**Believing and Receiving (Acts 8:14-25)**

 The one who believes in Christ is called to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

 Greetings dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we bring up today an extremely important topic which was understood plainly in the era of the church led by the Apostles. Our passage is taken from the encounter between Philip and Simon the Magician. The people were coming to the Lord because of Philip’s preaching – even Simon himself had believed in the Gospel. Concurrently, it was clear that the Apostles in Jerusalem understood that the life of the church was based on the Gospel of Christ. In addition, they made it clear through how they served in the church that without the power of the Holy Spirit, which reception was obvious or able to be noticed, the believer’s condition as a member of the church was somehow incomplete. Therefore, today we’re going to be talking about these two interconnected and extraordinarily important spiritual realities: mainly, believing in Christ and then receiving the Holy Spirit. Again, I want to reiterate that the one who believes in Christ is called to the filled with the Holy Spirit. Let’s speak, therefore, about this foundational truth.

 In order to live the life of faith, the reception of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. If the event of many people receiving the Spirit had only happened once, we would have said that the above passage was exceptional. However, since we have many such instances noted in Acts, we are called to understand that the reception of the Holy Spirit often occurred in different manners but was always linked to the preaching of the Gospel and its acceptance. When Philip preached the Gospel and was performing miracles, the people were being converted. However, the Holy Spirit had not visibly fallen on them. For that reason, when the Apostles heard about it, they went to Samaria and became the means by which the Spirit rested and filled the believers in that region. Let us notice, especially, that the Apostles were not satisfied with the fact that the people only believed the Word. Rather, they felt the need to travel that distance and lay their hands on and empower people that they previously would have hated as Jews.

 Examples of this believing-receiving reality are many in Scripture. For example: In the second chapter of Acts, the Apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. In the fourth chapter, when the believers were filled, they spoke the Word of God boldly. In the tenth chapter of Acts, Peter hears the voice of the Spirit and becomes the means by which Cornelius and his household are saved and filled by the Spirit (prior to baptism, interestingly enough…). In this last case, the in-filling experience was characterized by bold witnessing and the speaking of tongues. And so, there are many examples of the visible activity of the Holy Spirit at the moment of being filled.

 This reality is relevant for us because we are not that used to sharing our supernatural stories or testimonies with each other (yet). It is possible that many of us have not experienced that fullness of the Spirit, or perhaps we have experienced or felt the Spirit, but neglected to keep that “fullness” alive within us.

Therefore, our task is to pray and examine ourselves: if we have not visibly received the Holy Spirit, let us set up a time and come together (pastor and congregant), and let us pray by laying on of hands for the power of the Spirit to visibly or tangibly appear on each one of us that receives prayer. I know from my own personal experience that the power of the Holy Spirit changes your whole life. Things like believing in the Lord, loving Him, seeing miracles in your life, accepting them for yourself when you need them, and becoming a means of signs and wonders become not only more frequent, but also we begin to resolve sin issues, bondages, weaknesses and other difficulties more quickly. We cleanse ourselves of sin by confession and repentance much more easily and we get free of spiritual chains in similar fashion.

So, if you have believed in the Word like the Samaritans did in Acts 8 but have not received the Holy Spirit in a tangible manner, it is time for you to make an appointment so that we can pray together with the laying on of hands for the reception of the Spirit. Thus, you will have not only received the Word, but also the Power to put it into practice, to obey it, and through it to have the ability to live out the Spirit-led life.

 In order to live the life of faith, the reception of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. The one who believes in Christ is called to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

 May God fill us all with the Spirit with clear accompanying signs and keep us filled every day. I await your communications and am ready to pray with you. May the Lord bless you all. Amen.