

# SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

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Two men were viewing the Niagara whirlpool rapids when one said to the other, "Come, and I'll show you the greatest unused power in the world." He led him to the foot of Niagara Falls, where he shouted to his friend, "This is it! The greatest unused power in the world!"

"No, it's not," said his friend. "The greatest unused power in the world is the Holy Spirit of the Living God."

Sitting in this room are at least 50 individuals whose consciences have been cleansed and their spirits filled with the Holy Spirit, as a result of their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 50 people in whom the Holy Spirit of the Living God resides! But what impact are we having in the Marin community?

The Bible records the 34-year life of one man, Jesus from Nazareth, who was full of the Spirit without limit... look what He accomplished!

The Book of Acts records the first 30-40 years of the Church's history, launched under the ministries of 120 Spirit-filled believers... they rocked the world... for over 2,000 years!

## **To Impact the World**

Exactly what does it take to impact the world with the name of Jesus Christ? It *does not* take fine architecture or comfortable buildings. It *does not* take millions of dollars. It *does not* take slick marketing. It *does not* take higher education. It *does not* take thousands of people.

What does it take? It takes the power of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the grave. The same Spirit whom God has given to every one of His children!

The astounding fact is this: if you have been born again through trusting Jesus to save you and if Jesus has baptized you in the Holy Spirit, you don't need to be given *anything else*. There is nothing missing that needs to be added to your life!

You have all that you need, except perhaps the knowledge and the skill to release and apply what you have received. You just need to know how to cooperate with the Spirit and stay out of His way. Let's talk about that.

## **Spirit-Life / Kingdom-Life**

*Romans 14:17 The Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

I refer to the "Kingdom of God" because that is the way the Bible describes the life where God is King, where the Holy Spirit is in control — where He makes the rules and gives direction, and His people follow His lead.

The Kingdom of God may be in our church, and the Kingdom of God may be in your home. The Kingdom of God may be *wherever you are*, if the Holy Spirit has control of you.

Paul said the Kingdom is “not a matter of what we eat or drink.” To understand his meaning, we simply need to return to the beginning of the chapter, where he begins to discuss our attitudes toward one another in the church.

**REMEMBER:** The local church is the classroom of the Spirit. Every spiritual lesson from God is first applied here. Learn it here and you can use it wherever you go. That’s the value of the local church; and also its challenge.

## Loving Attitudes

*Romans 14:1* **Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don’t argue with them about what they think is right or wrong.** <sup>2</sup> *For instance, one person believes it’s all right to eat anything. But another believer with a sensitive conscience will eat only vegetables.* <sup>3</sup> *Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don’t. And those who don’t eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.*

*Romans 14:6* **Those who eat any kind of food do so to honor the Lord, since they give thanks to God before eating. And those who refuse to eat certain foods also want to please the Lord and give thanks to God.**

*Romans 14:13* **So let’s stop condemning each other. Decide instead to live in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall.**

<sup>14</sup> *I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat. But if someone believes it is wrong, then for that person it is wrong.* <sup>15</sup> *And if another believer is distressed by what you eat, you are not acting in love if you eat it. Don’t let your eating ruin someone for whom Christ died.* <sup>16</sup> *Then you will not be criticized for doing something you believe is good.* <sup>17</sup> *For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* <sup>18</sup> *If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too.* <sup>19</sup> *So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.*

Paul’s teaches us to accept each other and not disapprove or condemn other’s for their differences. He teaches us to actively please God with and thank God for what we have. He teaches us to be considerate of one another, particularly of another person’s weaknesses, by not insisting on having everything just the way we like it. And he sums it all up by writing, “the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink.”

*1 Corinthians 8:8* **It’s true that we can’t win God’s approval by what we eat. We don’t lose anything if we don’t eat it, and we don’t gain anything if we do.**

So, Paul concludes that you don’t have more of the Spirit if you eat the *right* things and less of the Spirit if you eat the *wrong* things, nor is the Spirit’s power for *consuming* the things we like. Instead, the reign of Jesus Christ in your life is shown in your not insisting on *getting* what suits you, but on *giving and doing* the things that bless other people and honor God.

You haven’t become a Christian to become rich (though you may accumulate wealth). You haven’t become a Christian to become happy (though you may be one of the happiest people on earth). You haven’t become a Christian to be healthy (though you may live a long life). Such things are not *objec-*

tives of the Christian life; they are simply by-products, according to the will of God and your walk of faith.

When you turn the by-products into objectives, you make them your *idols*, which God despises.

So if the Spirit's control is not about scrupulous rule-keeping or having the "good life" for yourself, what is it about and how can we live there?

### **Kingdom Values: Righteousness**

Paul wrote that the Kingdom of God is found in three primary behavioral values: goodness, peace, and joy.

Goodness does not refer to merely kind deeds, for the Greek word from which it is translated is *di-kaiosune*, which is justice or righteousness.

Several examples of *unrighteousness* are given to us by Paul:

*1 Corinthians 6:9 Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality,<sup>10</sup> or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

But you must not be limited by this list (or to any list). Biblical righteousness is conformity to the claims of a higher power or authority, particularly, God. And for the Christian, conformity to all God commands is *not* conformity to a set of rules, no matter how religious-sounding they may be, but *yielded responsiveness* to the Holy Spirit's promptings and leadings.

The Kingdom of God is seen in doing what the Holy Spirit bids you to do.

What the Holy Spirit asks of you is not discovered in a single moment's impression, but in a chain of linked impressions and confirming conditions or counsel. Christianity is not a solo flight; it is a group migration, a journey among brothers and sisters. We sometimes step on one another's toes, but the Holy Spirit prompts us to lift one another up, spiritually and morally, to encourage faithful behaviors, and to lend our strength to another's weakness.

Like geese, we fly straightest and fastest when we fly together.

How do we learn these behaviors? How is this righteousness produced in our lives? Is it magic? No.

*NIV Hebrews 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons...<sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a peaceable harvest of righteousness for those who have been trained by it.*

Like it or not, right living is the product of the hardship that we endure. Of course, the product is great, but the process grates. But right there is where you'll know that the Holy Spirit is in control, when you can endure with peace.

## Kingdom Values: Peace

Interestingly, righteousness also produces something of spiritual value in our lives.

*NIV Isaiah 32:17* *The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.*

Are you getting the picture? If the Holy Spirit controls your thoughts and behaviors, then hardship produces a righteous lifestyle, and righteous living produces peace.

That's common sense: if you're doing what is right, you won't be looking over your shoulder, worrying about getting caught doing something wrong. No guilty feelings; that's peace!

If you're doing what you are confident God has asked you to do, then you won't be worrying about what others will think or say, or how it will turn out. No worries; that's peace!

If you're doing what the Holy Spirit has prompted you to do, the objections or opposition of others cannot deter you. No shame; that's peace!

This is more than a feeling of peace; this is genuine peace — peace that you feel and actual peace (not hostility) with God and often with others, even your enemies!

*Proverbs 16:7* *When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them.*

## Kingdom Values: Joy

When the Holy Spirit is controlling your thoughts and behavior, then the hard things in life produce disciplined behavior, that righteous living produces peace, and that peace leads to overflowing joy.

Who wants to have joy? Joy is a value, a godly value. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God, an evidence of the Spirit's control.

Far more than mere happiness, which is so tied to circumstances, joy is a deeper sense of delight in God because He delights in you.

I recently heard the story of an Irishman and his elderly father, who went for a walk along a beach. They were commenting on the beauty of the cliffs and the clouds and the water, when all of a sudden, the old man began to skip along the water's edge, then to run, then to leap into the air, and skip some more. When the son caught up to him, he saw tears streaming down his old dad's face, and asked, "Dad, are you okay? Why are you crying?"

The old man replied, between laughter and tears, "Son, my father loves me! He loves me so much!"

This is the joy that comes from God. It is joy for what we have, as well as joy for what we have been promised through Jesus Christ.

When the Israelites rediscovered the words of God, as Ezra and the Levites read to them what was written, Nehemiah the governor said:

*Nehemiah 8:10* *Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!*

Sometimes the words of God are hard to chew or swallow, but don't be discouraged. Start sharing the things you have been given and the joy of the Lord will become your strength, too!

## Full Circle

And now we have come full circle: endurance produces righteousness, righteousness produces peace, peace produces joy, and joy produces endurance!

*Hebrews 12:1 Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. <sup>2</sup> We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

Remembered joy and anticipated joy can get you through present difficulty.

*Romans 14:17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

You want to do the right thing. You want to have peace in your life. You want to experience real joy. How can you have these things?

First, you must be rightly related to God through faith in His Son Jesus. Make up your mind that if Jesus will forgive all your wrongdoings and take the lead in your life, you will give up trying always to do things your way.

Second, you must practice relying on the Holy Spirit. Though you cannot see Him, you can learn to feel His presence and sense His prompting and receive His direction through God's Word, the Bible.

*Galatians 5:22 The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control.*

Who produces righteousness, peace, and joy in our lives? Not us; we cannot manufacture them (all we can manage are cheap and short-lived knockoffs). They are the product of the Holy Spirit, the fruit that He grows in our lives. This is why you want to learn to stay full of the Spirit, and not drift away. This is why you want to stay connected to the local church and never ride alone.

*2 Timothy 2:22 Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.*

("Youthful lusts" are not the "things that young people crave"; they are the things that you have craved, instead of God, since you were young.)

If you are to live in righteousness, peace, and joy, they will only be found "in the Holy Spirit." Speaking in tongues may be the *initial* evidence of the baptism in the Spirit, but righteousness, peace, and joy are the *substantial* evidences of the Spirit's fullness in your life.