

Power of the Spirit

We have been looking at what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. We covered conviction of the Spirit and how we are transformed the moment we submit to that conviction and pray and pray for salvation. Before going further, we considered the abusive false claims of the power of the Spirit for selfish manipulation of people. We have to be warned of this so we can have proper respect for that power. It reminds me of some of the power tools we have today. They are wonderful, but you better have respect for them. A drill press can grab a piece of clothing and the next thing you know your hand is all twisted up in the chuck that holds the drill bit. A table saw can kick back a board at the speed of up to 120 miles per hour. A little slip of a knife can send you to the emergency room for stitches. With that in mind, we can respectfully consider and marvel at the proper power of the Spirit in our lives in these next two messages. Next week we will look at specific spiritual gifts that the Spirit has given us and this week we will look at how the power of the Spirit emboldens us.

1. We have the power of the Spirit that Jesus had -

Living the Christian life takes work. Many times people get discouraged if they focus on the work it takes rather than on the power God has for us to do the work.

Matt 11:28-30 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

The yoke is a reference to the work we have to do, but the whole purpose of the yoke is to make the work lighter. Jesus yokes up with us and does the

heavy lifting. This reminds me of an ad campaign that Staples office supply store had. Their slogan was, "That was easy." It featured impossible situations that were solved by hitting an easy button. When it was hit, a recording said, "That was easy." In their ad, a clerk with 4' stacks of file folders crashing down around him reaches for the easy button. A boy fidgeting in class and looking totally lost is called on by the teacher for an answer, reaches under his desk for the easy button. A cowboy facing a bucking horse reaches under his saddle for the easy button. A father with twins on the floor ready to be changed reaches for the easy button. Finally, a surgeon facing a surgery he's never done declares, "That's okay," as he reaches for the easy button. The ad goes on to say "Wouldn't it be nice if there was an easy button for life? Now there's one for your business."

I am astounded by the statement of Christ in John 14:12,

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

I would never be so bold to make such a claim that we would do greater works than Christ, but Jesus, Himself, actually said that. I don't think that He was referring to doing a greater *kind* of work than He did. Dying for our sins and rising from the dead can't be topped. I believe what He was referring to was how we would have a longer time on earth than He had and would have more time to work. Nonetheless, the works that we would be called to do would be greater than what we would think we *could* do. He asked the Jews of that day to overcome their deep seated religious and nationalistic prejudices and carry a Roman soldier's pack twice as far as the occupying force required them to do by their law. He told people to turn the other cheek when they were offended. He told His followers to forsake all and follow Him. He told them to take up and

bear their own cross. He warned them of persecution to come and to go out even though they might be ill prepared to do so. And yet, in spite of all of this, we are encouraged to be quite optimistic about serving God.

Look at what the apostle Paul had to go through.

2Cor 11:24-30 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

Even though he had gone through so much, he still found reason to rejoice. The reason for this alluded to in Romans 15.

Rom 15:13-20 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

...

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, **by the power of the Spirit of God**; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

The things that he did were "wrought" by Christ, but look especially close at verse 19, "... by the power of the Spirit of God..." It is not as though the Christian life is equipped with an *easy* button, but we *do* have the power to do the work that God has given us.

What I find amazing about the incarnation is that Jesus Christ did things not in His own power. This is something about God that I find imponderable. But we do have the clear teaching that He did things in the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:31-34 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent

speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

This is how Jesus can tell us that we are going to do such works. We have the same Spirit given to us. When we walk in the Spirit we have wonderful strength.

The Lumberjack

There is a story told of the big lumberjack who bought a brand new chainsaw and was told it could cut down at least 100 trees a day. But on the first day he only managed to cut down 25 trees. The next day he tried harder and finally cut down 33 trees. The third day he started early, worked late, and even cut his lunch break short, but he still managed to cut down only 48 trees.

He went back to the store and confronted the manager with his complaint. He told him of his efforts and of the results. The manager couldn't quite understand what had gone wrong, so he asked to take a look. He looked the chainsaw over for a bit and then grabbed the starter rope and pulled hard. The motor easily started up with a roar.

The lumberjack jumped back in alarm and yelled, "What's that noise?"

— Source unknown

2. We have the power to witness by the Spirit -

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the

uttermost part of the earth.

There are times when God has spoken directly to people and crowds, but all through the Bible He has used people to bear testimony of His grace. Sometimes the power of the Spirit was accompanied by the miraculous. One thing that can be said about having the power of the Spirit that people seem to miss is that it always results in bold preaching.

Acts 4:8-13 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Ghost**, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

....

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13 Now when **they saw the boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and **they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and they **spake the word of God with boldness**.

Acts 13:46,52 **Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold**, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

3. We have the power to be persuasive (sort of!) by the Spirit -

We have looked at John 16 and the conviction of the Spirit before, but now I would like to point out that even though the Spirit is the power behind our witness, that does not mean that the reaction to the power is necessarily positive.

John 16:7-11 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

There have been many times when persecution has come and the power of the Spirit was promised to us, but it would not mean that people would be persuaded. What it *would* mean is that if people would be persuaded at all it would be by the power of the Spirit. One thing that would be guaranteed is that the power of the Spirit would have an effect. He would be the power unto life if people respond positively, or He would be the power unto death if people respond negatively.

Matt 10:19-22 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

You can't be forgiven if you reject the power behind the message of forgiveness.

Matt 12:31-32 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

The Bible which came by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will have an effect, but it can go two ways. It will either free us, or it will condemn us, depending on how we respond to it. But you can be sure we will respond!

Isa 55:8-11 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall

not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

People will either accept Christ or they will reject Him. There is no middle ground. James wrote for those who put that day off.

James 4:14-17 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. **[You might boast that you have time...but that is not necessarily so!]**

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Our persuasion comes not from the excellency of our speech, but from the excellence of the power of the Holy Spirit.

1Cor 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

4. We have the power of the Spirit to face day to day challenges -

Eph 3:14-16 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

What A Child Needs to Succeed

In 1986, a group of researchers published a study of Japanese mothers and mothers in Minneapolis. The mothers were asked to rank the most important things that a child needs to succeed academically. The answers tell a lot about the difference in our two cultures today.

The mothers in Minneapolis chose “ability.”

The mothers in Japan said “effort.”

— Richard H. Finan, State Senator from Ohio

There *is* an effort that we must make. The Christian life is *not* easy in that there will be *no* challenges; it is *not* easy in that God does the work *for* us; but it *is* easy in that He does the work *through* us. We put out the effort *and* ability, but the *ability* is the Holy Spirit.

In a seminary missions class, missionary veteran Herbert Jackson told how, as a new missionary, he was assigned a car that would not start without a push.

After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children

out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure for two years.

Ill health forced the Jackson family to leave, and a new missionary came to that station. When Jackson proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new man began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, "Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable." He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life.

For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept Jackson from putting that power to work.

— Ernest B. Beevers, Source unknown

We have the same Spirit that was the power that Jesus had so that we don't have to trust in our own finite power. We have power to witness by the Spirit and we have the power of the Spirit to persuade. We have the power of the Spirit to face the challenges of life. You can have a ministry that is filled with the power of the Spirit which would give any of us the confidence we need to defeat the Gates of Hell if we will feed our spirit instead of our flesh. We don't have to walk away defeated because we are so sure that we are powerless. While it is true that *we* are powerless, it is not because the power is not there. It would only be because we are not plugged *into* the source of power. We don't have to wait until that power comes over us before we act. We can apply ourselves spiritually, but the power comes when we step up to the plate to reach others. Living for God can be a powerful remedy to overcome temptation. While we are

here on earth there will always be a struggle, but the struggle doesn't get easier by sitting beside the temptation and try real hard to not think about it. The struggle gets easier when we are serving God and He blesses us with the Spirit to do the work He has given us!

In order to have the power of the Spirit, you first have to have Jesus in your heart. After you ask Jesus to be your Savior forever, you will be transformed by the Spirit of God with His abiding presence. As you grow in the Spirit you will see the work of God in your life as you serve Him.

1. We have the power of the Spirit that Jesus had - Matt 11:28-30, 2Cor 11:24-30, Rom 15:13-20, John 3:31-34
2. We have the power to witness by the Spirit - Luke 24:49 , Acts 1:8, 4:8-13, 4:29-31, 13:46,52
3. We have the power to be persuasive (sort of!) by the Spirit - John 16:7-11, Matt 10:19-22, 12:31-32, Isa 55:8-11, Rom 9:33, James 4:14-17, 1Cor 2:1-5
4. We have the power of the Spirit to face day to day challenges - Eph 3:14-16