

*"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:3).*

## **The Church Alive – The Unfinished Work of Christ – The Power for Persuasive Proclamation (Part 2) Acts 1:4-8**

*4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of 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 were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Last week we looked at these verses from the perspective that they guide us through a progression; a progression that leads us to experiencing the fullness of the Spirit of God. This full experience of the Spirit of God is nothing short than a manifestation, a realization, and a demonstration of the power of God working through us, a power that finds as one of its greatest expressions; the proclamation, the declaration, the communication of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins against God and for the receiving of eternal life that we may live forever with God.

By way of brief review then, if we are to experience the fullness of the Spirit of God, it all begins by being rightly related to the body of Christ. At the beginning of verse 4 we find that it is Jesus who is said to be the one ***"gathering them together..."*** If we are to experience the fullness of the Spirit of God, we must be called by Jesus into His body, into the fellowship of believers; the church. *No one will fully experience the power of the Spirit if he or she is not in right relationship to the gathered saints.* In fact, as Jesus spoke in verse five of being baptized with the Holy Spirit, we learn from a passage like 1 Corinthians 12:13 that to be baptized with the Spirit is to be placed, brought into the body of Christ, the church of His redeemed. We read there, ***"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."*** The verses preceding and following this speak of being members of this body, members one of another. When we think of church as merely being something we choose to do because it seems to benefit us, we miss out on the fullness of the Spirit of God because it is not simply that we gather ourselves; but rather that we have been gathered by Jesus to experience His work in us through or by His Holy Spirit. Thus the importance of the church gathered.

Not only are we to be rightly related to the church then, having been called into the Body of Christ by Jesus, but we must also be rightly contemplating and then waiting upon the promises of God. We read of this through the rest of verse 4 and 5. *For those who will not consider and study the promises of God, there will be little or no experiencing of the fullness of His Spirit.* Jesus told His disciples to wait for God's promise. And whether that promise be the coming of the Holy Spirit, or of blessedness for obedience, or for the coming of Jesus to take us home; we are to contemplate and wait on such promises.

# The Church Alive

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Then finally, we noted that if we are to experience the fullness of the Spirit of God, we must be receiving our instructions from the Lord Jesus. We find in verses six and seven this little question and answer session between the disciples and Jesus. By way of application, we come together as the gathered church; we have our questions answered by the Lord Jesus as we study His Word.

This brings us then to the climax of our progression into experiencing the fullness of the Spirit of God as found in Acts 1:8. It is as if Jesus were saying in effect, "If you are rightly related to the church by call; if you are studying and contemplating the promises of God; and if you are seeking to have your questions answered by My words, then something extraordinary and necessary will take place in your lives that will transform and empower you." We read of this in Acts 1:8, ***"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."***

Do you realize that this is a promise given to the gathered church; a promise to be contemplated; a promise that we must wait upon in the sense that we need the same power, the same Spirit at work in us as the early church needed back then; an instruction from the Lord Jesus that we are to heed and obey? In answer to the question, "How will believers ever accomplish this unfinished work of Christ to speak to the world of His life, death and resurrection?" Will this be accomplished by a select few "supersaints"? Will it be accomplished by a professional clergy? No, upon each and everyone whom the Spirit comes upon, these will have power and these will be witness for Jesus Christ.

If we are to experience the fullness of the Spirit of God; it comes as the climax or culmination of this progression we have seen in verses 4-7. But now comes the questions; What is this power? What does this power do? How is this power manifested? What does it mean to be a witness of Jesus? Let us see seek to answer some of these questions by examining our text.

As the culminating experience of the church gathered, contemplating the promises of God and receiving instruction from the Lord, Jesus promises what? He says, ***"but you will receive power..."*** The promise of the Holy Spirit was a promise of power. The word for "power" is the Greek word *dúnamis*. From this we get our English word dynamite and dynamic. The power of God is the dynamic and explosive force of the Spirit in the lives of believers. There is incredible, divine and supernaturally enabling power that is promised to the believer. But what is this power?

## **What is the Power of the Spirit of God?**

Beloved, the power of the Spirit is the power of God; the ability of God to accomplish whatever He deems by His own omnipotence. This is the power of God; that comes from the Spirit of God. This is the power that opens the eyes of the blind and the power that opens the hearts of unbelievers. This is the power that raised the dead. It is the power of God as experience through the Spirit of God.

This is the power that is promised to those who wait on God and to follow Him because it is of God, from God, and to God's glory. As we learn from Acts 1 and other texts of Scripture, this power is for the redeemed, those who are born again, those whose lives have been transformed by God for this very purpose. And what is this purpose? The power of God is the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and abiding on you.

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## What Does the Power of the Spirit Do?

That is all well and good, this awesome power within and upon us; but what does this power do? As we look at Acts 1, we see that this is the power of God for the disciples to be able to preach the word and perform signs and miracles as a testimony to the power and authority of God's saving gospel as realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. But this power is more broad and pervasive than this. Not only is the power here *the ability to communicate the word of God*; but it is also the power *to understand the word of God*. In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, Paul quotes from Isaiah 64 and 65, the Word of God and notice then what he says in verse 10,

**9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.**

Paul will go on to say in verse 14 that the natural man, the one who has not experience the new birth, cannot understand the Word of God because he does not have the power of the Holy Spirit at work in him to understand. The Spirit of God illuminates the heart, giving it light and understanding. This is the power of God to know the Word of God and therefore to experience God in a fuller way. The power of Spirit of God enables you to experience a more intimate and intense relationship with God whereby you hear His voice with spiritual ears and therefore know His will and obey. The power of the Spirit of God at work in you is the enabling of the heart and mind to see the sinfulness of sin and then the power to repent of it; to reject it and to turn to God.

Let us never forget that the power of the Spirit that Jesus speaks of here in Acts 1:8, is the same power by which Jesus performed every one of His miracles. When did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus? When Jesus was baptized as recorded in Matthew 3:13-17. After this was His temptation in the wilderness, but as Luke 4:1 records, Jesus was **"full of the Holy Spirit"** and this fullness enabled Him to resist the temptations of the devil. Then, as Jesus began His ministry, notice what we read in Luke 4:14 and 15, **"And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...and He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all."** We learn that to resist the devil we need to be full of the Spirit and to preach, teach or proclaim the gospel, we need the power of the Spirit.

As Jesus taught the peoples and performed miracles in the power of the Spirit, some of the religious leaders, the Pharisees, accused Jesus of doing what He did by the power of the devil. In Matthew 12:22-32, Jesus tells them that to attribute His works to the power of the devil is to blaspheme, to impugn the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 22:28 Jesus says, **"If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you..."** Notice that Jesus, while God, is also man and says that He is only casting out demons by the Spirit of God. What a reminder to us; that if Jesus needed the power of the Spirit to do what He did for God while on this earth, how much more will we need the Spirit to accomplish the work? Let us remember that we are not powerful in ourselves; that we are sinful and powerless and therefore we need the power of God to carry out His will. But oh, what can be accomplished if we would but avail ourselves to this power.

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### How Do We Get This Power?

But this begs the question; how do we get this power? If we are to receive the power of the Spirit, it comes in part by prayer. We read in Acts 4:31, **“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”** If we were to read the prayer of the disciples in the previous verse, we would note that they did not pray to be filled with the Spirit, rather they were gathered because Jesus called them, they were contemplating the promises of God and heeding the instruction of Jesus. And then the Holy Spirit filled them with power and boldness. I might challenge you as you read through the book of Acts to take note how often the power of the Spirit manifests itself not in miracles but rather in boldness to proclaim Jesus to people.

Not only is the power experienced as we pray, but it is also experienced as we obey. In Acts 5:32 we read, **“And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”** As we obey God, we experience the power of the Spirit of God. This is what it means to receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

But when does a person receive this power. Initially, according to our text, this power is received, **“when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...”** This initial receiving of the Holy Spirit is your moment of faith and conversion to Jesus Christ. When you believe, you receive the Holy Spirit; who first baptizes you into the Body of Christ and then fills you for service to God and to the Church. Beloved, if you are saved, then the Holy Spirit has come upon you. When you believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and that it is His righteousness that makes you fit for heaven, this is what is called “justification” – the receiving of the righteousness of Christ as your own. This guarantees that the Holy Spirit is in you. We read in Romans 8:9-10

**9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.**

But as we continue day by day with Christ, we must also experience what is called “sanctification” that process by which become more and more like Christ. This is not something we muster up in ourselves. It is not that we, by our own power, look at the life, characteristics and behavior of Jesus and say, “I can do that.” We need not only the power of the Spirit in us; but also the power of the Spirit upon us. We read of this in Romans 8:3-4

**3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

We must learn to walk **“according to the Spirit”** or as Galatians 5:16, **“by the Spirit”** in the power of the Spirit. This is a process, that process is called “sanctification.” But how do we know if we are experiencing this power? What are the indicators of the power and presence of

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the Spirit both in and upon us? Let me give you a few to consider and to ask yourself, “Are these true of me?”

First, do you desire to hear God’s Word? **“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word , so that by it you may grow (continue, progress) in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:3).** Do you desire to hear the Word of God?

A second indicator of the power of the Spirit in you is in how you answer the question, “Do you long for repentance? Do you see a continual turning from sin in your life?” **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age...” (Titus 2:11-12).** Might I say that the grace of God to do such things is simply the power of the Spirit at work in us.

A third indicator, do you love others? Are you seeking the highest good for others, regardless of the personal cost to your ego, to your time, or even to your checkbook, all for the glory of God? **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7).** Love is **“from God”** – has come upon us from God; first in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and second in the experience of the power of the Spirit of God in and upon us, enabling us to love one another.

A fourth indicator that the power of the Spirit is in you is in how you answer the question, “Are you increasing in your knowledge and understanding of God?” Proverbs 2:6 says, **“For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”** Are you learning more and more about Jesus and delighting in that knowledge? We already noted from 1 Corinthians 2 such truths, but hear them again from verses 10, 12;

**10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. . .12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,**

We are to know, understand; and apply the “things” – the promises freely given to us by God through the Holy Spirit. Are you increasing in such things? And then we have those familiar words of 2 Peter 3:18. Are these descriptive of you? They should be and they can be; **“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

And of course, the greatest of the indicators of the power of the Spirit at work in you is revealed in your answer to the question, “Am I increasing in my experience of the fruit of the Spirit? And what is the fruit of the Spirit? According to Galatians 5:22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”** Are these yours and are they increasing? This is the power of the Spirit upon you.

With regard to the book of Acts, when the Holy Spirit came upon people, dynamic things took place. At the very beginning of the church, there was the speaking in tongues, known languages for the people who had gathered in Jerusalem from nearly every corner of the earth to hear the message of the gospel (Acts 2:8-11). So there was the speaking of the gospel with boldness (also as we saw in Acts 4:31); but there was also profound repentance of sin. Consider with me Acts 11:15-18 as Peter reports his experience of the work of the Spirit to the church in Jerusalem. He said,

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## The Church Alive

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**15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way? 18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance [that divine ability to turn from sin] that leads to life.”**

Back to our text in Acts 1:8, we have considered what this power is and where it comes from; but let us consider now the purpose or goal of this power. The purpose of the power of the Spirit upon you *is so that you might be an effective witnesses for Jesus Christ*. Jesus said, **“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...”**

We are not to be our own witnesses. We are not to be witnesses or bear the testimony of our church in the sense of what we do. No, we are to tell people about what Jesus did and what He continues to do. In Matthew 15:18 Jesus said, **“But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart..”** In that passage the heart was filled with the sinfulness of man. But if that heart is filled with the Spirit, what do you suppose would come out from that heart? The message of Jesus. In John 15:26 we read this truth of the Spirit of God, **“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify [or bear witness] of Me.”**

When the Spirit comes... And how does He come according to Acts 1:8, **“upon you”** – how will you know He has come upon you? Because He will testify of Jesus through you! Not simply that you will *want* to talk to others about Jesus; but rather you will talk to other about Jesus. Is this the power you are experiencing now? May I remind you that each one of us who claim to be born again is a witness of Jesus Christ. By virtue of your profession of being a Christian, you are testifying of Him. The only question is this; are you a good witness or a bad witness? Are you speaking the words of your heart put there by the Spirit of God; or the words of your heart from this crooked and perverse world? What kind of a witness are you now?

I read the story of a man who “used to be a Christian.” In giving his reasons as to why he had lost faith in Christianity and how he concluded that Christianity was not true he recounted this incident. He and a friend were riding their bicycles up a mountain road in a heavy downpour. They decided to thumb a ride instead of risking a downhill run on a mountain road in the cold rain. A huge motor home pulled up and the driver asked them what the problem was. They told him of their situation and he said he would like to help them but that he was going to church and did not have the time..... Later, a beat-up old station wagon with a Mexican family in it stopped and picked them up.

The witness or testimony of the driver of that motor home literally drove this man to fall from Christianity. We might think that this was but a small thing, a minor instance that should make or break anyone's Christianity. But, in the heart of someone who is doubting and struggling with faith, *nothing done by a Christian is small and timing can be everything*. So I ask you, what kind of a witness are you?

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### **Where Are We To Manifest The Power of God?**

As we experience the power of the Spirit in being witnesses for Jesus, we end on the question of where? Where are we to be witnesses for Jesus? And the answer? Everywhere; anywhere, in any and all places, wherever, in everyplace. As Jesus spoke to the disciples they were in their present location of Jerusalem. Jesus says, "Start here; right here where you live." But from there, whether by means of influence or by personal involvement, this testimony of ours is to make it out to the world. I know that at times the Panjwanis will speak to others of the faith and love of Hope CBC to those to whom they are witnessing to in India. You see, as we pray for, encourage and support the Panjwanis, we are testifying to those in India of Jesus.

But of course the point of our text is that we all are to be ready to be a witness for Him anywhere. Not simply at church or among our friends who are also Christians. It is more difficult to take a stand for Jesus when things can be inconvenient and people may become irreverent at best or hostile at worse. But do you believe that the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon you? It is the Holy Spirit who overrides our feelings, fears, and faults and moves us to sacrifice in love to fellow man and obedience to God. Northwest Arkansas needs your testimony of Jesus to be heard. Acts 1:8 is your charge, your commission; it is what we have been gathered together by Jesus to hear; it is a promise we are to wait and act upon; it is the instruction of the Lord we must obey.

If you desire then to experience the fullness of the Spirit, to be enabled by His power; to have the boldness, ability, and the confidence to be a witness for Jesus; then know that it does not come from you; it comes upon you, from the Spirit of God, as you gather with believers, as you contemplate the promises of God and wait upon the Lord; as you learn and follow the instructions of Jesus from His word. Then we can pray together, obey together and rejoice together as we see the power of the Spirit manifest itself in ever-increasing witness concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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