

## The Holy Spirit's Power and You

by Bayless Conley

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After the resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days here, where He appeared many times and spent time on various occasions with the disciples, giving them infallible proof that He was indeed the risen Son of God. And then up on the Mount of Olives, just before He's going to ascend into heaven and sit at the Father's right hand, He gives the disciples and us, by way of talking to the disciples, some final instructions before He left this earth.

And we read it in Acts 1, beginning in verse 4, it says (Acts 1:4–8),

<sup>4</sup> 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; <sup>5</sup> for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." <sup>6</sup> Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup> 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."

So, He says, wait for the promise of the Father. You're going to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and you'll receive power. Everyone say, *power*. It's the same word translated "miracle" throughout the New Testament. In the verses where it says that virtue or power went out of Jesus and healed the multitudes, it's this same word, healing power, miracle-working power to be witnesses to Him in our own backyard and around the world.

Now, if you were with us when I spoke (the weekend prior to Easter) about that final conversation Jesus had with the disciples, He talked in detail, which we only mentioned. But He talked in detail about the Holy Spirit and His ministry. What the disciples could expect and what they should anticipate from the Holy Spirit when He came.

And He said, He'll comfort you, He'll strengthen you, He'll reveal the future to you, He will remind you of My Word, He will guide you into all truth, and He will help you to testify, to bring conviction regarding the reality and availability of salvation to a lost world. And that's what the Holy Spirit does. He fills us personally, He enriches our lives personally, He guides us, He strengthens us, He comforts us on a personal level, but He also empowers us to bring the influence of the kingdom through us to others. He does things in us and for us, but He also does things through us. And that is what Jesus emphasizes here in these verses. You'll receive power, miracle-working power to be My witnesses.

So, it's at the end of the 40 days. Jesus has talked to them about the kingdom. They realize their mission is to go out and to preach the gospel to every creature. And so, Jesus is about to ascend. And what does He say: You know the message is true. I've been raised from the dead. Salvation is available to a lost and dying world. People can miss hell. They can go to heaven.

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They can be in relationship with Me. So here are My final instructions to you. We've got this lost and dying world out there; wait. Wait. Wait for the promise of the Father. Not many days from now, you'll be filled with, baptized with the Holy Spirit.

And turns out it was about ten days that they had to wait. And we come to Acts 2:1–4, It says,

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And, my friend, the New Testament interchangeably uses the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” and “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” It refers to the same experience.

And I love the way that the Holy Spirit manifested when He first came to fill these believers. There's this sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind, and divided tongues of fire sat on each of them individually.

Under the old Testament, when God's people came out of the land of Egypt, which we are taught in the New Testament as a type of our salvation, coming out from sin, coming out from the bondage of sin, and out from under the jurisdiction of the devil, they passed through the Red Sea, which the New Testament says is a type of our baptism into the promised land, which is a type of salvation.

And when they got into the promised land, God's redeemed people, the Holy Spirit was with them every day. And part of the way the Holy Spirit manifested, there was this huge pillar of fire. It gave them light. But whenever the pillar of fire would get up and move, the whole camp, they'd break camp, and they'd follow the pillar of fire. And so, it was God's Spirit leading them corporately outwardly, outwardly leading them together corporately.

Jesus said in John (and we looked at it last time), it says “The Spirit dwells with you, but He's going to dwell in you.” And so, I believe this, in part, symbolizes the fact the same Holy Spirit that led God's people outwardly and corporately is now going to lead His people individually and inwardly.

A divided tongue of fire came and sat upon each of them. And as well, we all know that fire spreads rapidly. I think God was saying, listen, you're going to take this gospel of the kingdom, and like fire, it's going to spread around the world as you obey My Word and as you yield to My empowerment.

Now, why would they have to wait till Pentecost? Now, that was 50 days after the Passover. So it's been 50 days, basically, since Jesus has been crucified. Why wait till that? Well, it would have impressed upon their minds the main purpose, not the only purpose, but the main purpose of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, of this baptism in the Holy Spirit, because Pentecost was the festival of harvest. It was the feast of harvest.

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Yearly, they would have this feast or festival where they would celebrate the harvest, showing that as well as personally blessing us, God empowers us through the Holy Spirit to reap the harvest.

And throughout Scripture, that metaphor is used of unsaved people coming into the kingdom as a harvest being reaped.

Jesus is at the well, talks to that woman and reveals her whole life to her, tells her that He's the Messiah. She runs into town and says, "Come meet this Man. He told me everything I ever did. This is the Messiah." The whole town is moving out now to come and see Him for themselves. Jesus says to the disciples, you say four months, and then comes the harvest. Lift up your eyes and look. The fields are already white for harvest, referring to the mass of humanity that's coming out to talk with Him. And they did subsequently believe in Him.

In the book of James, it says, "Don't think God is slow concerning His promise about the return of Christ. Like a farmer, He's waiting for the precious fruit of the earth." What's God waiting for? Why does Jesus tarry? Why hasn't He returned yet? Because there is going to be a great end-time harvest of souls around the world, and we get to be a part of that, my friend.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is depicted as sitting on a white cloud with a sharp sickle in His hand. And an angel cries out and says, "The harvest of the earth is ripe. Thrust in your sickle and reap." And He thrusts in His sickle, and the harvest of the earth is reaped.

Well, my friend, Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. And that sharp sickle in His hand is the Church. It's us. He uses us to reach lost, sighing, dying humanity. And this empowerment, this coming of the Holy Spirit, came on the day of Pentecost in part to show us that it's for reaching the lost. It's for influencing others toward the kingdom.

So in order to reap this harvest, we must be empowered by the Spirit. Speaking of this gift of the Holy Spirit, this baptism in the Holy Spirit, Peter said this specifically about the event that just took place. Acts 2:39, he said,

<sup>39</sup> For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

This promise is to you, your children, and all those that are afar off in the distance, afar off in time. We qualify on both fronts. We are some of those that are afar off in distance, and we're far off in time. The promise is for us. This wasn't just some special thing that happened on the day of Pentecost some 2000 years ago. My friend, the gift is available to us today, and he went on and said as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The New Testament says we've been called into the fellowship of His Son, that we've been called according to His purpose, that we've been called to eternal life, that we've been called to eternal glory, that we've been called out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The word for "Church" in the New Testament it's the Greek word *ecclesia*. Do you know what it literally means? "The called-out ones." If you're part of the Church, you're called. If you're a part of the Church, you're called. And this gift is to those that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. The same Holy Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost and filled those believers in that upper room, my friend, that experience is available to you today. God wants His Church empowered today just like He did then.

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To empower us with *dunamis* is the Greek word. Miracle working power. *Dunamis*, in our words, *dunamis*, God doing works of a miraculous nature through us.

That day, Peter preached on Pentecost. As far as the Jews were concerned, he was an uneducated man, a fisherman, a common man, but he preached on the day of Pentecost, and there was power in his words. There was something about his words that struck the people, and 3,000 people were saved that day. God used his words. God anointed his words.

And it's an interesting study if you just go through the New Testament and look how many times that word *dunamis*, miracle power, is used in connection just with speaking words, with preaching the gospel. And it will work with a crowd of thousands, and God will empower our words when we speak to an individual.

Many of you know my testimony or part of it. I came from a background of some pretty serious substance abuse and alcoholism. And no one had ever talked to me about Jesus. I didn't know the plan of salvation until one day, in a park, a 12-year-old boy told me about Jesus Christ. He spoke like Jesus was still alive and told me I could have a relationship with Him. I thought I was listening to a crazy person, but I couldn't get away from his words. I couldn't escape his words.

I actually moved away, moved down to Mexico City. At that time, there were only eleven million people there. It's like doubled since then. But I was involved in some illegal activities. It's the grace of God that I didn't end up in a Mexican prison. But I couldn't get away. I am down there, and I can't get away from the words that kid had spoken to me. They haunted me. They clung to me. It was like someone had driven a nail into my heart. I just couldn't get away from it.

And I told my friends down there one day; I said, "I'm leaving." They said, "When?" I said, "Right now." And I jumped in my truck, and I drove 3000 miles back to Oregon, where I was living to find that 12-year-old kid.

And through a process of things, I ended up in a street mission where I got saved. It was full of homeless people and people with drug problems. And I was the only one that responded that night to the invitation.

Well, you know what? Now I'm a Christian, brand new saved. And I'm with that kid and his mother, and they asked me if I wanted to go with them to the hospital; they're going to go visit somebody. I go, "Sure." And so I go, and we went, we found the room. And the mother is in there talking to the guy, and I turn around, and the kid disappears. That 12-year-old kid, he's gone. I go, "Ah, I better go find him."

So I go wandering around the hospital. I'm wandering down this hall, and I go down this hall, I'm looking. I can't find him anywhere. And I come into this hall, and there's a bench sitting outside the room, and there's a man sitting on the bench with a hospital gown on. It's open in the back. He's sitting on the bench, and he's sobbing. I go, and I said, "Are you okay?" He goes, "Who was that kid?" He says, "The doctors told me that I have an incurable disease, and they can't help me. And this kid walked into my room, and he told me that Jesus is a healer. And that by Jesus' stripes, I was healed. And I've never heard anybody talk like him. Who is that kid?" And I felt like going, "I know what you mean. He did it to me too."

I'll tell you who he was. He was a 12-year-old, Jesus-loving, Spirit-filled, tongue-talking 12-year-old boy. God anointed his words.

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God will anoint your words if you'll just open your mouth.

When the Holy Spirit came, I love it; there was fire, there was illumination, but there was a sound. You got to make a sound. We've got to open our mouth. We've got to tell somebody. And the Holy Spirit will empower our words.

And the same power that anointed Peter's words, right after that, anointed him to work a miracle. In Acts chapter 3, there was a man. They laid him daily at the beautiful gate of the temple. He'd been lame since birth. He'd never walked. And you know the story. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I do have, I'm giving to you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And the guy got up healed. Two thousand more people came into the family of God. Now the Church has grown to 5,000 people. You can read it in Acts chapter 3. It was through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you may go back with us far enough to remember when Reinhard Bonnke would come and preach at Cottonwood Church. One of the world's greatest evangelists. He's been in heaven a couple of years now, three or four years. And Reinhard did not come from a Christian background. His family lived in a forested area in Eastern Germany. And his grandfather, whose name was August, was terribly sick. The doctors couldn't diagnose it, but all of his joints were swollen. He would scream at the slightest touch. And for years, not days, not weeks, not months, for years, he screamed in agony day and night, night and day, day and night. And everyone in the village knew because they heard him scream all day and night long in constant agony.

Well, an American missionary, an Assembly of God missionary in 1922, got lost in the forest in Eastern Germany and happened upon the little village where August Bonnke and the family were. And he walked into the village. And he asked somebody. The first thing he asked, first words he asked, "Is there anyone in the village that's sick and needs prayer?" They said, "Yes, just walk up the street. You can't miss it."

He starts walking up the street, and he hears someone screaming. He comes to the house and explains to them that he believes God has sent him and that God has sent down the Holy Spirit and given us power. And he went in and said to August Bonnke, "In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up." He jumped up off of his bed. All the inflammation had left his joints. He starts crying. Starts walking. He couldn't walk and then starts running and leaping. He embraces his wife, the first time he's been able to do that in years.

And then, his son became a pastor. And 18 years after August Bonnke was healed, and the whole family was baptized in the Holy Spirit; 18 years later, Reinhard was born. At ten years old, God called Reinhard to preach the gospel. And for decades, he preached from Cape Town to Cairo, back and forth. And won to Christ, this is not an exaggeration, they would actually have the people that gave their lives to Jesus fill out a salvation card with their information on it, 90 million people.

Ninety million precious Africans won to Christ through that ministry. But it all went back to the healing of August Bonnke and that missionary that got lost in a forest in Eastern Germany.

I still remember a husband and wife that came to church years ago. And she had stomach cancer. And, I think, gone about as far as they could with the doctors. They were doing some kind of treatment. But a friend of hers said, "Look, you should go to my church. They pray for the

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sick at my church. I think God could help you.” So they came, they believed in God, they weren’t Christians, they believed in God and believed in the Bible. There are a lot of people like that. But they’d never been born again.

And I remember we sat down for probably 20 minutes. I went through healing Scripture after healing Scripture and talked to them about it. I said, “Do you see this? You see, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do you believe this promise?” They said, “Yes, we do.” We laid hands on her and prayed for her, me, and several other people on the staff. Well, she went back in for her treatment, and they actually did some tests and said, “Something’s changed.” They followed it up with X-rays and more tests and more tests. And every trace of cancer was gone—a wonderful miracle.

But the marvelous thing is that next Sunday, she’s in church, her husband’s in church, all of their children, they’re in church. Every one of them responded, came forward, and gave their lives to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit wants to do things in us and for us, but He also wants to do things through us. And that’s an important word, “through.” No flesh glories in His presence. God uses foolish things, my friend. If you feel inadequate, I just want to tell you, you qualify.

Now, on that day, when the Spirit was poured out, God even used speaking in tongues to reach out to people. It’s really a unique occurrence. We’re not going to take time to read it. But it says there was dwelling in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And it goes and lists country after country after country. So there were a lot of people that had come, Jews that had come to live in Jerusalem that were actually natives of other countries would have still had families and friends in those other countries. And there were many people that had come in from around the world just for this feast of the harvest.

In fact, it mentioned several people in there as well that lived in other countries, but they were there because of the harvest.

And so, this experience in the upper room breaks out down onto the street. They are speaking in other tongues. I guess God is not always seeker sensitive. If I would have thought of a way to start the church, it wouldn’t have been to send 120 people out on the street speaking in other tongues, like, that’s weird, but that’s what God did.

And there was a miracle that took place there because everyone was freaking out, saying, “We can hear them speaking in our native tongues.” Now, the miracle may have been as much in the hearing as it was in the speaking. They said, “Every one of us, we hear them speaking, and we know they don’t speak our native tongue from around the world.”

And then Peter uses that occasion to preach. Three thousand people were saved.

Service in our church, Cottonwood, I was there when it happened. I remember it very clearly. We had a woman in church. She and her husband moved away to Montana, actually, probably 20 years ago. And a lovely, lovely lady. She loved the Lord with all of her heart and had a genuine prophetic gift on her life. I really respected her and her sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. So, it’s during our regular worship time, just like we had today. And sometimes, she would give an utterance in tongues that would be interpreted, and different things. But she just lifted her hands worshipping, and she started worshipping God and singing in other tongues.

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And you just have to know God kind of uses our personality. She was rather loud sometimes. And so she's loudly singing in other tongues. And this guy, there's like another person there, and he's sitting in the next seat or standing there, keeps staring at her. Anyway, everybody sits down. I get up and preach and give an invitation. And this man tracks her down after service. This all happened in the front of the church. I was there. And he starts speaking to her. She doesn't understand a word he's saying. She says, "I'm sorry, I don't understand you," and he continues to speak to her in this other language.

She said, "Look, I only speak English." And he says, "Don't give me that." He said, "I heard you in perfect, impeccable Hebrew, glorifying God when everybody in here was singing." It turns out he was a Jewish man, not a Christian, a Jewish man. He spoke Hebrew himself. A friend had brought him to church to "check it out." And so he starts speaking to her in Hebrew again. She says, "I'm telling you, I don't speak Hebrew." He says, "I heard you. You do." She said, "I don't, but I do speak in tongues." And she explained to him about it. He was dumbfounded, absolutely flabbergasted.

Someone says, "Did he get saved?" As far as I know, no, but something happened to him that he'll never be able to get away from. I don't know what happened to him after that day. But he didn't confess Jesus that day, but God did something for him.

Now, I think we understand, and you would if you were a student of the Scriptures, that one of the main purposes of speaking in tongues is for personal, devotional use and for personal edification. Paul wrote extensively about it. And I want to quote to you a couple of verses. First Corinthians 14:2, he said,

<sup>2</sup> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

All right. Whoever speaks in a tongue doesn't speak to men but to God. No man understands. But on the day of Pentecost, men did understand.

Well, Paul also went on in the very next chapter, 1 Corinthians 13:1, he said,

<sup>1</sup> Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels . . .

You may be supernaturally speaking the language that's spoken somewhere in the world that you've never learned, or you may be speaking in an angelic, a heavenly language. And that's why people call it your heavenly language. But the main purpose of it would be devotional, speaking to God. And there's great benefit in talking to God. No man understands me. However, I speak in the Spirit mysteries. He goes on to verse four,

<sup>4</sup> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself,

So, yes, it is for me. And that word *edify* means "to build higher and higher."

In fact, if we could bring it into a modern translation today, the closest translation where it says, "He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself," would be like, "charges himself like a battery."

And I've thought about that. What a blessing. This microphone I have right now has a battery in it. Most of the time, we use rechargeable batteries. When the battery gets flat and gets low, we

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want to recharge it. But the battery doesn't just get charged up for itself. It gives away what it has. You put it in a flashlight so the flashlight shines. You put it in a microphone, so the microphone works.

It's not the little battery going, "I'm so blessed. I'm so charged. Look at me." But I think sometimes, that is, as Christians, what we do. It's almost like, (*humming*). No, no, no, no. He charges you, but it's for something else. You get the blessing of it, you get the edification of it, you get the strength of it, but it's not just for you. The battery is charged for something else.

The battery is charged for something else. And somebody says, "Well, nothing ever happens in my life." Maybe your battery is low. Maybe you need to charge your battery. Yeah.

The great English preacher, Smith Wigglesworth, was asked, "What's the secret of your ministry?" A great soul winner. And great miracles happened in his ministry. He said this. He said, "Before I go out and preach," he said, "I usually spend an hour or two hours speaking in tongues, edifying myself, and then I just go out and edify the people." There is something to that.

I learned this secret from a lady named Mom Abbott. She was 80 years old and became a friend of mine when I was a brand-new Christian. She had a small farm. And I would go milk her goats and take care of her animals. One time I helped the veterinarian geld a horse, something I don't want to ever do again.

But I would go spend a lot of time with Mom. She's 80. She's built an orphanage and supports an orphanage in India. She built another orphanage in Mexico that she supported. She had six orphans that she brought across the border from Mexico. She's 80. She's raising six teenagers on her own. Eighty years old. Amazing lady, such strength. She had a health food company. She made some health food concoction that she sold to health food stores around Oregon. And as well as that, every summer, she would drive herself and preach in different churches, just filled with energy.

And I learned something about Mom. I learned a secret from her. I'd go over and visit sometimes just to hang out. I'd say hi to the kids. I'd say, "Hey, is Mom here?" "Yes, she's upstairs." I go up and say, "Mom, it's Bayless." She said, "Come on in." I'd walk in the room, and she'd be pacing back and forth, speaking in other tongues. She's praying in other tongues. She says, "Sit down, son." And she'd just go on for like 5 minutes or 10 minutes praying in tongues. She says, "Do you have something you want to ask me?" I said, "Yes, ma'am," and I asked a question. She'd share the answer and then go back to praying in tongues, just walking back and forth in front of me.

And she says, "You got anything else you want to know about?" And I'd asked her, and she would tell me. And would go back to praying in tongues more.

One time, she and I were going to a meeting. I was driving. She spoke in tongues for 30 minutes all the way there in the car. And then I was really concerned about something. I said, "Mom, something I'd like you to pray with me about." And I explained. She said, "No need to pray. I got the answer in the Spirit while I was praying in tongues on the way here. It's already done. It's already taken care of. God already showed me." Amazing.

Now, obviously, I'm talking a lot about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and what that did in empowering and releasing the Church there early on. But there are other baptisms spoken of in



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the New Testament. There are three main baptisms spoken of in the New Testament, baptism into the body of Christ, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and water baptism. And you know what, in every baptism, three things have to be there. Always.

Number one, there has to be a baptizer, someone doing the baptizing.

Second, there has to be a candidate for baptism.

Third, there must be some element to be baptized into.

And the word *baptized*, the New Testament word everywhere we've seen it, everywhere you read it, literally means "to be placed under or to be immersed in." To be totally immersed in. It doesn't mean to sprinkle. It means "to be totally immersed in."

So here's the first one, 1 Corinthians 12:13. (he said 3) And I want you to leave the verse up just for a minute, guys. It says,

<sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

All right. Who is the baptizer in this? The Spirit. For by one Spirit, we (who's we?), we that have believed in Jesus, we're all baptized into one body. What's the element we're baptized into? The body of Christ. All right. This is talking about salvation.

You can take that down right now.

At salvation, when a person repents of their sins and puts their trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes them and literally places them in the body of Christ. You become a member of the Church. I am a part of this universal body of Christ. And it's not just a metaphor, my friend, it is something that actually happens spiritually. I get connected with other believers right around the world. We may not share the same ancestry. We may not share the same culture. We may not speak the same language, but we are connected. We have been made members of the same body. And when I accepted Christ, I was placed into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

All right. Mark chapter 1, John the Baptist is speaking about Jesus. And he said, "I indeed baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." He's speaking of Jesus. All right. Who's the Baptizer? Jesus. Who's the candidate for baptism? We are; anyone that the Lord, our God, shall call, even those who are far off, anyone that's thirsty for more of God. If you name the name of Christ, if you've been born again, you're a candidate for the Holy Spirit if you want it. All right. What's the element that He baptizes into? The Holy Spirit.

And then there's the third baptism that everyone knows about, and that's water baptism. All right. The baptizer; whoever, some church leader, a friend, whoever's doing the baptizing. The candidate; it's the person that has put their trust in Jesus. What's the element they're baptized into? Water.

Now, there were many key factors in the early Church.

In fact, I prepared three sermons for today. This one floated to the top. So the other two may be for another time. But one of the messages that I did, there were at least around 9 or 10 key elements or key aspects to that early church. And it literally is a template for the church in every generation. It's God's plan for His church in every generation. You should find all of these

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things. A church that's firing on all cylinders should have these things. And if we took time to read them, it would be worship, community, generosity, prayer, and teaching. They met in large gatherings like this. They also had small gatherings from house to house, a number of things. But of all of those things, only one was immediately commanded upon believing. So Peter preaches, and those that were listening said this in Act 2:37,

<sup>37</sup> 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?"

Now, did Peter say, all right, give an offering? Did he say worship? Did he say get in a Bible study? No, he didn't say any of those things though they're all important, and they're all part of the template.

This is Peter's response. (Acts 2:38)

<sup>38</sup> 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;

The one thing that was commanded was water baptism. And thousands that day believed and were baptized.

Now listen to me, just like the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it's for you and your benefit personally, but it's also for others. Water baptism is for you personally. It's a way to display your obedience to Christ, a way to express your faith in Him, but it's also for others. It's a way to express your obedience to Him. Jesus said that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. It's not a doctrine to be debated. It's a command to be obeyed.

First Peter 3:1 (1 Peter 3:21) says that water baptism is the answer. The answer of a good conscience toward God.

I talk in generalities about my past and where I came from. There are a lot of specifics I don't share. And God knows everything's on the table, and anything He ever directed me to, I would, but there are a lot of things about my past that I'm ashamed of. They're gone, but it's like, I can't even relate to the person that I used to be. And I had a really guilty conscience. But when I gave my life to Jesus, I don't know how He did it, but He made my conscience clean.

The Bible says the blood of Jesus cleanses even from a guilty conscience. And I immediately, once I got saved, I made restitution anywhere that I possibly could and anywhere it would have been helpful. But He cleansed this guilty conscience of mine. A clean conscience makes a mighty soft pillow at night, my friend.

But Peter said that water baptism is the answer, the response of a good conscience toward God. It should be the initial response. When the blood of Christ has cleansed our conscience, we become new creations in Him. We obey the Lord, and we make that response.

I've talked about this before. But I was a brand-new Christian, I just started reading my Bible and didn't really know anything. And I should have started in the New Testament. No one told me, and I think it was like up to the book of Leviticus, and I'm on my knees praying. I lived above a bar on Siskiyou Boulevard in Ashland, Oregon, in a little single room. It didn't even have an electric light bulb in there. The mattress is on the floor, and I'm kneeling down. And

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I just said, "Lord, what do You want me to do? Anything. I just want to be close to You." And I felt like the Holy Spirit whispered to me, I want you to get baptized.

Now I remembered something that very week the pastor had said in church. Now I didn't realize that preachers don't mean everything they say. I hadn't learned that lesson yet. But he said, "If you want to get baptized, we'll baptize you any time of the day or night." He said it. Ten o'clock at night, I took my one towel I owned, went downstairs, and walked through the bar with a towel under my arm. The guys are all sitting at the bar there, drinking. I went across the street to a phone booth, got the phone book out, looked up the pastor's phone number, and put my dime in it. How many remember when 10 cents cost a phone call? Yes. Put my dime in, ten o'clock. "Pastor, hi, I want to get baptized." "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Bayless Conley." He said, "That doesn't help me. Who are you?" I thought, "Ah, man, I'm the guy with long hair in your church." I was the only guy with long hair in the church. I had a long beard and really long hair. And I kind of wish I had some of that back.

And he says, "Come on Sunday, and we'll baptize you." I was crushed, standing with my towel under my arm, and he says, "Come on Sunday." I've got to wait days. I was dejected. I walked with my head down back across the street and up into my little room, and I waited. Sunday came, and I showed up at church with my little towel. Service is done, and I noticed they don't have the baptismal tank filled.

I went over to the pastor and said, "You're going to baptize me. Right?" He says, "Oh, come back Wednesday. We need to fill the tank." I said, "No, I'm not leaving. You have to baptize me today." He tried to talk me out of it. I said, "No, I got to get baptized today." I still remember. He said, "You really want to get baptized, don't you?" I said, "Yes, sir. I do." So they filled the tank. The whole church is empty. I'm the only one sitting in the whole church, and they had a big tank up on the stage, and they filled it up and baptized me.

Now, it was an important matter of obedience for me, but you know what? It's also for others. Romans chapter 6 talks in detail about water baptism and that it is a declaration, a demonstration of what we believe and Whom we serve, that it's a type of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and our total identification with it. I believe that He died and was buried. When I go under the waters of baptism, my old life is dead and buried. I was crucified with Christ. He came up out of the grave. When I come up out of the waters of baptism, I have a new resurrection life. That old man, the old Bayless, I'm leaving in the water. This new one has a clean conscious, has a new talk, has a new walk, has a new way of life.

And anyone that cares to watch me right now, I'm doing this before God. I'm doing it before the angels of heaven. I'm doing it before the devil. I'm doing it before demons. I'm doing it before my family. I'm doing it before my co-workers. I'm doing it before my friends. I'm doing it in front of my enemies. I'm doing it in front of strangers. And I am not ashamed. I have a new life in Jesus Christ. And this is my declaration, water baptism.

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