

08.08.2020 SPIRIT- EMPOWERED WITNESSING

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When conversion occurs and we receive a new heart (the heart of God, from God), the Spirit of God pours out His *agape*' love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). God's motives become our motives: He so loved the world that He gave His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The love of God in our hearts compels us to share the good news of God's redemptive work for all mankind.

Jesus and the Promise of the Holy Spirit

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." John 15:26, 27

'And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Mark 16:17-20

The Spirit was given to mankind in fullness because Jesus was glorified to the right hand of the Father (John 7:39, Acts 2:33). Now all that the believer has to do is to ask in faith for God our Father is more than willing to give the gift of the Spirit (Luke 11:13). We do not have to improve ourselves before we receive the Spirit; no, we ask in humility, recognising that of ourselves we can do nothing, and the Spirit is given to re-create our lives into the image and likeness of God and to make us powerful witnesses to His name.

We need to ask God for the baptism of His Holy Spirit to make us effective witnesses. We need to ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit to witness in power.

An Empowered Church

'Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.' Luke 24:49

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all ^[a]with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:1-4

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31

In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Romans 15:19

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Corinthians 2:4, 5

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The 5th book of the New Testament, the book of Acts, tells us the story of how God manifests Himself to humanity through the Church. As Christ was anointed by God and did His ministry in the power of the Spirit (Acts 10:38), so the

Church is anointed by God and empowered by the ministry of the Holy Spirit to reveal to the world His character and salvation.

Acts covers the thirty years after Christ's death and resurrection. The power of the Holy Spirit, the leadership and the explosive growth of the church then was to be the normal pattern for the church until Christ's second coming. Unfortunately, compromise with the world and false teaching changed that pattern fairly early in church history. If we are to once again proclaim the true gospel in the power of the Spirit, we must ask God for the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit so that the church in the end-time too will proclaim the gospel in the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and Witnessing

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Luke 11:13

"in all the world's history there has only been one soul winner, and it is not us. It is the Holy Spirit. He is the only one who has any possible capability of winning souls. We are not the one who does the soul winning; we are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit for our testimony. It is the Spirit who convicts men and women.

Witnessing is primarily the right person in the right place saying the right thing at the right time, to prepared hearts, hearts already prepared and made hungry by the awakening touch of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. The Holy Spirit prepares the heart and then speaks through you to say the right thing, which is the gospel, to a prepared person under timely circumstances. Witnessing is simply sharing with someone who has already been awakened by the Spirit to listen and already has a heart hunger to hear more. Even though the façade may seem at first to be indifference, you get beneath that and you will discover a hungry heart who wants to hear what happened to you. That is what witnessing is." *R.Stedman: The Holy Spirit as Soul Winner.*

So much of witnessing today is done out of presumption or fear. But true witnessing is the outcome of saving faith.

Presumption: We should never presume to do the work of God without falling on our faces and acknowledging that of ourselves, we are wholly incapable of carrying out Christ's great call to witness. Unfortunately much of Christian witness today is marked by self-glory, self-promotion, the use of our natural talents, harnessing the power of the media and advertising (while the latter is not wrong in itself, it becomes a problem if we trust in them alone for the spreading of the gospel). It is not difficult to recognise such witness. Ask the question, 'Who is getting the glory?' Is it an individual or individuals, a church or an institution? Is it obsessed with money? Are those involved united in the Spirit, or is there disunity? If the answer to any is 'Yes', then the glory is not God's. In God's work, all must be done of Him, so that He gets all the glory (Jeremiah 9:24).

Fear: If we are honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that we are often fearful of witness – fearful that we will not be up to the task, fearful that we will be rejected, fearful that we do not have the right words to speak, fearful of who may come in through the doors of the church (though we know that Christ was made a 'ransom for all'), fearful of the consequences of great multitudes repenting (how will we deal with the social and personal problems that may come with them?).

In all of the above, there is one thing that underlies these fears. We have forgotten the commission and the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His Spirit, He will do the work; His will be the saving power; He will be with us throughout and give us wisdom; He will give gifts that will meet every need of the church and build it up in love.

It isn't our job to convict people. Once we understand that we do not need to worry that we must know all the high-powered arguments by which we pressure and convince people and answer all their rebuffs and resistance. This is what makes us afraid of witnessing.. We feel inadequate, and of course we are. But we are not inadequate to talk about what Christ has done for us.

Faith: It is as we look to ourselves that we live in fear, hesitation or presumption. As we look to Christ, we shall have no fear, only boldness to proclaim the risen Christ in Whom is salvation full and free. His love will pervade our hearts and minds and we shall, like Him, seek to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10), to tell them that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32). We shall rejoice that God's grace has enabled us to be vessels of honour, fit for the Master's work (2 Timothy 2:20, 21). And we shall claim His promise and invite the Holy Spirit to make us witnesses to His name.

The Holy Spirit, the Word and Witnessing

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

The Word of God is central to all true witness. The Scriptures testify of Christ and all true witness is our testimony of Christ as presented in the Word of God and our personal experience of Him.

Christ spoke the Word of God... *'the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God'* Luke 5:1

The apostolic church preached Christ from the Scriptures and from their own personal knowledge of Him. So also it must be of us.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7

The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached. Acts 10:36, 37

*Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the **word of God** should be spoken to you first. Acts 13:46*

Today we are called to preach and teach the Word in the power of the Spirit.

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead ^[b]at His appearing and His kingdom: **Preach the word!** Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:1, 2*

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:14, 15

*"So now, brethren, I commend you to **God and to the word of His grace**, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Acts 20:32*

The Life-Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit convicts men through the witness of Spirit filled Christians. We often look to transform men and women who do not know Christ. Yet we ourselves are often no true witness of the supernatural change that occurs in the lives of genuine Christians.

We need to experience the Cross of Christ in our lives and allow it to destroy self and self-centred ambition.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 1 Corinthians 5:14-15

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” John 7:37-39

“ You are the light of the world.” Matthew 5:14

‘You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men...You are the light of the world...let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.’ Matthew 5:13-16

The Spirit will work through Christians to satisfy man’s hunger and thirst for righteousness. The Spirit will work out in their lives the fruit of holiness so they become channels or candlesticks through which Christ, the Light of the world is revealed. And there is also the silent, unseen work of the salt which provides savour to a society that would rot in impurity except for the grace of God.

Men and women today are hungering and thirsting for God, even though they may be unaware of who can satisfy their longing. By the lives we live under the influence of the Spirit, men and women will be drawn to us. They will seek to know what satisfies us. Our reply is to lead them to Christ, the One who truly satisfies the longing soul.

When men and women are truly converted, they recognise their oneness in Christ. They recognise that the barriers that divide us belong to the world under the rule of Satan. We who call ourselves Christians must never cause new converts to stumble or turn away from the faith because we ourselves are unloving, unkind and ungenerous.

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.” Mark 9:42

We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God.. We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. We faithfully preach the truth. God’s power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defence. We serve God whether people honour us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. 2 Corinthians 6:3-8

Conclusion: The ‘Why’ and ‘How’ of all Christian Witness and Service:

The Great Commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, John 20:21, 22) clearly answers this question. All we do must be done because God commands it. And whatever God commissions us to do, He provides Himself the resource – to be with us, to provide us with power to do His work.

We find this over and over in the Bible. e.g. When Joshua was called to lead Israel, God said, *‘Be strong and of good courage... Have I not commanded you? I will be with you wherever you go.’* Joshua 1:8

As God the Father anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit and with power to witness to His character through love and service, so Christ anoints His disciples today with the Holy Spirit and with power to witness of His redeeming love to all mankind.

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:16

Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. James 5:20

Additional Note:

Witnessing and the Holy Spirit

This is something which is vital to our witness. It was the whole secret of the ministry of the apostle Paul. He did not preach with enticing words of human wisdom, but preached, he said, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor. 2:4). He was filled with the Spirit for his task.

Is this not something which causes us all to pause? Whatever the form of our ministry, it is only of value while we are filled with the power of the Spirit. So we should realise the necessity of seeking this filling of the Spirit and of power before we attempt any task, whatever it may be.

Let me put it like this: there is all the difference in the world between being a witness and being an advocate. Men and women can be advocates of these things without the Holy Spirit. I mean that they can have an understanding of the doctrine; they can receive the truth, and can present it, argue for it and defend it. Yes, they are acting as advocates. But primarily, as Christians, we are called upon to be witnesses, to be witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the Saviour of the world, as our own Saviour, as the Saviour of all who put their faith and trust in Him. And it is only the Holy Spirit who can enable us to do that.

You can address people and act as advocates for the truth but you will not convince anybody. If, however, you are filled with the Spirit, and are witnessing to the truth which is true in your life, by the power of the Spirit that is made efficacious. So this filling is essential to all our Christian service.

But also it is equally clear that the infilling of the Spirit is essential to true Christian quality in our life. That is why we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. It is a command to every single Christian: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18). We are exhorted to be filled with the Spirit. And this is commanded in order that our graces may grow, in order that the fruit of the Spirit may develop in us and may be evident to all. It is as we are filled with this life that the fruit and the graces of this life will be manifest. Indeed, the filling of the Spirit is essential to a true act of worship.

Did you notice how Paul uses that commandment of his in that very connection? He says, 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit'—and then he goes on at once—'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 our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' So the way to test whether we are filled with the Spirit is to ask: Are we full of thankfulness? Are we full of praise? Do we sing to ourselves [p 243] and to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? Do we make melody in our hearts? Do we praise God when we are alone? Do we delight in praising Him with others?

Martyn Lloyd Jones: Great Doctrines of the Bible.

God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles. *Ministry of Healing. P 37*
