

CHRIST: THE POWER OF GOD, Pt 4

YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER

The Power of the Spirit

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Let's pick up the background from the early pages of the Book of Acts.

Acts 1:4 Once when he was eating with them, [Jesus] commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 2:1 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

The crowd that gathered wondered what had caused this commotion. Peter rose to tell them:

Acts 2:16 "What you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.'"

Acts 2:32 "God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today."

Acts 2:36 "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷ Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."

It was the fulfillment of ancient prophecy. It was the Father's long-awaited promise. It was the evidence that Jesus was who He said He was and came from where He said He came from and went to where He said He went to.

It was a gift for the followers of Jesus. It was the gift of power.

But what kind of power? Power for what purpose? To find the truth. To unite the faithful. To reach the lost.

Power to find the truth.

Everyone hungers to know what is true.

Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

Many pride themselves on owning the truth (being in the right). Some even point to their Bible, as if to say, “See, I have the truth right here.”

But the truth is not words. Words are but the containers for expressing truth, like the wooden forms for a concrete wall.

Finding the forms is not the same as finding the wall. So, having a Bible is not the same as having the truth. Truth is in the Bible (God’s Word is truth), but it is not the ink on the paper.

Hebrews 4:12 *The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword.*

John 16:13 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.*

Simply owning a Bible, or even reading the Bible, does not necessarily mean you know the truth. The activity of the Holy Spirit is required to illuminate your heart with the truth of God’s Word.

Therefore, you should pause to thank God for every insight and understanding you gain as you read the Book. This is the Spirit’s work within you.

Power to unite the church.

The Spirit comes to us with a variety of supernatural gifts and abilities. Power is attractive and most Christians pursue His gifts at some point in their lives. But power also corrupts, and everyone who seeks His gifts is subject to the temptations that accompany power: pride, selfishness, and abusiveness.

Gifts of power may be worn like a crown that elevates us above others. We may imagine they are ours to possess, that they make us special — specially loved by God, specially favored, specially blessed.

1 Corinthians 12:4 *There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.*
⁵ There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶ God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. ⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

There is no room for selfishness here. God’s gifts of power are not given to thrill you or to use for your own benefit alone. Every supernatural gift the Spirit brings has one primary purpose: so we can help each other.

The gift with which He blesses you is so that you may be a blessing to someone else. If you don’t share it, you frustrate its purpose. If you hold back, out of selfishness or fear, you have wasted it.

1 Corinthians 12:13 *Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.*

There is no place for threatening one another with His gifts — threatening to use them or to withhold them — that would be an abuse of the power the Spirit has given, for His gifts are given to accomplish one thing: the unity of the church.

A healing is never just about the person healed. A prophecy is never just about the prophet. The expression of the gifts is aimed at developing harmony among God's people — exposing things that are discordant, revealing things that build bridges, creating bonds of love where there were none.

1 Corinthians 12:25 *This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.*

Power to reach the lost.

You found the truth by the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit in your life, but that was just the beginning. The church is being united by the work of the Spirit and His gifts, but even that is only a means to an end.

Invited to teach in a synagogue, Jesus read:

Luke 4:18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.”*

The Spirit has come upon us as upon Jesus, for the same purposes. He has come to transform our lives so that we might bring others to the life-changing Savior.

Here is what Isaiah foresaw:

Isaiah 11:1 *Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.² And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.³ He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay.⁴ He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment.*

We have a Savior to show. “You will be witnesses of me... to the ends of the earth.” By deed and by word, empowered by the Spirit of the Living God, we are to bring Christ to those around us, to show them what Jesus is like.

Who is sufficient for such a task? Who's got what it takes? It sometimes seems like we can barely keep ourselves together, let alone help someone else!

And that's exactly why God sent His Spirit. To forgive our mistakes. To overcome our weaknesses. To make up the difference. To make us more than we ever could be in and of ourselves. We are tempted and tried by life's circumstances, like everyone else, but we have the Spirit. He works miracles in us so that we can live beyond ourselves, so that we won't be consumed by our own lives.

He gives us compassion for those who are now as we once were: lost without Jesus.

He gives us courage to reach out to those we might rather avoid, because Jesus died for them, too.

He can take you anywhere you want to go to reach another person for Christ.

Be Continually Being Filled

Therefore, the key is to be full of the Spirit at all times. Paul's admonition is clear:

Ephesians 5:18 *Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

The verb of the final sentence was written in a tense that means "an action once begun and still continuing." It would be appropriately translated: "Instead, keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit." If the tire on your bicycle or automobile loses pressure, you fill it up again. When your gas gauge gets low, you fill the tank again. So, we are to keep coming to the Lord for more fullness, because our capacity grows, and we leak.

Would you make a fresh commitment today... not to an experience, but to a lifestyle: to be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit? Acknowledge to God your inability and your weaknesses, so that He may cover you with His grace. Receive the gift of His Spirit today.

Only He can give you power to find the truth, bring harmony to the church, and reach the lost for Christ.