

POWER AND PURPOSE

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Why on earth are you here?

Is life about discovering and enjoying wonderful things? Or, is life about enduring trials and suffering to the end?

Is life all about your moment-to-moment experience, or is there a higher purpose that weaves *all* your experiences, both good and bad, into a richly textured fabric of growing spirituality?

Where There's a Will

Jeremiah 29:11 I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

One thing is clear: God's intention for your life is not disastrous. Yet, disasters happen. Why doesn't God's will to give a future and a hope prevent such calamities?

Because God's will is not the only will at work here. You have a will of your own, all human beings have a will, and the devil also has a will. God's will is sovereign (over-arching), and through Christ He may overrule the devil, for the Son of God was manifest to destroy the works of the evil one, but His will in Christ is only activated by believing hearts applied through prayer (it is not automatic).

Classroom of Prayer

Neither is prayer automatically effective. Prayer is a classroom for spiritual maturity, not a formula for feeling good. God is more interested in your spiritual development than in your immediate ease, and discomfort and pain are powerful coaches.

If you only pray when you're feeling bad in order to feel good, then you haven't begun to pray. It is the prayer that carries you through the difficult time—prayer that looks not to the immediate but to the eventual, not to the temporal but to the eternal—that builds strong spirits.

You may have prayed a prayer once that initiated your salvation, but your salvation must be completed over time, lest it be aborted in the end. There is such a thing as a spiritual miscarriage. Jesus said it is the one who endures to the end who will be saved.

My aim is not to discourage you, but to tell you the truth: life demands courage; spiritual idleness will achieve nothing.

¹ Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though

it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

¹ Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.¹¹ To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Dazed and Confused

Jesus' disciples wondered what had happened to God's plan of salvation when Jesus was arrested and crucified; they were in shock and discouraged. Then, Jesus arose from the dead and showed Himself alive to them. They rejoiced!

Then, Jesus revealed that He was about to leave them and return to His Father in Heaven. They were dejected. He ascended into the clouds with this instruction: wait in the city until you are endued with power from Heaven.

Acts 1:8 You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Discouraged again and confused, nevertheless, they waited together and prayed. Then, the Holy Spirit came upon them all and they understood and rejoiced. And though the Biblical record reveals their persecution and deprivation and hardships and disappointments, there was never again a time when they all lost hope.

Not Without Hope

This has been the record of history as well. For nearly two thousand years the church has pressed forward—sometimes haltingly and embarrassingly, sometimes in deep darkness and lack, but never in hopelessness.

¹ John 5:4 Whoever has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world—our faith.⁵ Who is he who overcome the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the overcoming power of faith! Your faith in Jesus Christ has the power to take you through your trials and heartaches. Your faith in Jesus Christ has the power to turn the devil on his ear and send him packing. Your faith in Jesus Christ has the power to overcome the unbelief and darkness in your community and your family—one soul at a time. Your faith in Jesus Christ!

Power From Above

The Holy Spirit sustains that power of overcoming faith in you. That's why Jesus instructed His disciples to wait until they received Him.

Acts 1:8 You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Have you received that endowment of power? It is not the same as receiving the Savior.

Inviting Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, means asking for power to endure, power to hold up, power to move forward against all odds. Have you cried out to the Lord for that?

Have you confessed, “Lord, I cannot make it on my own! I need the Helper.”

This is not about “speaking in tongues” or “gifts for ministry.” Those things come in the aftermath, but this is primarily about overcoming spiritual weakness and helplessness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Power on Purpose

Acts 1:8 You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

God's power to last also comes with purpose for living. It is power to accomplish a purpose. God's purpose.

If you have no trials in life, you will have nothing to say to people around you, because the only thing they *really* want to hear is how to overcome their trials.

What can you tell them?

If you cannot overcome your circumstances, if you succumb to the pressures to quit trusting Jesus Christ and return to doing your own thing, you will lose your impact for Christ. Your words will fall on deaf ears. Your testimony will become an empty script.

If your faith and your religion is just a passing fad, who else will want it?

It's the faith that endures that is priceless and treasured. That's the only faith worth seeking. That's the only faith worth following. It's the only life worth living.

You have been born again to tell others about Jesus Christ. To tell them what He has done for you, and what He can do for them. To tell them about the end of guilt and judgment for sin, and the beginning of a life of friendship with God.

And you need the fullness of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill that commission.

His power led the Early Church to effectively tell about Christ to the people of Jerusalem, in the face of great persecution and hardship.

His power led them to tell others about Jesus in all Judea and Samaria, in the face of rejection and suspicion.

His power took them to the far flung corners of the earth, to people of cultures and languages unlike their own, in the face of prejudice and indifference.

His power can take you, too!

Where do you need to go?

Who do you need to tell?

What do you need to overcome to get His Word out?

It is the purpose of the power of the Holy Spirit to help you do these things.

Why on earth are you here?

What on earth are you doing for Christ?

Do you have a purpose beyond your own pleasure and comfort?

Do you have the power required to fulfill that purpose?

Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit if you sincerely ask Him and expectantly receive?

He will fill you with purpose and with power to reach it.

Why not ask Him right now?