



The Holy Spirit is the gift of the Risen Christ. His anointing filling, empowering work is a baptism of love that gives power to make Jesus real to us and known to others.

April 21st The Shofar Acts 4 – John 10

The Church is Spirit driven

filled with the Holy Spirit... With those three Greek words, Luke sums up the source of power galvanizing the Church's mission in the world. Without this as a starting point, nothing the Church does, nothing to which Christians aspire has any hope of producing the lasting fruit expected by God. What began on Pentecost morning continues until the Son of Man returns. That is both the hope and promise made by Jesus and guaranteed by the Father.

The image comes from the ancient quarries. Stonemasons carefully selected the stones used in construction. No stone was more important than the cornerstone because the integrity of the whole structure depended on the cornerstone having the right lines. If the cornerstone was not perfectly aligned, the entire building would be out of line. The cornerstone was always the first stone laid during construction, and every other stone in the building was measured by the standard of the cornerstone to ensure a proper fit.

For that reason, builders inspected many stones, rejecting each one until they found the one they wanted. Rejected stones might be used in other parts of the building, but they would never become the cornerstone or the capstone (the first and last stones put in place). Only perfect stones for the would work for those key positions.

When Solomon was building the first temple to God, there was to be no noise. The stones were to be hewn in the quarry and brought to the place of construction. One of the stones was the largest stone ever taken out of a quarry. It weighed about 500 tons! It's a miracle of engineering that without the use of earth moving machinery, the Israelites were able to haul this "rock" to the temple site and set it in place.

Once there, the builders weren't sure what to do with it. It didn't seem to fit anywhere in the blueprints for the temple. So, the builders pushed it over the temple mount into the Kidron Valley and there it lay. Later, they realized their mistake and hauled it back up again. They placed it in the foundation of the temple

and it remains on the western wall of the temple mount to this day. It lies close to the location of the Holy of Holies. In Jesus' time, everyone in Israel knew about this stone. It was a well-known story to anyone familiar with the history of Israel. Later, in Ezra's day when the temple was rebuilt, and subsequently when Herod improved the structure, the stone remained in place.

Christian life is built on Jesus Christ

This image of the Church as God's house was common among the early believers. As Paul wrote, we are all no longer strangers and aliens on account of the perfect work of Christ. Because of the cross, Gentiles who entrust themselves to Jesus are reckoned as fellow citizens with faithful Israelites. Therefore, they are full members of the household of God (**Ephesians 2:19**). Like every building, this spiritual temple has a foundation that grounds and supports the building's structure. According to the apostle, Christ Jesus Himself is the cornerstone of this household (**v. 20**).

In calling Jesus the cornerstone, Paul explains that those who want to form the stones in the household of God must be conformed to the image of Christ. In other words, we must be disciples who are daily becoming more like the Saviour. Of course, perfect conformity to Christ's image is impossible before we are glorified (**1 John 1:8-9**); nevertheless, all of those who are in Jesus will have a basic desire to turn from sin and follow Him, willingly taking up our crosses (daily) in a life of obedient discipleship. Discipleship is not possible without the cross.

The Apostolic Tradition

There is a further spiritual development among early believers. Our Saviour is the

cornerstone of the household of God, but His apostles and prophets make up the rest of the foundation. This is not to say that these individuals are, in themselves, worthy of the same honour as Christ. Instead, the apostles and prophets serve as the foundation insofar as they speak the very words of our Lord. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write down the teachings of Jesus delivered before His incarnation (through the Old Testament prophets), during His earthly ministry, and after He ascended to the Father's right hand, thereby giving the church a sure record (**John 14:26; 16:12–15; 2 Tim. 3:16–17**). The words of the biblical texts are the revealed teachings of Jesus Himself.

When Peter preached to the Jewish leaders in **Acts 4:8–12**, he quoted **Psalm 118:22** to show that Jesus is the rejected stone whom God made to be the cornerstone of salvation. They (the Jewish leaders) rejected him, but God not only accepted him but put him in the position of highest honour.

Peter pressed the point home: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)*. These words are utterly exclusive. There is no other hope, no other way, and no other name than the Name of Jesus. If we desire to live within the reigning of God on earth, we must come God's way or we will not rejoice in those blessings.

Shepherds Good and Bad

Jesus takes the metaphor of good and bad shepherds from **Ezekiel 34**, which speaks of the shepherds of Israel—religious leaders—who feed themselves! Shouldn't the shepherds feed the sheep? *You eat the fat, and you clothe yourself with the wool, you kill the fatlings; but you don't feed the sheep (Ezekiel 34:2-3)*. It contrasts these bad shepherds with God, the true shepherd (**Ezekiel 34:11-31**). The passage concludes with God promising Israel, *You my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, says the Lord Yahweh (Ezekiel 34:31)*. As the Father shepherded Israel, so Jesus shepherds His Church.

Sadly, there are good and bad shepherds today, both clergy and laypeople and the difference between the two is in the shepherd's heart. The good shepherd cares about the people in his/her care, whether they are a diocese, a parish or just a few children in a Sunday school class. The good shepherd seeks ways to lead faithfully, relating to all who come their way as Jesus *The Good Shepherd* sees them and loves them. They stand for what is right, whatever the personal cost—even in the face of opposition or danger. Bad shepherds care only about their own welfare.

A bad shepherd comes in all shapes and sizes and does not always look evil. They may well promote ways of 'being Church' that are not faithful to the models we find in the Scriptures. They care more about balancing the finances, the latest church growth programmes, maintaining the old status quo, keeping people happy, anything but putting the people of God and their needs first. They do not prioritise mission but use their resources to maintain what is and what was. Fundamentally though, it is bad enough for a shepherd simply not to prioritise God's sheep placed in his/her care.

Shepherding is about relationships

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and I am known by my own" (v. 14). In verse **11**, the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. In verse **14**, the Good Shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep know him. The verb *know* is more than any kind of superficial knowledge—it refers to a deep and intimate experience, a passionate living relationship with God, one taking up every aspect of our lives.

The Old Testament talks of a man knowing his wife in the sense of sexual intimacy, a relationship that has significance beyond the physical act. When Jesus says that the good shepherd knows the sheep, he is not implying anything sexual, but is nevertheless talking about a very significant relationship.

One of the ways we know God loves us is because of the sacrifice he made for us in his Son, Jesus Christ. That is the only valid measure of genuine Christian love: it comes at a cost, demanding a self-sacrificing loving service.