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# THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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But 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." (Acts 1:8)

The very mention of the Holy Spirit often provokes a certain discomfort for many believers. Due to bad experiences many reject the moving of the Holy Spirit; churches are quickly divided in opinion while many others refuse to speak about Him as a Person. Unfortunately today many Pentecostal churches rarely encourage the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. However, we must take into consideration that not

believer or church can be effective without the moving of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to speak so much about the baptism of the Holy Spirit as much as about His function.

In the early church, as in many healthy churches today, the Holy Spirit was not pushed to the side; instead He was the key Person of life and function among believers.

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► **1. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO CONVEY INFORMATION BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST'S MESSAGE CONFIRMED BY SUPERNATURAL WORKS.**

The gospel is not a human thing, although man is directly involved in carrying it out. Many believers today attempt to speak about Him in an intellectual way or even perhaps as an alternative lifestyle bringing positive change to those who receive Him. More and more pastors preach apologetics and psychology in an endeavor to keep believers in the pews. Churches are trying to do all they can to draw people in; they have been induced to offer church positions to only those who have degrees, thinking that the more highly educated people are the more equipped they are at understanding how the gospel ought to be shared. However we only gain a partial benefit from this for we can only truly share the gospel in the same measure in which we have a real living experience.

While reading the book of Acts we can see the ultimate attitude of the disciples. Before

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they began to minister they had to wait in prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit in order to become effective witnesses. The Greek word used here for "witnesses" is *martus*, and literally implies a witness, with reference to someone who reminds someone of something. A witness is a person who has information or understands something founded by experience, not so much intellectually as in reference to academic knowledge.

The trap into which many believers, churches, Bible schools and denominations fall is greater emphasis on intellectual knowledge and less encouragement of the believers to experience change that the Holy Spirit brings. We cannot carry the gospel to the world just because we have read the Bible, theological books or have acquired an academic title. We must first experience that which we are speaking about.

The gospel spread through the early church and advanced because the believers and church in that day did not present the gospel as a modern-scientific alternative to other points of view, rather as a supernatural life-changing experience, which they had experienced when they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Today it is unfortunate to see, especially in Pentecostal circles, that the Holy Spirit is allowed fewer opportunities to move. The move of the Holy Spirit has lost its place while the church endeavors to conform those sitting in the pews; the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not spoken of because it is too controversial for many. Perhaps the moving of the Holy Spirit is viewed as emotional weakness marking those who are not at specific "intellectual

levels". This is why prayer and evangelistic meetings have grown dry, failing to bring about true conversion while in its place we have believers who have intellectually accepted various benefits of the gospel without truly experiencing conversion and the filling of the Holy Spirit necessary for witnessing.

The Book of Acts, though written over 2000 years ago, clearly describes the work of the early church. Though the times have changed we can, by all means, clearly recognize eternal principles and the moving of the Holy Spirit.

When the disciples waited and prayed for the Holy Spirit they experienced a supernatural move, which they shared with the gathering in Jerusalem. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:2-4)

The disciples experienced God's presence. They didn't read a book entitled, "God's Presence" and thereupon organize a series of seminars about God's presence, print t-shirts, or plant the "First Church of God's Presence". No one wrote a dissertation on it nor were they sent to minister based on their intellectual and social merit. They simply experienced the Holy Spirit who later directed their ministry.

Conveying Christ's message to people is the number one work of the Holy Spirit;

the disciples shared their supernatural experience in tongues and clearly announced the message to the astonished unsaved who gathered at the annual festival of Pentecost. "So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'Whatever could this mean?'" (Acts 2:12)

Other than true repentance and conversion, which we obviously see in Peter's address, the church powerfully grew because of the move of the Holy Spirit. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41)

In Chapter three we see that on the way to prayer Peter and John supernaturally healed a lame man. "Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'" (Acts 3:6) Christ's power mightily moved through the apostles. The power of the Holy Spirit was emphasized, not intellectual knowledge alone. Many churches today cannot testify that they have commanded someone to "Stand up and walk". They would rather give gold and silver, although even that has become rare.

When the disciples were forbidden to speak Jesus' name they did not buy a horde of books on apologetics in order to gain intellectual knowledge to be more persuasive, nor did they attend a theological

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seminary earning diplomas in order to be more acceptable among recognized people; rather they clearly sought the Lord in prayer for supernatural power and the infilling of the Holy Spirit and began to boldly proclaim God's Word. "...by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:30-31)

In the fifth chapter we also read that, "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch...so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women..." (Acts 5:12, 15 and 14)

Many of these events in the early church clearly confirm for us that the disciples supernaturally, and by experience, carried the message of Christ's gospel. This is the only way the multitudes were added to the church, which is why the church today needs to

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question its methods of sharing if she wishes to see the results described in the Word. We try so hard accommodate the unsaved and be acceptable to the world believing that this is most effective in sharing the gospel, but without the work of the Holy Spirit it is simply impossible. This is one of many reasons why the church today is full of worldly people – many have only intellectually received the Word while never having a living experience with the Word.

► **2. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS STRONG FELLOWSHIP AMONG BELIEVERS.**

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

We cannot have quality fellowship if we are full of ourselves and not filled the Holy Spirit. Many ask what the key is to good relationships: maybe academic knowledge, understanding of personality types, or perhaps something else. We are witnesses to divisions, fighting, jealousies, and hate among believers. The reason for this is not academic deficiency or ignorance; the reason is that we

are not right with the Lord. We have moved away from personal experience with Him and are attempting to replace it by giving a good impression with manipulation and good technology.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important elements in bringing better fellowship among believers. The believers in the early church were steadfast in the life of fellowship. They did not flee from one another at the first sign of trouble because the power and might of the Holy Spirit gave them a significant fellowship that the world around them could not give. They held close to each other; they were not negative and critical individuals. They shared their goods when seeing a need. They were not as individualized as we are in the church today. We love each other in a technical way until we are forced into situations that require a practical statement of love; at that moment we find 101 reasons why we can't fellowship with people and why we don't want to help.

Believers in the early church had joyful and simple hearts; they were people of quality fellowship, which was only possible by the Holy Spirit, and drew many new souls. New believers were not drawn by nice new buildings, big projects and great programs; rather they were in awe and drawn to open and honest fellowship. Of course, this is not a picture of communism and they were not equal in everything, yet no one was in need because those who had did not draw away in their own private work; they were sensitive to the needs of others. "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had

all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." (Acts 4:32-35)

When the congregation was filled with the Holy Spirit anything was possible – the work of the Holy Spirit brought quality fellowship, which is one of the most important elements in every growing church.

This is why the example of the Apostle Paul provoked the Philippians to fellowship with the Spirit and encouraged them to be in harmony with one another. "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be

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done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:1-4)

### ► **3. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS MISSION WORK.**

It is interesting how many churches today claim to have revival and an infilling of the Holy Spirit, yet do not support nor send one missionary to places in need of the gospel. When missionaries are sent they most often go to large cities where there are already many churches. They often build their own alleged image of a missionary while actually living a leisurely life often void of results while spending a lot of money. I always ask myself why missionaries don't go to cities where there is no church. They love nice, civilized places with useful infrastructure.

Be it as it may, one of the personal works of the Holy Spirit is surely missions. If people are filled with the Holy Spirit they will have a desire to share Christ with people who do not know Him. Today, unfortunately, churches more closely resemble social clubs than a

church full of the Holy Spirit. When people go to church their thoughts are not on receiving something from the Lord; they think about hanging out with friends afterward or look forward to a conference where they can show off what they know. Of course, no one there knows them well giving them a chance to be in the spotlight lacking at their own local church.

If we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will have a strong desire for missions and for personally sharing the gospel with those who don't know Christ. The acts of the apostles were acts of mission work – acts of evangelizing the world. The church was not just a social club.

In the days of the early church there were not biblical institutions where, after finishing school, people would be elevated to a position of academic success rather than a position of prayer and fasting. In separation by the Holy Spirit they were called to ministry. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:2-3)

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Mission work was God's plan fulfilled by the intercession of the Holy Spirit. He led them on the first of many mission trips. "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant." (Acts 13:4-5)

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit while on those trips, did not speak about his own

academic accomplishments. In order to gain public notice, he blinded the sorcerer Elymas. "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord." (Acts 13:12) This was no book of doctrines or apologetics – this was the work and power of the Holy Spirit!

The Holy Spirit led Paul and his followers on to many mission areas – from Cyprus to Paphos, from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia where, in the synagogue full of the Holy Spirit, he shared the good news to his countrymen, and later the whole town came to hear him: "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God." (13:44) Although many were saved, the religious leaders threw out the truth and began to publicly persecute Paul. However, it was already too late because the word began to spread throughout the surrounding regions. Later he went to Iconium, and the Word tells us that the disciples were filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit (verse 52).

In Iconium they stayed a long time and were allowed to preach. "Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands." (Acts 14:3) With the power of the Holy Spirit signs and wonders followed. This was not just for the good of the believers attending seminars and healing conferences, rather it was first of all for evangelistic reasons, particularly for mission trips. This is the example in Lystra. Paul prayed for a crippled man and he was healed. Instead of preaching in Asia, the Holy Spirit led them to Macedonia. "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia,

they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them." (Acts 16:6-7)

With the power of the Holy Spirit, while in Philippi, Paul commanded a spirit of divination to come out of a soothsayer who told fortunes and earned much money for her masters. Because of this he was put in prison, but supernaturally was released and the jail keeper and his family were saved.

The Holy Spirit led him also to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth where he stayed for a time and worked while lodging with a family. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia Paul once again began to reason in the synagogue and witnessed to the Jews of Jesus the Messiah. After this God spoke to him in a vision, and despite persecution he stayed a while longer.

We read that in Ephesus "...God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." (Acts 19:11) There many of the saved came, confessed, and revealed their witchcraft and

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publicly burned their books of magic. The Word says, "So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." (19:20)

In Caesarea the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Agabus about the persecution of the Jews. "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:11) and later Paul was led on his last mission trip – to Rome. On the way he survived a shipwreck and stayed three months on Malta where the people were drawn by the Holy Spirit. "In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days." (Acts 28:30-31) In Rome he stayed a full two years in a rented flat and, without any hindrance whatsoever, preached about the Kingdom of God.

I know that when we hear these things we immediately think of the word "balance", but this time we need to confess that regardless

of any bad experience we may have had, rather than chanting to ourselves that we need to be balanced people, we must admit that we are in desperate need of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of our church. He will empower us to experience Him, help us in healing relationships and bring fervency for preaching to the lost.

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