

Power from on High

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit

Three thousand souls saved in one day! And baptized! The 3,000 *continued* in the true doctrine and in prayer! They all loved each other and shared with the needy. The surrounding community was awed! The new believers happily praised God. More were saved daily!

Is that what you are experiencing? Have you ever seen anything close to that? Are you satisfied with seeing little or no life changing power in your ministry and witness?

Don't be discouraged. The preacher who saw those spectacular results had been a defeated failure less than two months before these amazing events. He was publicly seen cursing, swearing, lying, and denying Jesus.

What gave this timid coward such power?
“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost”
(Acts 2:4).

Jesus had said,

And, behold I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... (Acts 1:8).

I used to read of how Savonarola in the fifteenth century thundered against the sins of the wicked city of Florence, Italy, with little effect, until he received an anointing that so empowered him that

Everywhere he went, his denunciations of sin awakened much alarm.... The people were so eager to hear him that they rose in the middle

of the night and waited for hours for the cathedral doors to open.¹

The people of Florence abandoned their vile and worldly books and read Savonarola's sermons. Everyone prayed and went to church, the rich gave freely to the poor, merchants restored all the merchandise they had dishonestly acquired.... Even the hoodlums and street urchins stopped singing their crude songs and sang hymns instead. ...They made huge bonfires of... their worldly books, obscene pictures, and other things of the kind.²

I heard about how, in the nineteenth century, D. L. Moody preached to big crowds with some success. After he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached the same sermons, but instead of seeing 5 or 6 saved he saw hundreds saved.

¹ James G. Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, Whitaker House, 1998, p. 62, 63.

² James G. Lawson, p. 65.

Can we get this same power? How? What is the evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

First, we must know that all true Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. **“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”** (Rom. 8:9). **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Rom. 8:14).

But are all Christians filled with the Spirit? No. Because we are commanded to **“be filled with the Spirit”** (Eph. 5:18). God would not command us to do something we are all, automatically doing anyway.

So all Christians have the Holy Spirit, but not all Christians are filled with the Spirit. It is plain that most of us do not have the power of God on our ministry!

Can we get this power?

Yes.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).

The Holy Spirit is a *gift*. “...Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “...On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:45). We do not earn, merit, or deserve this gift.

How can we get this power?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:13).

Jesus told of a man needing bread late one night for his guest. He went to his friend at midnight asking to borrow three loaves. His friend was already in bed and did not want to be bothered. But because of the insistence and continual knocking of the man needing bread, the friend finally got up and gave him as much as he needed. Then Jesus said,

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:9-13)

We are like that man who needed bread. **“A friend of mine in his journey is come unto me, and I have nothing to set before him.”** We have people cross our paths who need eternal life, and we are powerless to help them. We need help from heaven!

So Jesus gave this wonderful promise: **“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”** (Luke 11:13).

Jesus spoke of the Spirit, not only as bread, but also as living water:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...) (John 7:37-39).

Jesus not only meets our own needs by His Spirit, but He generously gives enough for *many others* around us. If you are thirsty, He does not just give a few drops, not just a glass, but *rivers* of living water!

What do you need? Love? Joy? Peace? Power? Other things? Jesus can bless you so much that you will overflow with blessings to *many others*!

Jesus showed that the Holy Spirit is a *gift*. Not earned, not deserved. He offered this gift to

an immoral woman. She had had five husbands, and at the time had another man who was not her husband. Jesus said to her,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink: thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water (John 4:10).

She believed. Jesus met her need. He quenched her thirst, so she immediately even had the power to win many others to Christ!

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did (John 4:39).

What power attended her testimony! Her power obviously did not come from formal religious education. Her power did not come from high tech equipment. Or money. **“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6).**

The Urgency

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not just a nice option for those who would like the extra bonus. The Word of God *commands* us to be filled with the Spirit. **“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”** (Ephesians 5:18). We are disobedient if we are not filled with the Spirit!

Another fact that has prodded me to boldly ask for the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the Lord’s warnings of hell. I *must* minister in the fullness of power in order to save many from everlasting fire! It is not just for my enjoyment and success that I must be filled with the Spirit. The dreadful fact of everlasting punishment compels me to turn to God for His power, for the sake of others!

If I am to obey the great command to love my lost neighbor as myself, I can expect God to endue me with His power. Powerless preaching and powerless witnessing will not do!

Hindrances to God's Power

Jesus said we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by asking. Are there any hindrances? *Often there are.* Sin is a hindrance to any prayer. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”** (Ps. 66:18).

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that is cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1,2).

Jesus offered the sinful woman the Holy Spirit as a gift, but He did point out her sin. Peter and the apostles said God gives the Holy Spirit **“to them that obey Him”** (Acts 5:32). Sin and disobedience will block the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Is there sin in your life? Hate it. Confess it. Turn away from it.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13).

We must know what sin is hindering our prayers. We would want to know if we were about to mistakenly eat poison. We would want to be warned if we were about step on a deadly snake or step off of a cliff. We should want to be notified if we are sinning! Here is a helpful prayer to find out if there is sin that would hinder God’s blessings:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139: 23,24).

Have you hurt someone and failed to make it right? Have you stolen or borrowed and never restored it? Are you feeding your sexual lusts by what you watch or do? Are you being dishonest? Is there someone you have not forgiven? Are you

obeying the authorities God has placed over you, your parents, your husband, the laws? Is there something you do that you cannot do in faith? **“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”** (Rom. 14:23). Have you surrendered yourself and all you have to the Lord? **“Render ...unto God the things that are God’s”** (Mt. 22:21).

God cannot stand the prayer of the person who refuses God’s commands.

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination (Prov. 28:9).

Have you made someone or something an idol? **“...I the Lord thy God am a jealous God”** (Exodus 20:5).

Are you more concerned about the opinions of people than the approval of God?

How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (John 5:44

...If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

Are you too proud:

- To be a servant to those around you? **“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet”** (John 13:14).
- To treat those of a lower class as better than yourself? How about those of another race? **“Let each esteem other better than themselves”** (Phil. 2:3)
- To submit to the authorities God has placed over you?

“God resisteth the proud” (James 4:7). So the opposition and resistance you have faced may have been *from God!* 1 Peter 5:5 also says, **“God resisteth the proud.”**

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

So we receive the Holy Spirit by asking. But, as with all prayer, sin harbored in our lives hinders God from answering.

Here's a word of encouragement and of caution. The devil will try to plague our consciences and push us to unscriptural extremes. (He tries to block our confidence in God's promise. He hates us, he hates God, and he hates those who could be saved if we were filled with the Holy Spirit.) Just obey what God has said, and relax. Don't get into bondage by adding to it. **“And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts”** (Psalm 119:45).

What is the evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

I know I need help from heaven to meet my own needs and to win the lost. I have heard Jesus' promise, and I have asked. I have confessed and renounced every known sin. *How do I know when I am filled with the Holy Spirit?* Do I keep on praying? Do I fast until I see results? Do I wait till I speak in tongues? Do I insist on receiving the gift of tongues? Will I have a wonderful experience? What is the evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me... unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Jesus said the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit is *power for witnessing*.

Other evidences of the fullness of the Spirit are singing to the Lord, thanking Him, and submitting to one another.

...Be filled with the Spirit;

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:18-21).

Sometimes there are other accompanying signs. At Pentecost there was **“a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting”** (Acts 2:2) when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Occasionally God still does the same thing. Erlo Stegen in South Africa writes:

The day came when God rent the heavens, as it were, and came down while we were gathered together. Suddenly we heard a noise like a great wind.... Everybody was conscious of the presence of God without anybody saying a word.

...The Spirit of God came over that place... and brought the people [wanting to be saved]. The first person to come was a witch who lived seven kilometres away and was in charge of a training school for witches.... “I need Jesus. Can He save me? I am bound with chains of hell. Can He break these chains?”³

[A little later] With the glory of heaven shining on her face and in her eyes, she cried,

³ Erlo Stegen, *Revival among the Zulus*, Kwasizabantu Mission, 1998, p.50.

“Oh how marvelous, Jesus has set me free!
Jesus has broken these chains of hell!”⁴

God had kindled His fire, and it spread through the valleys and the mountains, so that thousands were saved in one week, yes, even in one day. That happened among the Zulus and the Xhosas in South Africa.⁵

This Kwasizabantu Mission just mentioned has continued to have a powerful, effective ministry for over 30 years.

Three times in Acts they spoke in tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). Five other times in Acts the fullness of the Holy Spirit is recorded with no mention of tongues at all.

In Acts 4:31 when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the place was shaken where they were gathered. A missionary to New Guinea tells how

⁴ Stegen, p. 52.

⁵ Stegen, p. 54.

the same thing happened as he was teaching this passage. There was an earthquake! (The missionary was surprised and afraid. The natives were pleased that God was doing it again!)⁶

Sometimes miracles accompany those filled with the Holy Spirit. Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha all worked many miracles by the Spirit of God. John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, was greater than any of these others (Matt. 11:11), yet he had a reputation that he "did no miracle" (John 10:41). Miracles are a wonderful gift of the Spirit, but not all Christians are expected to have this gift (1 Cor. 12:29).

In fact many will be shut out of the kingdom of heaven, people who perform "many wonderful works" in Jesus' name! But they continue on in their evil ways (Matthew 7:21-23).

⁶ *EE-TAOW The Next Chapter*, video, Summit Media.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to those who ask. After a while there will be evidence-- power in witnessing. But we believe His promise whether there are accompanying signs or not. In John 4 a nobleman begged Jesus to come and heal his son who was at the point of death.

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way (John 4:48-50).

Later, the nobleman found out that the boy had been healed at the same hour Jesus had given His word. But at first the nobleman had no evidence of his son's healing but Jesus' word. The man showed his faith by obeying Jesus' command and going his way.

When we believe Jesus' promise to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, and we do ask Jesus, then we demonstrate our faith by going our way, whether we see signs and wonders or not. Then there will be the evidence of power in our witness according to our faith.

Similarly, when we asked the Lord to save us, we trusted His Word. That settled it. Not all of us had a remarkable emotional experience. Later, there was evidence: we began to obey.

And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar... (1 John 2:3,4).

The evidence of the fullness of the Spirit was seen in Barnabas. His witness was with power.

For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and much people was added unto the Lord (Acts 11:24).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers:

For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance... (1Thes. 1:5).

Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, that He will **“reprove the world of sin”** (John 16:8). So when Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached at Pentecost, **“they were pricked in their heart, and said... What shall we do?”** (Acts 2:37).

When Stephen, **“full of the Holy Ghost”**, preached, **“they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth.”** They resisted the Holy Spirit and stoned him (Acts 7:51-58). Not everyone will believe; not everyone will like it when we are filled with the Holy Spirit! But He will **“reprove the world of sin”** (John 16:8).

In the power of the Holy Spirit Paul sharply reprovved sin.

...Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him [Elymas the sorcerer],

And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord (Acts 13:9-12).

Micah said,

But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin (Micah 6:8).

A Personal Testimony

When I was a little boy I made a profession of faith in Jesus with the encouragement of godly parents. For the next several years I lived in such continual sin that I doubt now that I was really saved at all (1 John 2:3,4). By my late teens I was seriously following Jesus, though I was still often defeated. I was powerless to win others.

As I heard and read of great soul winners I was hungry and thirsty for God's power and blessing! Reading the Bible, I gradually saw that the Holy Spirit is a *gift!* I began to trust God's promise to give me His Spirit. He said He would give His Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11:13 & John 4:10). I asked. I had no remarkable experience at first. But in the coming days and months I was able lead many others to a public profession of faith. Over the next 30+ years of preaching and serving Jesus, there has been increasing satisfaction and power to bless others and win the lost. Many thousands have come to a public profession of faith in Jesus.

I think I can safely say that life is more and more fun, and serving Jesus is getting easier and easier. Jesus said if you are having a hard time, **“Come unto Me... and I will give you rest.... For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28-30).

At the same time that I rest in God’s promise for the fullness of His Spirit (as I have for many years) I still want to seek God and His power and know Him better! **“Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually”** (1 Chron. 16:11).

God has showed His mercy through me. He can use someone who was a fake, someone who was defeated and weak, to bring mercy and salvation and victory to many others. God’s Spirit is a gift, not deserved, not earned.

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse... so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing (Zechariah 8:13).

The Holy Spirit and the Bible

The Holy Spirit is closely associated with the Word of God, which He inspired:

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you (Prov. 1:23).

It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

A Gift for Anyone!

Remember, the Holy Spirit is a gift for *everyone*, not just pastors and evangelists.

I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on My servants and on My

handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit...(Acts 2:17,18).

The fullness of the Spirit was a requirement even to be a deacon (Acts 6:3).

Laying on of Hands

Sometimes the Spirit was given through the laying on of hands.

...They... prayed for them [of Samaria], that they might receive the Holy Ghost: For as yet He was fallen upon none of them.... Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:15-17).

Paul received the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid hands on him (Acts 9:17). When Paul laid hands on the disciples at Ephesus the Holy Spirit came on them (Acts 19:6).

The Holy Spirit seems to have come on George Whitefield when the bishop laid hands on him in 1736.

That God really touched the lips of Whitefield with the divine fire of His Holy Spirit at the time of his ordination seems proved by the fact he began to preach with great anointing and power on the next Sunday after his ordination. His first sermon was delivered to an immense audience in his old home church at Gloucester. Complaint was afterward made to the bishop that 15 people were driven mad by this sermon. The good bishop replied that he hoped that the madness would not be forgotten before the next Sunday.⁷

George Whitefield went preaching powerfully to crowds of many thousands. It is estimated that 10,000 people professed conversion at *one sermon* he preached at Cambuslang, Scotland.⁸

⁷ Lawson, p. 150.

⁸ Lawson, p. 144.

Encouragements

God loved you enough to give His Son to save you. Now He wants to bless you with the fullness of His Spirit so you can save many others! God has given many encouragements in His Word for those who seek Him and His power: **“He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”** (Heb. 11:6).

Elisha asked for a double portion of the Spirit that was on Elijah, and he was rewarded for his faith. God invited us and commanded, **“Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it”** (Psalm 81:10). Like Elisha, ask for great blessing!

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually (1 Chron. 16:10,11).

The promise [of the gift of the Holy Spirit] is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Luke 11:13

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