

21) *"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to [them], even so the Son gives life to whom He will. (NKJV)*

Now to verse 30.

30) *"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (NKJV)*

He's saying that when He was a physical, carnal human being on this earth, He had to fight the nature that we have as human beings. Of course, He had the spirit without measure and had it from His birth. He never sinned, but He had to battle with that physical human nature as well. If He wasn't constantly yielding to the spirit and the mind of the Father, He would have been overcome by being physical carnality as well. He would have wound up sinning. That's why He said of Himself that He could do nothing. He had to constantly rely on the Father and that connection with Him and His spirit to be able to accomplish what he did in His life.

The same concept is true of us. We don't have God's spirit from birth like He did. We're more carnal, sinful individuals who have to repent of that, whereas He never actually sinned. He had that nature that He had to fight, but He never messed up. We're much weaker than He is. Again, the same concept applies that if we're not constantly relying on the Father, we do not have the ability within ourselves to be able to live this life.

Let's look now at what the spirit accomplishes for us. Turn to Galatians, chapter 5. We'll see the contrast of what this creates in our lives when we receive it.

**Galatians 5:16.** *I say then: Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

*17) For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (NKJV)*

The concept that it's explaining here is when we repent, are baptized and receive God's holy spirit, basically now what happens from that point forward is an internal battle. We now have two natures. We have a carnal, sinful, evil nature just by being human beings. When we receive God's holy spirit, now there's a divine nature that comes from God's mind that is put in us. Now you have two opposing forces that are at war with each other, and this war lasts the rest of your physical life. It never stops.

It's like the old story about an Indian talking to a child. The old Indian chief talks about two wolves, a good wolf and a bad wolf and they fight with each other. The little boy asked him, "Which one wins?" The answer is, the one you feed, because that's what happens. You have these two warring natures within you and which one wins? The one that you feed, you cater to and listen to; that's the one that ultimately wins the battle. That battle continues because oftentimes people make the mistake when they get baptized; they think, "Now that I'm going to receive God's nature and God's spirit, it's going to become much easier going forward." They don't realize that it becomes harder. Yes, now you have God's spirit and you have that power to help you change, but now there's this internal civil war, you might say, going on in your mind continually. You have to be aware of that and continue to fight that battle.

Let's pick up now in verse 19.

**Galatians 5:19.** *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*

*20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*

*21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

What he is describing here is our natural state. If we feed our natural carnal mind, this is what happens. We're selfish, we're angry, we're lustful and resentful. Those are all the things that are naturally going to come about in our minds if we feed that wolf. What we're going to see here in just a second is the contrast of what divine nature, God's mind, can create in us if we yield to it. Turn now to verse 22.

**Galatians 5:22.** *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

- 23) *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*  
24) *And those [who are] Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*  
25) *If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.*  
26) *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*  
(NKJV)

In other words, all the good qualities of patience, kindness, joy and love. Where do those come from? They don't inherently come from us. They come from God's spirit. That's why I call it the key to good mental health, because if we want to have that mind, it comes from God's spirit. It just doesn't come from within us.

Let's turn now to Romans, chapter 7. Let's notice this particular concept being expounded a little more.

**Romans 7:14.** *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

15) *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

16) *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that [it is] good.*

17) *But now, [it is] no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* (NKJV)

Paul is referring to this internal battle that's going on with him. Even one of the apostles who wrote most of the New Testament, had this same battle going on in him. He wants to do right, but he constantly has to battle this evil human nature that wants to take him into the ditch. Picking up in verse 18 ...

**Romans 7:18.** *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but [how] to perform what is good I do not find.*  
(NKJV)

In other words, he didn't have the raw materials within himself. He has to depend on God's spirit to do any of this.

**Romans 7:20.** *Now if I do what I will not [to do], it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

21) *I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.*

22) *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

23) *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

24) *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

25) *I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.* (NKJV)

Again, the concept that we're getting here is these two warring natures that take place, and we have to realize that it's a battle we will fight all the rest of our physical lives.



That never stops, and we always have to continue to feed the good wolf and not the bad one, because whichever one you feed is the one that will win the battle.

Turn back to Acts, chapter 2 and we will pick up the last verse in Peter's speech that we didn't talk about. Before we get into that, I want to set the scene of what I want to talk about.

My freshman year at Ambassador College was in 1988. I had a class called "Principals of Living." The instructor of that class was going through a couple of verses here, but he posed a question to the class for discussion before he went on to give his answer. He asked a question regarding second generation Christians, because much of the audience in this class almost exclusively were children of members and had grown up in the church. He asked the question: "Are second generation children of members automatically called? Basically one hundred percent of the time by virtue of being children of members, are they specifically called by God?" As we know, God selectively calls certain individuals. Which way does it work? Do they have to be individually called by God or is it basically an automatic situation if you're born as a child of a member? Are they, one hundred percent of the time, called? He makes a dogmatic conclusion on this and we're going to look at the logic that was expressed here. He starts reading verse 39. I'm going to go back and read verse 38 so you understand the context.

**Acts 2:38.** *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. (NKVJ)*

What we're talking about is having the spirit available to you and being called as a firstfruit.

**Acts 2:39.** *"For the promise is to you and to your children ... (NKVJ)*

Well, my instructor stopped reading right there and he makes a dogmatic conclusion and said, "See, the promise is to you and to your children. Therefore, children of members are one hundred percent of the time always called and given their chance at salvation now." Wait a minute, we just read one third of a sentence. We need to read the entire sentence to get the whole thought of what Peter was saying. Let's apply that logic to the rest of the sentence.

**39b)** *... and to all who are afar off ... (NKVJ)*

Wait a minute. Doesn't that mean everybody? Think about it. If he's saying to you and your children and the audience he's talking to and "to all who are afar off," isn't that everybody else? Of course we know ultimately everyone receives their chance at salvation. That's the plan of God. If we're going to say that the first half of the sentence meant that second generation Christians are always given their chance of salvation in this life, wouldn't that same logic have to be applied to the second half of the sentence,

“and all who are afar off?” We have to understand those first two comments by the end of the sentence. Read the end of the sentence.

*39 continued) ... as many as the Lord our God will call.” (NKJV)*

It’s a complete thought. If we’re going to apply that logic strictly to the first part of it, don’t we have to consistently apply that logic to the second part of the sentence, “and to all who are afar off?” Can we look at that and say, “Okay, has all mankind, all who are afar off been given a chance of salvation today?” I think we would readily agree that’s not the case. Obviously, all of mankind hasn’t, at this time, been given a chance of salvation. They will be in the future, but they haven’t at this time. If you think about that, this can be a very serious matter.

Let’s turn to Hebrews, chapter 6 and cover this before I go any further. The reason this is a very serious subject is we know that once God grants His holy spirit and gives someone their chance at salvation, it becomes an extremely serious matter. It basically becomes a “do or die” situation. God doesn’t play games with us. That’s why He tells us when we receive His holy spirit, we need to count the cost because we are making a life or death choice.

**Hebrews 6:4.** *For [it is] impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the holy spirit, 5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6) if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put [Him] to an open shame. 7) For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8) but if it bears thorns and briars, [it is] rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. (NKJV)*

The concept it’s saying here is if someone has truly received God’s holy spirit, been given their chance of salvation and then walked away from that, there is no do over. I’m sure we remember sometimes as children, you’re playing a game and it doesn’t really turn out the way we hoped and the kids say, “Do over! We’ll just do this over again.” Salvation doesn’t work that way. If we don’t see this through to the end, there is not a do over. It’s a very serious matter.

Let’s get back to our original question. Does that necessarily mean that everyone who was born as a second generation, as a child of a member in the church automatically receives their chance at the holy spirit and called at this time? Personally, I don’t think we can make such a dogmatic conclusion on the first part of Acts 2:39, because again we have to apply that same logic to the rest of the sentence. If you look back at the time this was said in 1988, I know within a year or two after that there was a minister at Ambassador College who worked at headquarters that was doing research on youth in the church. He was my club director one year and that’s why I heard a lot about this. He was looking at the statistics. This was back even before the apostasy and the

breakup of Worldwide. He was looking back over the years, basically the statistics of retention of second generation kids who were born in the church and grew up in the church. Even at that time the vast majority of second generation kids did not remain in the church. The conclusion he was mentioning to us is that the organization would have been substantially larger if we simply had retained all the children who had grown up in the organization.

Does that automatically mean that all of those who walked away from that lost their chance at salvation? Personally, I don't think it's that easy of a subject. I don't believe that everybody who ever attended a Church of God organization and got wet in a baptismal pool necessarily had their chance at salvation and received God's holy spirit. Again, I'm not suggesting for a moment that I have all the answers on this subject, and I'm certainly not anyone's judge, but I think there is a Biblical principal that can help us in looking at this concept. Personally, I believe there were a number of people who came into an organization, had a relationship with an organization, the culture and social structure of it, but not necessarily with God. They did not necessarily received their chance at salvation at this time.

To talk about the principal I want to get to, turn to 2 Peter 2 and we'll start reading in verse 20.

**2 Peter 2:20.** *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. (NKJV)*

We're going to come back to that particular phrase.

**2 Peter 2:21.** *For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known [it], to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.  
22) But it has happened to them according to the true proverb; "A dog returns to his own vomit." And "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (NKJV)*

The concept that it's getting at here is that if someone has received their chance of salvation, if they have truly received God's holy spirit, and they reject it and walk away, as it says, *"their end is worse than their beginning."*

Again, I'm not suggesting for a moment that I have all the answers on this subject and I'm certainly no one's judge. I'm presenting some food for thought here based upon these Biblical principles. But having grown up in the church and attended Ambassador College, I've seen a lot of people that attended church and YOU with me and went to college me that have now moved on with their lives and have nothing to do with the Church of God. Personally, I do not believe all of those people have lost their chance at salvation and walked away from God. I say this based upon this particular principle; notice it says that *"their end is worse than their beginning."* There are two general categories, and again understand I'm not suggesting to have all the answers or to be

anyone's judge. However, I've known a number of people who have kind of walked away from the truth, from having their involvement in the Church of God, who have gone on to live their lives, physically speaking, that are balanced people.

I recently caught up with an old friend from Ambassador College. We were real good friends throughout college and when the church busted up he went away from the truth and has lived his life. In talking to him today, I wouldn't describe his physical life today as, "the end is worse than the beginning." He's not angry about the church or his experience with that. He doesn't have an axe to grind. He has a stable family and things are going well for him in that regard. Again I'm not his judge. I'm just saying that I've seen a number of people that fit into that category.

I've also seen an opposite extreme. I've seen individuals who I would absolutely describe that their end is worse than their beginning. For example, today on Facebook there was an Ambassador Alumni page where people go to share memories and photos and things of that nature. I always find when there is something like that associated with the church, it attracts people that have an axe to grind from their previous experiences with it. These can be people where it's been decades since they were a part of the church, attended the college or anything. Ambassador College closed its doors over fifteen years ago. For the vast majority, who have attended, it's been at least about twenty years since they had anything to do with it. But oftentimes people will kind of flock to these things and spend a lot of time just attacking and putting out their venom for which they have issues. Anyone who would express positive sentiments about their experience almost gets attacked. You stop and look at this and say, "Wait a minute. You spend a lot of your time going on and reliving your baggage with venom and anger for something you haven't been a part of in decades. Why? Why would you do that with your life?" Today there are internet forums where people literally have not been part of the church for decades, just spend their time doing this. You can see that their life is consumed with anger, bitterness and destructive energy. Their end is worse than their beginning. I've seen people whose moral character compared to the person they were when they were in the church versus who they were when they left, they wind up being a much worse individual. Their mental health sometimes ends up being much worse. I was recently talking to a person I've known all my life growing up in the church and we were sharing expressions of another person we knew a number of years ago in the church. This friend commented to me that, "When so and so left the church, about fifteen years later, he was basically just about nuts." What he meant was that this individual got into strange ideas and became consumed in conspiracy theories. They became unbalanced, way more than they ever were when they were in the church.

My point is, if you look at that you say, "Their end is worse than their beginning." When I see situations like this, that scripture screams out at me. Where again, there are many other people that seemed to have been part of a culture, in an organization and moved on with their life, but they don't appear to have the end of their physical life worse than their beginning.

Again, I'm not suggesting that I have all the answers on that subject or that I'm anybody's judge. God is everyone's judge, and all who came into a Church of God organization at one point, just because they walked away from that, I don't think that it necessarily means they were given their chance at salvation. I think that is something God has to determine. I think we should look at it from that perspective and realize that a lot of those people may actually come up later in the second resurrection, receiving their chance at salvation at that point and haven't necessarily gone down that road. I just wanted to express that based upon some Biblical principles. I don't suggest that I have all of the answers on that subject.

To wrap up here today, as I mentioned, the problem with human beings is we have an inherent evil nature. That is just who we are. When we repent, we're not just repenting of having made some mistakes. We are repenting of who we are and we have to realize that this is a battle we will fight for the rest of our natural lives. There will always be those warring natures in us, and the secret to successfully making it through this is to feed the good wolf. That is to constantly yield to God's spirit and grow in that so it transforms and changes us so we can be part of this ultimate plan of God and be born into His kingdom.