

GET THE POWER!

By Rev. Will Nelken

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“One day in New York—what a day! I can’t describe it! I seldom refer to it! It is almost too sacred to name! I can only say God revealed Himself to me! I had such an experience of love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand! I went to preaching again. The sermons were no different. I did not present any new truth. Yet hundreds were converted. I would not be back where I was before that blessed experience.” (Dwight L. Moody, evangelist of the late 1800’s)

Moody was describing what the first disciples had also experienced, just as Jesus had said:

Acts 1: 4 Once when he was eating with them, he 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.”

Most church leaders considered this overwhelming experience of God’s presence to be a happenstance — something that fell upon some people extraordinarily. But the hunger for a renewal of holiness during the last half of the 19th century led some to make a more systematic study of the topic in the Bible — what was called the “baptism with the Holy Spirit.”

Such study led some to believe that God intended for *all* of His people — not just an occasional few — to experience this baptism. Fresh hope arose, spurring these students to pray and ask God to do it for them. To their wonderful amazement, (as near as we can document it) on January 1, 1901, in a Bible school prayer meeting in Topeka, Kansas, 30-year old Agnes Ozman asked her teacher, Charles Parham, to lay his hands on her and pray specifically that she would be baptized in the Spirit and speak with other tongues. Jesus responded to their prayer in a dramatic fashion. She not only began to speak in a language she had never learned, but it is recorded that for three days it was the *only* language in which she could speak. Such spiritual expectation gripped the student body that classes were cancelled as they prayed around the clock. Others were also baptized in the Spirit.

While there are hundreds of other documented testimonies of the baptism with the Spirit (including St. Francis, Martin Luther, and St. Augustine), the spark of that New Year’s day continued to burn its way to Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906 (founder of the mission, William Seymour, had also been a student of Charles Parham), and around the world, fanned greatly by the missionary zeal of the Assemblies of God (founded in 1914).

This “promise of the Father,” first written by the prophets Ezekiel (37:14) and Joel (2:28), was confirmed by Jesus Himself:

Luke 24: 49 “And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”

Jesus had previously told His followers about the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

*John 14:15 If you love me, obey my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives **with you** now and later will be **in you**.*

He referred to two dimensions of relationship with the Holy Spirit: *with* you and *in* you. Since the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit has been present and working among people on the earth, drawing each of us toward Christ with saving faith, gradually revealing who He is and what He has done for us. In other words, the Holy Spirit has been faithfully and dynamically bearing witness to Jesus Christ. In this way and for this purpose, the Holy Spirit lives *with* every person throughout the world.

The second dimension (living *in* you) was a revelation unique to Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus said, “*Don’t be surprised when I tell you that you must be born again.*” (John 3:7) The new birth brings the Spirit of Jesus *into* our lives, to take up residence in our hearts. This is true for every believer in Jesus.

After His resurrection, Jesus introduced a third dimension of the Spirit’s influence — “upon you” — and outlined its intended impact: power and witness:

*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.”*

Less than two weeks later, Jesus’ prediction was fulfilled, as His followers waited in prayer for God to act:

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 Spirit had come (from the Father and the Son) upon God’s people and His power and purpose were unleashed in the world.

From that day until this, wherever believers in Jesus Christ express a relentless hunger for an unre-served (nothing-held-back) relationship with God, Jesus, the great Baptizer, releases His Spirit again with the same power and purpose.

What power does the Spirit provide? Power to *be* the light and power to *bring* the light.

Power to Be Light

Jesus said of His people, “*You are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14) But that light only shines if the windows aren’t shuttered and the doors aren’t closed. The Holy Spirit has come to open wide the windows and the doors.

Power to be the light means power to live the Christian life as Jesus lived His. That involves daily overcoming temptation and sin and subduing your fleshly instincts and inclinations.

Dwight L. Moody once illustrated this truth as follows: “Tell me,” he said to his audience, “How can I get the air out of this glass?” One man said, “Suck it out with a pump.” Moody replied, “That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass.” After many impossible suggestions, Moody simply picked up a pitcher of water and filled the glass. “There,” he said, “all the air is now removed.” He explained that

victory in the Christian life is not achieved by “sucking out a sin here and there,” but rather by continually being filled with the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul said, “*Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.*” (Galatians 5:16) If we are continually being filled with the Holy Spirit there will be no room left for sin to take advantage of us.

Living the Christian life does not occur in a vacuum, but in the world and among people, both Christians and others.

Titus 2:12 *We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God.*

And among Christians, we are to live as a unit, a family, and like a healthy, functional body.

NIV 1 Corinthians 12: 13 *For we were all baptized [with] one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

Yet, how diverse is the body of Christ! Ethnicity, language, culture, customs, personalities all threaten to divide us — repeatedly. In fact, there is no reason in this world for us to be together or to love and respect one another apart from the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. He provides our unity in Christ. We need His power to overcome the forces that would pull us apart.

Power to Bring Light

Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit so that we may have power to bring His light, to communicate His life, to others. In order to do this effectively, we must overcome our natural timidity.

2 Timothy 1: 7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

It is God’s power, love, and discipline, working in us, that carries us past our fears to tell others about Jesus and His great grace.

The Holy Spirit also gives insightful strategies for approaching people with the Good News, bypassing or side-stepping their deflections and penetrating their confusion. Here it is most important that you “*do not depend on our own understanding,*” but “*trust in the Lord with all your heart.*” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

And, it is the Holy Spirit who provides attesting gifts and miraculous signs to validate and verify God’s truth.

Mark 16:20 *The disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.*

NIV Mark 16: 17 *And these signs will accompany those who believe in my name: they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.*

What purpose does the Spirit bring into our lives? To testify of Christ in all the world. It is a cooperative arrangement:

John 15: 26 *“But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.”* 27 *And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.*

What are we to bear witness to? I will mention four areas: His deity, His character, His history, His purpose.

Witness of Christ’s Deity

Jesus Christ is God in human form. He is not just a great human being, a wondrous teacher, a miracle worker, or a representative of God. He is the one and only Son of the Living God in human form.

You and I have been given the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to declare that. To declare it with confidence and the expectation of a hearing and a transformation of people’s lives.

If you really want to know what God is like, look at Jesus!

“If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

It is His incarnation — His in-fleshness — that helps us to relate to God, as we see Him relating to others and responding to the circumstances of human experience. It also enabled Him to take on our sins and carry them away — one Man for many.

Witness of Christ’s Character

We testify about the character of Jesus. It can be seen all through the New Testament. He is pure and holy and just and faithfully devoted to the Father and submitted to His plan, even when under testing and extreme pressure.

This is the same character that God wants to develop in us! How can that be? Only by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. No pretense, no fakery. Genuine holiness working its way to the surface of our lives.

Witness of Christ’s History

We also testify to the history of Jesus. His miraculous birth, His redemptive death, and His astounding resurrection. We help people to understand He is a real person, not a mythical figure. A man like us in every respect, except sin, who took our place in judgment and rose from the dead to give us His life. We must tell this story (with a life that backs it up).

Witness of Christ’s Purpose

We are also here to tell the purpose of Christ. He came to save sinners. He came to take unclean people and make them clean. He came to take unwanted people and who them God’s desire for them. This was His purpose: everlasting salvation.

Not only to save us, but also to unite us in one family under God. Whether Jew or non-Jew, slave or free, male or female, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, from every language and ethnicity — Jesus came to make us one people (diverse on the outside, united on the inside). What can unite such a diverse group? Only the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's not instantaneous, but gradual, as we keep working hard to protect and maintain the unity the Spirit gives.

We also bear witness to His ultimate purpose: to share with us God's own glory. Imagine! Wicked, hell-bent creatures like us, accepted by the Holy God and at home with Him in Heaven. A communion of faith and love between God and mankind!

This is our message. And His is the power that makes it possible for you and for me.

This is the life that He has for you, after His power comes *upon* you. Upon *you*. I cannot receive this for you. No one can be your proxy.

Each of us comes to Christ individually to receive salvation. Each of us comes individually to receive the baptism with the Spirit.

Do you have that relentless hunger? Does your heart yearn, "Oh God, my life cannot fulfill its purpose unless your Spirit rests upon me in power!" Is that your cry to Him?

Whether for the first time or in renewal, tell God that you need this enduement of spiritual power so that the will of God may be done in your life and the peace of God may settle in your heart. Ask Jesus now to baptize you in the Holy Spirit.