

**The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit  
Galatians 5:16-26, Acts 2:42-47**

In 1965, an assistant coach for the football team at the University of Florida asked some of the university physicians to determine why so many of his players were being affected by heat and heat related illnesses.

The researchers soon discovered two key factors that were causing the Gator players to 'wilt': the fluids and electrolytes the players lost through sweat were not being replaced, and the large amounts of carbohydrates the players' bodies used for energy were not being replenished.

The researchers then went to their lab, and formulated a carbohydrate-electrolyte beverage that could replace those key components lost through sweating and exercise. They called their concoction 'Gatorade'.

Soon after the researchers introduced their Gatorade formula to the team, the Gators began winning... by outlasting their opponents in the heat, and finishing the season at 7-4.

The team's success improved even more during the 1966 season, with the Gators finishing at 9-2 and winning the Orange Bowl for the first time ever in the history of the school.

Word about Gatorade began to spread outside of the state of Florida. Soon other college football programs across the country began ordering the drink, as playing without Gatorade was like playing shorthanded.

Soon teams in the NFL began ordering Gatorade, and from there on many other professional sports leagues and organizations, like the NBA, PGA, and Professional Soccer, to name a few, began to endorse its use.

In 1985, the Gatorade Sports Science Institute was created to further study the areas of exercise science, hydration, and sport nutrition.

The result of their work can now be found in a variety of products and flavors, which as mentioned are used by all sorts

of professional sports organizations. Even NASCAR drivers are benefiting from their Gatorade-In-Car-drinking system.

And as an amateur athlete you can benefit as well, as all these products are available for the public, at your local convenience store.

Now I tell you this story because it's a great analogy to help you understand the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. In fact, there are some striking similarities which I want to show you.

Back somewhere around 33 AD, Jesus Christ noticed that his disciples were wilting in the oppressive heat of the Jewish political and religious climate.

Sure they were eager to get in the game, in fact Simon Peter is quoted as saying *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* (Matt 26:35)

But it soon became obvious to Coach Christ that his players were more talk than action.

Remember when Jesus went to pray at the Mount of Olives and He asked the disciples to pray with him? *"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. (Matt 26:40)*

And who can forget their performance in the final quarter of that game. One of their own teammates throws the game – Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Then, when Jesus is arrested all their talk about being willing to die with Jesus and never disowning him goes out the window.

They all desert Jesus and fled. They wilted and folded under pressure, they couldn't finish strong and pull off the win.

Truth be told – Jesus had always known they weren't up to the task. In fact, that was precisely why the Owner of the Israelite franchise had sent Him to be their New Head Coach.

And what the disciples had experienced was one of those lessons a coach allows his players to go through so that they will never forget it, and they would realize they needed what Jesus had told them about when He told them he was leaving.

You see the disciples weren't suffering from a lack of carbs and electrolytes, they were simply sinful, fallen human beings who lacked the understanding and power they needed to succeed as followers of Jesus Christ.

This is why in John 14 Jesus had told them he would send them the Holy Spirit, and it would be the Spirit who would give them what they needed to succeed.

And from this point on it's simply a matter of comparing the before and after stats and it's quite obvious that having the Spirit was what made it happen for the disciples.

Before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit the disciples had no understanding – Mark 4:13 *"Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you **understand** this parable? How then will you **understand** any parable?"*

Before the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them the disciples were full of fear – Matt 8:26, *Jesus replied, "You of little faith, why are you so **afraid**?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

When they didn't have the Holy Spirit the disciples were all talk and no action – Matt 26:35 Peter boasts *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* But when Jesus was arrested Peter disowned Jesus, denied knowing him.

Before they were filled with the Holy Spirit the disciples had no power. Mark 9:17-18 *A man in the crowd said "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit ... I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, **but they could not.**"*

Before the Holy Spirit was poured about the number of believers was low! – In Acts 1:15 we read *“In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)”*

But then Jesus ascended to Heaven and as He promised He sent the Holy Spirit. The disciples were waiting in Jerusalem as He had instructed them to do, and the Holy Spirit was poured out during the Old Testament celebration of the feast of Pentecost – and the disciples were empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit in them.

So, after they received the Holy Spirit the disciples when from having no understanding to being able to instruct unbelievers! Acts 2:14 Peter stands up and teaches a crowd of people *“Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.”*

After they will filled with the Holy Spirit the disciples were full of courage and no longer afraid. In Acts 4:29 they disciples pray *“Now, Lord, consider their (the religious leaders) threats*

*and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”*

And once they had the Holy Spirit in them the disciples were enabled to walk the talk. In Acts 4:19-20 the religious punish the disciples for preaching Jesus but Peter and John tell them *“Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

Once the disciples had received the Holy Spirit they were full of power, Acts 5:12, 16 says *“The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people.”* and *“Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.”*

And as a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit the number of believers increased dramatically! Acts 4:4 says *“But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.”*

So you can see the difference before and after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples was simply amazing!

And the result of this difference resulted in the establishment of the ***Association for Holy Spirit Living*** – better known as the Church. Our reading from Acts 2:42-47 describes what the early church was like – people devoting themselves to the apostles teaching, signs and wonders, meeting for worship everyday at the temple, and so on...

But I think we should take note that the result of the Holy Spirit's outpouring on individual disciples who do amazing works for individual people results in a new group, a new community, a church where people are *connected together* by the Holy Spirit. To stick with the sports metaphor, it created a new team of team players who played like a team.

And as the saying goes "*team work makes the dream work*" This Holy Spirit empowered team work caused a massive expansion for God's People starting new local teams all across the known world and eventually being a Holy Spirit

empowered team player in the Church became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and many other subsequent nations in history. The results of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the disciples and the early church are amazing and inspiring!

But... as with anything that experiences a great deal of success, it can grow beyond the initial motivation which caused it to grow. (as the Arizona Coyotes are finding out.)

Just like the story of Gatorade, it can seem a bit incredulous that what is a market-place giant these days, was once a fledgling concept of a sports drink that had to be pioneered and proven and overcome people's skepticism.

In the same way, it might seem to be incredulous and unbelievable to hear the story of what the early church and the disciple were like in the beginning and how they were changed by the out pouring of the Holy Spirit in such amazing ways when what we know as church today is either ineffective

and irrelevant or overly reliant on marketing and business strategies and staying relevant to maintain its appeal.

In both cases the passion and fire that helped start things off has been eclipsed by the massive growth that has resulted.

For the Christian faith the power and success of being the “official” religion of the West has caused us to lose sight of what originally motivated and started the church, or I should say the One, who originally motivated and started the church... The Holy Spirit!

And when we forget this brothers and sisters, when we look to other things to make the church relevant or rely on business and marketing to try to grow the church – it doesn’t work.

All around us we see the signs of the Church declining in North America and disregarded as something no longer important, just another option among many other things you can attend on a Sunday morning or be involved in if you want to.

But that’s why we need to be reminded of how the Church started off. How the outpouring of the Holy Spirit transformed the disciples and created a new community where people were forgiven and healed and changed and connected to each other in a Church that will outlast everything else.

And we know the Holy Spirit wants to renew us in this way at Valleyview because we’ve been invited to pray for what the Holy Spirit will birth among us... And He’s directed me to focus on preaching about His outpouring this month to help prepare us for that, so it’s important we understand that Church happens, we are the church together, being together, being connected to each other results in ministry to each other – healing - like we learned about last week...

And one of the ways we can discern if Valleyview is being renewed by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit as opposed to our own efforts and looking for the fruit of the Holy Spirit among us.

Are we experiencing transformation from being controlled by our sinful nature to having the Spirit poured out upon us so that we are bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit among us?

Not just individually and personally and privately but together... because the work of the Holy Spirit creates spiritual fellowship among us. So are we sharing the experience of transformation with each other and encouraging each other in it— working together in this, like a team?

Because brothers and sisters – to continue with the sports analogy in this message, in my role as an assistant coach I know how easy it is for us to “wilt” and “fold” in the middle of the game, in the heat of daily life and show little or no fruit!

One of the biggest reasons for this is because we’re afraid to play as a team, we’re afraid to share our faults and failings with each other, its embarrassing and we feel ashamed of how we struggle with sin, we want to keep that private and personal. When we’re going through tough times in life we don’t want people knowing about our business...

So, let’s talk about this – I’ll use an imaginary Valleyviewer as an example, let’s call him Mr. Goodman.

Mr. Goodman hears Gal 5 read in the service and is struck by verse 10 where it says *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious!”* and as the list is read out he thinks *“yep they are pretty shameful too! I hope some of these things aren’t too obvious in my life – how embarrassing would that be!”*

And as the list continues on, a couple of them bring back some old college memories he’d rather forget about, and things he would die of embarrassment if anyone in church knew about.

So, as the passage continues of to talk about the fruit of the Spirit, Mr. Goodman makes a classic error that snares many well intentioned believers. He thinks the point of the passage is telling us that the Fruit of the Spirit needs to be exhibited in our lives so that it covers up the acts of the sinful nature – much like lighting a fruity- scented candle to mask the things that stink up our homes.

So, if he can act Loving, Peaceful, Patient, and joyful... then it will cover up the acts of his sinful nature like pride, rage, sexual immorality, envy, selfish ambition or whatever particular flaws she has...

So he wears a “Christian” mask, especially at church and around church people so that no one knows about his real issues, or what is going on in his life and the result is that nobody know what he needs help with, he isn’t encouraged in his faith or obedience, nobody prays with him, he doesn’t receive any spiritual fellowship or friendship! But everyone thinks he’s a good man, a nice guy. But its fake.

Do you know the difference between real fruit and fake fruit?

Real fruit you can eat, it nourishes you, provides you with vitamins and nutrition and it helps you grow. It also contains seeds, ensuring that there is the possibility of reproducing.

But fake fruit just sits on the counter and looks good, it won’t reproduce and when a hungry person comes along looking for

food they will be disappointed, and when the heat gets turned up – fake fruit just melts. So when his marriage starts to fall apart so does Mr. Goodman’s “spiritual act” and his faith and good life wilts just like the University of Florida football players did when they didn’t have Gatorade.

Now a few years ago Gatorade had an advertising campaign with this slogan *“Is it in You?”* Brothers and sister, that’s the question we need to ask ourselves today. Is it in You? Is the Holy Spirit in us??

Well, we’ve learned about how the Holy Spirit is poured out this month in one sense we can say He is – as it relates to Baptism. When a football team wins a big game, what happens? The players take the cooler of Gatorade that’s sitting on the sidelines and they dump it over the coach’s head to celebrate their victory.

I want to invite you to think of baptism in that way – as a pre-season victory celebration where instead of Gatorade, it’s the Holy Spirit that is poured out on you.



Now I say its pre-season victory celebration because as we've learned about Baptism a few weeks ago, Baptism is a beginning – it's not an end. Spiritual baptism gets your relationship with God started, its not a demonstration of reaching a certain point of commitment to God and an ability to follow Him. That's we're asking you "Is HE in You?" or to use a more biblical phrase "*Are we being filled with the Holy Spirit?*"

Because the Father and Son have promised the Holy Spirit to us – to be in us and upon us... but whenever God promises us something it requires that we make a response as well. The Gatorade doesn't do the players much good just sitting there on the bench, they need to drink it.

And likewise the Holy Spirit doesn't do us any good if we don't pay much attention to Him, if He's just "the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the trinity..." if "he's the impersonal power of God" or we just give a nod to Him once a year when we remember the events of Pentecost. He needs to be in us... and we need more and more of Him in us!

We need His power so that we don't wilt or fold in the heat of the game, when life gets tough, instead we can finish the game as victors!

But since the Holy Spirit is God - the third person of the Trinity - and we can't manipulate, or coerce Him into filling us with his power. We can't just grab a drink of Holy Spirit like we grab a drink of Gatorade!

But we can ask him, and we can create an environment in ourselves which is conducive for the Holy Spirit to work in, we can grow in our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

So when we ask, we pray to Christ that He will give us more of the Holy Spirit which He promised to us.

We ask for more because the Holy Spirit has already working in us, bringing us to faith in Christ but we want to experience more of what the Spirit can do in our lives. We don't want to leave it at just believing in Christ – we want to be made like Him, which happens by connect with His body – the Church.

So let me wrap up with some encouragement to create that environment in our lives that is conducive to experiencing more of the Holy Spirit through Respecting, Repentance, and Relinquishing

We need to respect and honor the Holy Spirit and the best way to do that is acknowledge Him as God, and highlight His work, and then discern what He is doing and be obedient to it... 1 Thess 5:19-20 says *“Do not put out the **Spirit's** fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt”* Respect and obey Him.

And it might seem obvious, but we need to repent if we want **more** of the Holy Spirit. The word “repent” means to turn around and go in a different direction. So – if we haven’t really given much respect to the Holy Spirit before then we need to “turn around” and deliberately give Him more attention...

Additionally, our lives are so busy and hectic that is often very difficult to discern the Spirit’s presences and work. So we need to slow down, turn around from our hectic busy lives, and take a Sabbath – so that the Holy Spirit has time with us.

No time, no relationship with Him, very little of Him in us...

Don’t neglect him or offend him by ignoring Him, as Eph 4:30 says *“And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit** of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

Lastly we need to relinquish our attempts at trying to produce the fruit that the Spirit produces. Let Him produce it. I know many Christians feel it’s just so hard to live a Christian life. They just can’t do it. But that is because **they** are trying to produce the love, joy, peace, etc... but that is the Fruit which comes from the Spirit, not from us.. Jesus teaches us in Luke 12:12 when it comes to speaking *“the **Holy Spirit** will teach you at that time what you should say.”* It’s the same with His fruit.

So brothers and sisters – as the Holy Spirit is poured out among us... let us honor the power and presence of the Holy Spirit with respect, repentance and relinquishing so that His power and presence transforms us and we’re able to see the difference before and after, and give all glory and honor to God the Holy Spirit - Amen.