

The Believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit

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(SLIDE 1)

This morning, I'd like to talk about the believer's relationship to the Holy Spirit.

But to fully appreciate our privilege in being given this relationship, it may be helpful to see it in contrast to the alternative.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says,

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me (he's talking about Jesus... the one who is coming after me...) is more powerful than I.

I am not worthy to remove his sandals.

THEN, John says this:

He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

When John says Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire, I used to think that the word 'fire' symbolizes the power of the Holy Spirit.

But it was pointed out to me that in this particular context, we need to allow the verse that immediately PRECEDES, and the verse that immediately FOLLOWS, to guide us regarding the meaning of this word 'fire', in verse 11.

(SLIDE 2)

In verse TEN, John is speaking about Jesus, and as He says this:

The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

John is saying that Jesus brings Judgement to those who are not spiritually responsive. Without a doubt, the word 'fire' is referring to Hell.

And we find something similar if we jump to the verse that comes AFTER verse 11. Still speaking about Jesus, John the Baptist says this:

His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor.

In that agrarian culture, everyone would have readily identified with the farmer's labor in threshing wheat - a process that causes the portion that is eatable (the GRAIN) to be separated from the chaff, which is not eatable.

John continues, saying that Jesus will quote:

gather his wheat into the barn (clearly this refers to the outcome for God's redeemed).

But the chaff he will burn with FIRE that never goes out."

That is the fear-evoking outcome for everyone else.

So verses TEN and TWELVE are unambiguous.

In each, the word “FIRE” indicates condemnation to the fires of Hell.

(SLIDE 3)

So returning our attention to the last part of verse ELEVEN, it says of Jesus,

He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The “Holy Spirit” and the “Fire” are being presented as alternative outcomes.

Each member of fallen humanity will have ONE or the OTHER.

And (John is saying) it is Jesus, personally, who assigns each person to his or her respective outcome.

For those who repent, unto a saving faith in Jesus, the outcome is that Jesus Baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

For everyone else, Jesus will baptize in the fires of God’s condemnation.

It is easy to imagine how condemnation to Hell is a very extreme outcome. But its alternative, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is equally extreme.

In fact, each (of these alternatives) is (literally) as extreme “as extreme can be”.

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Regarding the Holy Spirit, In Luke 11:13, Jesus said this:

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to those who ask him?”

From all eternity past, through all eternity future, there has never been - and there never WILL be - a better, or more desirable gift than the Holy Spirit.

How COULD there be?

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Triune God.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

It is literally impossible for any gift to be better or more desirable than God Himself.

All who repent unto a saving faith in Jesus are GIVEN the Holy Spirit, who subsequently continues to dwell within.

That is how (important to God) each one of us is.

Had the Bible not taught this, we would have thought it blasphemy.

This “Holy Spirit” FORMERLY resided in the temple at Jerusalem, in the chamber called ‘The most holy place’.

Now, He resides within each genuine believer.

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And so Paul wrote this, in 1 Corinthians 6:19,

(19) Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?

When you came to faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit took up residence within you. You may or may not have felt any different, but the Bible says, the Holy Spirit is there.

(SLIDE 6)

When Jesus died on the cross, as the substitutionary sacrifice for sins, the heavy curtain that partitioned the Most Holy Place, there in the temple, was torn from top to bottom,

Matthew 27:50 & 51, says THIS:

(50) But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice (from the cross) and gave up his spirit.

(51) Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom...

The tearing of the curtain indicated that God (through Jesus) has now made it possible for that same "Holy Spirit" (who formerly "dwelt apart" in the chamber of the temple called 'the most holy place') ... this tearing of the curtain indicated that God through Jesus has now made it possible for this same Holy Spirit to dwell within each genuine believer.

(SLIDE 7)

So coming back to Matthew 3:11, where John says Jesus will quote “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”, the HOLY SPIRIT is the extreme and DESIRABLE outcome.

It is literally as extreme to the GOOD as extreme can be.

Permanent, Personal and Individual fellowship with God, by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Whose presence is a tangible demonstration that each one of us is of immeasurable value to God.

The OTHER extreme is “Fire”.

As the Holy Spirit is extreme in a GOOD way, the ‘fire’ is extreme in a BAD way.

There is no ‘in between’.

For each member of fallen humanity, the outcome will be the most extreme good or the most extreme bad.

One either passes through the narrow Gate whose outcome is life (and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) or one passes through the wide Gate of eternal condemnation in fire.

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In Daniel 12:2, God says this:

Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to disgrace and eternal contempt.

This is describing the resurrection of the dead.

Everyone of fallen humanity will be raised from the dead, being given new, immortal bodies.

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The REDEEMED will experience OUR eternal outcome from within new, immortal bodies. Daniel calls this 'eternal life'.

(SLIDE 10)

Everyone else will experience eternity from within THEIR "new, immortal bodies" - what Daniel calls,

'disgrace and eternal contempt'

I don't want to dwell at length on this, because it is not edifying, but the Bible DOES speak of it, and the stakes could not be higher.

So I speak of it briefly.

Jesus is very consistent in His message about the eternal outcome for those who prove unwilling to repent.

Daniel has told us that Hell is eternal. He says those who are not redeemed are resurrected to "disgrace and ETERNAL contempt".

Once an unredeemed person has died, that person's condition of being under God's condemnation NEVER comes to an end.

(SLIDE 11)

In Matthew 13, verses 41 and 42, Jesus said this,

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom all who cause sin and those guilty of lawlessness. They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
(Matthew 13:41-42)

(SLIDE 12)

A few verses later, Jesus says,

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous (that is, they are separating the unredeemed people from the redeemed people) - the angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, and throw them (that is UNredeemed) into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:49-50)

This horrifying outcome is spoken of in multiple other places in the New Testament. But for our immediate purposes, I'll just go to ONE of them.

(SLIDE 13)

The book of Revelation, chapter 20, verses 11 through 15.

Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it.

Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them.

I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.

Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.

Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works.

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
(Revelation 20:11-15)

So Hell is a horrifying and unimaginably terrible outcome. Not only because of the torment it bodes, but because (for those who are subject TO it) it never ends.

Now, a person could reasonably ask - isn't the severity of God's eternal condemnation TOO extreme?

How can God's justice require such as THIS for unsaved humanity?

The answer is:

we humans underestimate how extreme SIN is.

My sin and your sin.

We were all born into a WORLD that is sinful, and we each have our own sin nature. Our own native-born sinful propensities.

In the aftermath of Adam and Eve, for humanity, sin is what we are born into. It is what we know.

Our eyes have gotten used to the dark, and we think it not that bad.

But the reality of a horrible and eternal condemnation for the unredeemed is consistently taught by the Bible.

This “horrible outcome” is a testimony to the truth about how extreme SIN is.

My sin is much too big for me.

Your sin is much too big for you.

It is God’s will that we BRING our sin to Jesus, and leave it there with Him, at the cross.

(SLIDE 14)

In Ezekiel 33:11, God says:

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live.

God does not WANT to condemn. He takes no pleasure in it. He desires to save.

This is why, He sent His only Son, the eternal, second person of the Triune God.

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God's Only Son condescended to take on a human body. And we were told to call Him "Jesus", which means 'Savior'.

As the angel said to Joseph, "He will save His people from their sins"

He was sent with a mission. **A mission to save the willing.**

Consistent with what God said in Ezekiel 33:11, John 3:17 says this,

...God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

The mission of Jesus was to (save the willing) from the horror of a lost eternity.

And this was accomplished by His own substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross.

Because Jesus IS the eternal Son of God who IS God, He is infinite.

My sin is not too big for Him.

Your sin is not too big for Him.

And so God the Father placed upon HIM the full unrestrained magnitude of His righteous anger toward sin.

The eternal wrath that was due US, fell on the infinite expanse of God's Son.

Through all eternity, I think (God's redeemed) will always appreciate more and more (the horror of Jesus' sacrifice), but we will never be able to grasp the entirety of it.

Finite people cannot grasp the infinite.

Just as Baptism in the Holy Spirit is extreme, just as Hell is extreme, just as sin is extreme, so also God's love for us, as shown in the sacrifice of Jesus.

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When those hours of His sacrifice, there upon the cross were over, Jesus pronounced, "It is finished".

The price had been paid.

As it says in 1 Peter 3:18,

Christ...suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God.

And in 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul writes:

(God the Father) made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(SLIDE 17)

And so when John the Baptist speaks in Matthew 3:11, He is presenting humanity with a choice between alternatives, each of which, is literally (as extreme) as extreme can be:

(Jesus) will baptize with the Holy Spirit, or He will baptize in the fire of eternal condemnation.

Now, a person might say, 'I don't hate Jesus'. I LOVE Jesus.

I don't WANT to take my guilt and put it on him.

And the answer to that is THIS:

It is God's will.

It is God's will for you (and for me) to take our sin to the cross and leave it with Jesus.

This is a matter of obedience.

Submit to the will of God.

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When you do that, then Paul's pronouncement applies to you:

In Romans 8:1, he says,

...there is now no condemnation for those (who are) in Christ Jesus...

With these things said, I'll turn our attention away from the extreme of FIRE, back to the OTHER extreme.

The gift of the Holy Spirit.

(Slide 19)

Through our faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God, the third person of the Triune God, now, amazingly, condescends to permanently dwell within.

As Paul says in Galatians 4:6

...because you are sons (through our faith in Jesus, we have been adopted into God's family... because you are sons), God sent the Spirit of HIS Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba, Father!"

Of course the word 'sons' (plural), here, is gender inclusive.

Here, the Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of HIS Son', because it is by the instrumentality of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit is sent TO us.

Nothing less than the third person of the Triune God now personally indwells each genuine believer.

And the Holy Spirit within us testifies to our hearts and minds that God the Father is indeed OUR Father.

Through our faith in Jesus, we have been adopted into God's family.

This is evidenced by the Holy Spirit who dwells within each believer.

You and I may sometimes fail to appreciate how great this gift of the Holy Spirit IS.

And we do well to ask,

What can I do, to demonstrate anew my sense of appreciation for all that God has done for me, and for the Holy Spirit who now dwells within me?

May I suggest a renewed diligence to live day by day in harmony WITH the Holy Spirit.

In Galatians 5:25, Paul writes:

(since) we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of Scripture - the Bible. Spend time daily reading and / or meditating on the Bible.

And spend time daily in prayer.

As Paul said in Ephesians 6:18,

“Pray at all times in the Spirit”

As you spend daily time in the Bible and in Prayer, you are making yourself available to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will help you and guide you.

From there, who knows what else He may put on your heart?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we pray that every person among us has redemption through faith in Jesus.

And we pray that each of us would continuously renew our appreciation for the great gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

May we spend time daily in your word (the Bible) and, as Paul says, 'praying at all times in the Spirit'.

In Jesus' name, amen.