Our Risen and Ascendant King: Promises (Part 1)

Introduction

The Text

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (**Acts 1:1–11**)

“Promise”

1. This morning now we are setting our sights on **v. 4** and it’s this “**promise**” Jesus mentions there that we shall be considering in greater detail together. Look at it again: “And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the ***promise*** of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me . . . .’”
   * 1. And **v. 5** and later **v. 8** make it plain that we’re talking about the promised gift of the “**Holy Spirit**”.
2. **This morning** our focus will be on this “**promise**” of the Spirit more broadly conceived. **Next time**, we shall take up the idea of what Jesus calls here the “**baptism**” of the Spirit in particular.
   1. I’m going to organize my thoughts, then, under two headings: (1) **Promise Made**; and (2) **Promise Kept**.
3. But let me at least say this from the outset: **We have a faithful God**. If he ***makes*** a promise, he ***keeps*** that promise.
   1. As he says to the prophet **Jeremiah**: “I am watching over my word to perform it” (**Jer. 1:12**).
   2. Or as he says to the prophet **Habakkuk**, when he’s starting to doubt and struggle with what God is doing and where he’s at: “[S]till the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay” (**Hab. 2:3**).
   3. As **Joshua** said to the people of Israel just before his death: “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed” (**Josh. 23:14**).
   4. And now here **Jesus** is about to depart from his disciples and he’s essentially saying the same thing: *“In years past, we’ve* ***promised*** *that the gift of the Spirit was coming. Well, the* ***time of fulfillment*** *is now!”*
      1. He’s a faithful God. He’ll be **faithful to you**.

(1) Promise Made

New But Not Novel

1. The first thing I want you to realize is that this **isn’t the only place** in the NT where we’re told that the Holy Spirit was in some way ***promised*** to us by God at earlier stages in redemptive history.
   * 1. So Paul writes in **Gal. 3:14** that, through faith, we “receive the ***promised*** Spirit.”
     2. And later, in **Eph. 1:13**, he says that we’ve been “sealed with the ***promised*** Holy Spirit.”
2. The bestowal and outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, then, while ***new*** in one sense, it certainly is not ***novel***.
   1. What I mean is simply this: while it may be **new in terms of our experience** of God and things, this is not something God threw together ***randomly***—it is not out of ***left field***.
      1. In many ways the Spirit can be understood, it seems to me, as the **sweet center of the New Covenant**, which God has been ***speaking about*** and ***working towards*** for quite some time.
3. And so now I simply want to ask: **Where?** Where has he promised such a thing? And **why?**
   1. Perhaps we should take the ***why*** question first as that will set the stage for what we see in the ***where*** . . .

*Why* Does God Promise?

1. So **why** does God promise to give us his Holy Spirit? Well, to understand this we must go back to the **very beginning**.
2. All three members of the **Trinity**—the ***Father***, ***Son***, and ***Spirit***—can be seen, it seems to me, right there in the **opening verses** of our Bibles.
   1. From the outset of **creation**, we’re told that “the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters” (**Gen. 1:2**).
   2. And then in **v. 3** this divine person, whom we might now call the **Father**, speaks: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” The ***Father spoke*** and the ***Spirit executed*** on the basis of that word.
   3. But **John**, in his gospel, reflecting on creation and Christ’s part in it all, places Jesus, the **Son**, in between Father and Spirit at this point, identifying him, in some sense, as the **divine word**: “ 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (**John 1:1-4**).
      1. We may still be **uncertain** as to whom John is referring to here, but down in **v. 14** he makes it ***abundantly plain***: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the ***only Son*** from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
3. ***Father***, ***Son***, ***Spirit***—all were magnificently engaged in this opening work of creation, the **capstone** of which, of course, comes on day six with the creation of ***human beings***, man and woman, together made in God’s image.
   1. He forms Adam from ***dust*** and ***breathes*** into him. It’s an ***intimate picture*** establishing ***intimate relation***.
4. You and I were created for **deep, satisfying relationship** with the triune God. We were ***enveloped*** by these divine persons, as it were, ***folded into fellowship*** with them. Located in a **garden paradise**. Given the mission of partnering with them in **filling the world** with refractions of his glory.
   1. But, bottom line: **We would not have it**. God tells us no. And nobody tells us no. *“I’ll what I want to eat. I will be* ***king****. I will be* ***queen****. I will be* ***god****.”* It’s **insane**. We are ***creatures*** and yet we would dare rebel against the ***Creator***, the Almighty.
      1. And don’t think for a moment you **don’t relate** to Adam and Eve here. ***Every sin*** you ever commit is a **participation in the mutiny** of this very ***first one***. *“He says no, but I say, unequivocally, yes. I want what I want and I want it now.”*
         1. And so because of our sin we rightly incur the **curse of God**. Of necessity, we’re ***thrust*** from his holy presence—condemned to dwell with ***barren hearts*** in ***barren lands***.
5. But now, hear me: The only thing **more insane** than ***our stubbornness in sin*** is ***God’s stubbornness in grace***.
   1. He should’ve just **kicked us to the curb** and let it be.
   2. But, perhaps as he contemplated such severe yet appropriate action, it would seem his **heart** ***recoiled with objection*** and ***welled up with compassion***. And he said: *“I can’t. I won’t. I love him. I love her. Too much.”*
      1. It’s true, what Paul says in **Rom. 5:20**: “[W]here sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”
         1. Every Christian in this room: your ***testimony*** is a ***testament*** to the veracity of this verse. It’s true.
            1. I was ***running from him*** as fast as my feet could carry, but he was ***running after me*** even faster! His lovingkindness ***outpaced*** and, eventually, ***overwhelmed*** my resistance.
6. Maybe you’re in a place right now where you’re **running from God**. Why would you run from the one who loves you so?
   1. Whatever sin is promising you, it’s counterfeit, it’s **fool’s gold**. It may be ***shiny*** on the outside, but you go to cash it in and find it’s ***worth*** ***nothing***. Don’t trade God who is everything for that which is nothing. He’s here. He’s running after you.
      1. As David says in **Ps. 23:6**: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow [Heb. radaf = ‘pursue’] me all the days of my life . . . .” **Stop running** and let his goodness and mercy ***overtake you***. Let it happen today. Let it happen right now.
7. So, seeing this in Adam and Eve, seeing this in a fallen humanity, seeing this in you and me . . . God starts **making promises**—looking forward to a time when he will ***overturn the curse*** and ***redeem*** and even ***recreate*** his people through an ***outpouring of his Holy Spirit***.
8. So, again, **why** does he promise such a thing? Two reasons: (1) because ***we desperately need*** it; and (2) because ***he’s happy to provide*** it.

*Where* Does God Promise?

1. But now we come to that other question we posed at first: namely, **where?** Where does he promise such a thing?
2. Well, there are, of course, **many places** we could go, but there are times where God gets more ***explicit***, particularly in the **prophetic books**. And I wanted to drop in on just a few of those with you now . . .
   1. Peter, in his Pentecost sermon in **Acts 2**, is going to point to **Joel 2:28-32** in particular.
      1. But the promise of the gift of the Spirit certainly **goes beyond** even what Joel says here and, because we’re going to deal with that in more detail in the **coming weeks**, I figure now would be the time to show you a few ***other texts*** instead.
   2. So consider, for example, **Isa. 32:15**. While God bemoans what his people have become in their sin, he looks forward to the day when “***the Spirit is poured upon us from on high***, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field . . . .” He goes on to say that, in that day, “ 16 justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. 17 And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. 18 My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (**vv. 16-18**).
      1. *“No longer will they have* ***barren hearts*** *in* ***barren lands****. I’ll overturn the curse, transform their hearts and make fruitful their contexts, through the outpouring of my Spirit.”* In other words: ***“I’ll bring them back to me.”***
   3. Later in **Isa. 44:1-5**, after talking about how he’ll blot out his people’s sins and remember them no more he says this: “ 1 But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! 2 Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not . . . . 3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; ***I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring***, and my blessing on your descendants. 4 They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. 5 This one will say, ‘I am the LORD’S,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’S,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”
      1. Does anyone in here feel like ***thirsty land***? Like your heart is just a ***desert***? You don’t feel ***full or satisfied***. You feel ***dry and dead***.
         1. God says, *“Don’t fear. I’m coming to help. When I* ***pour out my Spirit*** *it will flow like* ***streams in the Sahara****. Whatever was dry and dead before will suddenly burst with life!”*
   4. The prophet **Ezekiel** records numerous promises of similar import. Take, for example, **Ezek. 36:22-36**. Here he’s considering the **exile**—which is really just a ***redemptive-historical recapitulation*** of what happened with Adam and Eve as the people of God are thrust out yet again from the presence of God and the land of promise—and he writes this: “22 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23b . . . And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a ***new spirit*** I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And ***I will put my Spirit within you***, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. 30 I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. 32 It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

33 “Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. 34 And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. 35 And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ 36 Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.”

* + 1. Listen, he’s not just talking about ***Israel’s return to the land***.
    2. He’s talking about the **New Covenant** which culminates ultimately in the ***New Jerusalem***, the ***new heavens and new earth***. That’s the trajectory.
       1. And it starts with the **outpouring of his Spirit**, whereby we’re ***washed*** of our uncleanness and ***changed*** from the inside out.
  1. And, it’s amazing, he actually goes on from here to write about that vision he’s given of the **valley of dry bones**. Where it’s just death all around. And then, in response to the ***word of God***, the ***breath of God*** starts to blow (it’s the same Hebrew word for ***‘Spirit’*** [Heb. ruach]). Then, bit by bit, the **bones** start to rattle, and they come together. And then suddenly there’s **sinew** and **flesh** and **skin**. And, by the end of it, the people of God are ***alive***!
     1. At first it may sound like something out of a **horror movie**.
     2. But it’s quite the opposite. It’s a picture of ***redemption*** and ***regeneration***. He's going to ***open the grave*** of our hearts. He’s going to ***raise the dead man in me***. He’s going to ***pour out his Spirit upon a spiritual cemetery*** and bring life!
        1. It’s a picture ultimately of ***new creation***. As God first ***breathed into Adam***, he’s going to ***breathe again into us***.
  2. And the vision ends yet again with those **all-authoritative words** from the LORD: “I have ***spoken***, and I will ***do*** it . . . .” (**Ezek. 37:14**).
     1. The burning question now is: **How exactly?** How is he going to do it? We know the Spirit is going to be given and poured out, but how exactly? And when?

1. Well, this leads us to the **second heading** for this morning. Now we transition from the ***Promise Made*** to the ***Promise Kept*** . . .

(2) Promise Kept

The Journey of the Son

1. Here, of course, is where **Jesus** starts to come into view. Jesus knows this is a ***central component to his mission***. It’s why he’s come.
   1. That’s why, if you noticed, back in **Acts 1:4**, we see that these **promises** of the Spirit were not just ***made by the Father*** in times past, they were ***reiterated by the Son*** throughout his earthly ministry: “wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘***you heard from me*** . . . .’”
      1. Now, we don’t have time to consider **all the texts** in the gospels he’s possibly referring to when he says this (cf. **Luke 11:13**; **12:12**; **John 14-16**; etc.).
         1. All I want for you to see at this point is that **attention is now being drawn to the Son** as the one ***by and through whom*** the Spirit will ultimately be given to us.
2. The gospel records we have portray Jesus as he is **en route** to becoming the ***dispenser of the Spirit***. It is a privilege he **earns the right** to, we could say, by way of his ***death***, ***resurrection***, and ***ascension***.
   1. He personally ***knows and experiences*** the Spirit of God, but there is a **journey** he must take if he is, in fact, to become the ***source***, the ***distributary***, the ***dispenser*** of that Spirit to us.
3. So let me spend a moment here and give you some of the **highpoints along this journey** . . .
   1. The gospels begin, if you recall, with Jesus being **conceived** by the Holy Spirit. So **Gabriel** says to **Mary**: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (**Luke 1:35**).
   2. And then later, after being **baptized by John** in the Jordan, we see that Jesus is **anointed** by Holy Spirit: “ 21 [T]he heavens were opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (**Luke 3:21–22**).
   3. After this, we’re told that he’s “***full*** of the Holy Spirit” (**Luke 4:1**) and that he’s **driven** by the Spirit out into the **wilderness**, where he’s ***tested and trained*** with a view to his coming combat with the devil at the cross.
   4. Then he returns from the wilderness forty days later “in the ***power*** of the Spirit,” we’re told (**Luke 4:14**). And he enters a **synagogue** there in Nazareth on the Sabbath, opens the scroll of **Isaiah** and reads these words from **Isa. 61:1-2**: “‘ 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’ 20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’” (**Luke 4:18–21**).
      1. *“I am the* ***Messianic Servant of the Lord****, anointed with the* ***Spirit of the Lord****, to set free the* ***people of the Lord****.”* **Liberty** is coming. But perhaps not in the way any would have **expected**.
   5. So Jesus, later, when he’s sitting with his disciples around the table of the **Last Supper**, he talks about how the **new covenant** promised by **Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel** and **others** is about to be established by him through his ***broken body*** and ***poured out blood*** on the cross there in Jerusalem: “This cup that is poured out for you is the ***new covenant*** in my blood” (**Luke 22:20**).
   6. And then Matthew records that they **sung a hymn** and proceeded to go out to the **Mount of Olives** where he tells them this: “ 31 You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ***‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’***” (**Matt. 26:31–32**).
      1. Now, these disciples ***might not see it***, we might not see it, but **Jesus knows** precisely what he’s doing here.
         1. He’s quoting from **Zech. 13**. In its broader context, it’s another passage that points to and promises the ***outpouring of the Spirit of God***. I skipped over it earlier, because I wanted to look more closely at it now . . .
4. The quote from Jesus comes in **Zech. 13:7**, so let’s start there: “‘ 7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. 8 In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. 9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, “They are my people”; and they will say, “The LORD is my God”’” (**Zech. 13:7–9**).
   1. First note that God calls this “shepherd” “the man who **stands next to me**.”
      1. This shepherd, the “**Good Shepherd**” as Jesus would call himself in **John 10**, ***dwells side by side*** with the Lord.
   2. And yet, by God’s doing he shall be undone. God awakens the “**sword**” and ***brings it down*** upon his Son.
      1. He’s **“struck”** [Heb. ***nakhah***]. It’s the same word used to describe what befalls the Suffering Servant in **Isa. 53**: “ 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten [or ‘struck’ = Heb. nakhah] by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (**vv. 4–6**).
         1. “The good shepherd ***lays down his life*** for the sheep” (**John 10:11**).
   3. And though ***many will turn away from him*** because of the offense of the cross, there will be others whom this text will be ***“refine[d]”***. Their hearts will be opened to him. They will ***call*** upon him. He will ***answer*** them. They will be ***his*** ***people*** and he will be ***their God***.
      1. It’s the same sort of thing we saw earlier that **Isaiah** and **Ezekiel** had promised, now with ***Jesus brought front and center***.
5. But **where is the Spirit?** That’s what this whole thing has been about. Where is this gift, this outpouring?
   1. Well, that’s what’s described wonderfully just a **few verses prior**. Look up at **Zech. 12:10**: “ 10 ***I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy***, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. . . . 13:1 On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (**Zech. 12:10, 13:1**).
      1. **John 19:37** explicitly ties ***this piercing of God***, or this ***shepherd***, or this ***only son***, to the ***piercing of Jesus Christ on that cross*** there in Jerusalem.
      2. And it’s only John who mentions that when he’s pierced both “**blood and water**” flow (**John 19:34**).
         1. And I have to think, knowing that **Zech. 12-13** is already in his mind, that he’s likely there drawing a connection between the ***piercing of our Savior*** and the ***opening of this fountain*** filled with living water for the cleansing of our sin.
            1. Because he ***poured out his blood for us***, he can now ***pour out his Spirit upon us***!
      3. This is why **after his resurrection**, John records that Jesus appears to his disciples, shows them the ***scars*** in his hands and his side (the ***pierced places***), and then he breathes on them and says: ***“Receive the Holy Spirit”*** (**John 20:22**).
         1. It’s a throwback to **Ezek. 37** which itself is a throwback to **Gen. 1-2**.
         2. The meaning, I think, is plain: He’s the one come to ***create us anew***, to bring ***life from the dead***, to bring ***streams to the Sahara***, to ***wash us of our sin***, to ***soften our granite hearts***, to ***lead us back to God***.
            1. And it’s because of his ***death***, his ***substitution***, in my place condemned he stood. He gets the ***curse of Adam***. We get the ***Edenic paradise***.
6. He’s the one who now, not only ***has the Spirit***, but also the one who ***freely and abundantly gives it***.
   1. As **Peter** will stand up declare boldly on the day of **Pentecost**, **Acts 2:32-33**: “ 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”
      1. And he’s able and willing to pour it out **on you**.

What Does This Mean for Us?

1. Now there is so much I could say regarding what all this **means for us**, but I’ll draw out just **one implication** for your consideration and then we’ll wrap things up.
2. I wonder if any of you saw the **buzz** that was circling around a few weeks ago regarding the actor **Brendan Fraser**.
   1. He was bigtime in the **nineties** and the **early 2000s** and then he kind of just disappeared from the Hollywood scene for quite a while.
   2. And it’s only been within the last couple of years that he’s **mounted a comeback**. I guess there was a lot of stuff he’d been personally wrestling through, so it’s a big deal. It’s great.
   3. And he just won Best Actor at the **Critic’s Choice Awards** for his work in the movie *The Whale*.
   4. And he had the opportunity to give an **acceptance speech**. And it was very ***emotional***, very ***genuine***, very ***heartfelt***.
   5. And everyone seemed **deeply moved** by it. Everyone was talking about it—how special this speech was, how important, how inspiring. Perhaps you saw the clips making the rounds on ***social media*** and the ***news*** and elsewhere.
3. The **soundbite** that kept circling was this little **bit of advice** that he gives at the end of his speech. I’ll read it to you here: “If you—like a guy like Charlie, who I played in this movie—in any way struggle with obesity or you just feel like you’re in a dark sea: I want you to know that, if you too can have the strength to just get to your feet and go to the light, good things will happen.”
   1. And the crowd gets ***on their feet***. The sound of ***applause*** fills the room. There’s not a ***dry eye*** in the place.
4. But now, listen . . .
   1. I don’t mean him any ***disrespect***. I’m not trying to be a ***hater***, alright. I know he’s been through some stuff and it’s good to see him coming out on the other side.
   2. But if you look past the emotion and the tears and things and really attempt to analyze his advice to us in this speech, you’ll find it, I think, to be ***profoundly unhelpful***.
      1. It may make you feel good in the moment, give you the ***warm fuzzies***, but you go to grab onto this in your **dark night**, and you realize there’s ***nothing there***.
5. Look at it. In essence, here’s **what he’s saying**:
   1. *“If you’re* ***really struggling and you feel stuck****, just find the strength to get* ***unstuck****.”* What? If I had the strength to get unstuck, I wouldn’t be stuck!
   2. *“If you feel like your* ***lost in the dark****, just find the strength to walk towards the* ***light****.”* Serious? If I could see the light, I wouldn’t be lost in the dark!
   3. *“If you feel like you’re* ***drowning in a deep sea****, just find the strength to* ***swim*** *back up to the surface.”*  Listen, if I could swim, I wouldn’t be drowning. I can’t swim anymore, that’s the point!
      1. So it sounds good, it sounds nice, but it's about as **solid and stable as a cloud**. You go to put your weight on it, to step out onto it, and you just ***fall right through***.
6. His advice, at bottom, amounts to this: *“If you’re struggling, just* ***dig deep and save yourself****.”*
   1. And we’ve seen how that goes. It doesn’t work. Maybe you can ***pull it together*** for a bit here or there, but on the whole, if it’s up to you, you’re ***going down***.
7. Now here’s why I bring this up. Here’s what’s so amazing about **the gospel** and about what Jesus is trying to get across to his disciples and us here in **Acts 1:4** about the ***promise of the Spirit***.
   1. Listen, he’s not expecting you to ***claw your way back up out of the pit*** and towards God. *“You screwed it up. It’s on you. Figure it out!”*
   2. No! In Jesus, with the Spirit, God offers us precisely the opposite. He knows we don’t have it, we can’t do it, we won’t make it. So ***he comes down to us.***
      1. *“Are you* ***lost in the******dark****. I am the* ***light****”* (cf. **John 9:5**).
      2. *“Do you feel* ***overwhelmed with weakness****? My* ***grace is sufficient****”* (cf. **2 Cor. 12:9**).
      3. *“Do you feel like you just* ***can’t go on****? The* ***Good Shepherd*** *is going to pick you up, throw you over his shoulders, and carry you if he has to”* (cf. **Luke 15:3-7**).
      4. *“I will* ***pour out my Spirit*** *upon you . . . and* ***bring you home****.”*
8. So hear me:
   1. *If you’re* ***really struggling*** *and you feel like you’re in a* ***dark sea****: I want you to know* . . . ***you don’t have the strength*** to just get to your ***feet*** and go to the ***light***, and ***make*** ***good*** ***things*** ***happen***. And that’s okay.
   2. Because **Jesus does**. And he’s ***s***, in this place, right now.
      1. So forget trying to ***dig deep*** and ***turning in on ourselves***.
      2. Let’s ***turn to him***. Let’s ***cry out to him***. Let’s beg him for a fresh ***outpouring of his Spirit***.
         1. He’s ***promised*** it. He will ***do*** it!