

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WITNESSING CHURCH

Scripture: Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Introduction:

One night a wife found her husband standing over their infant's crib.

As she watched him looking down at their very first baby, she saw on his face a mixture of emotions: ...disbelief, doubt, delight, amazement, enchantment, skepticism.

Touched by this unusual display and the deep emotions it aroused, with eyes glistening she slipped her arm around her husband.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said.

"It's amazing!" he replied. "I just can't see how anybody can make a crib like that for only \$46.50."

APPLICATION:

Here lay one of the greatest miracles in God's creation... and all this father saw was a crib. He didn't see what lay within.

But he wasn't unique.

Many times people look upon God's handiwork and only see the outside manifestations... never the miracle that lays within.

It works that way with many things, whether it be the miracle of the birth of a new baby or the miracle of the birth of a new Christian.

There are many who see only the outside framework and miss the miracle that lays within.

Acts 2:38 tells us that something very exceptional lies within each Christian.

When we obey Jesus by repenting of our sins and then we go to be baptized we also have the promise that we shall receive the **"gift of the Holy Spirit."**

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

In fact, in Ephesians we're told that God's Holy Spirit is a mark of God's ownership of us:

"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit"
(Ephesians 1:13)

There are those who believe that the Holy Spirit is some kind of inanimate object – like the crib that held that baby – AND they see only the crib not the miracle within.

Theologically these people accept the idea that God's Holy Spirit can live within us, but they don't think that Spirit does very much... and thus they miss out on the miracle of what that Holy Spirit can mean for us.

It's easy to see how this can happen.

There are a lot of churches that teach things about the Holy Spirit that are bizarre and unbiblical... however, we shouldn't allow those wrong teachings or any other distraction to cause us to forget the uniqueness that God's Spirit can have in our lives.

John 16:7-8 says: ***"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor (or Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment"***

Jesus was saying here that when He left, He would send His Spirit in His place.
The Spirit was to be Jesus' CONNECTION to us.
His power within us.

The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God does many things within us

- helps us in our prayers
- helps us to understand the deep things of God's Word
- guides us

- teaches us
- AND empowers us

BUT perhaps the most intriguing thing the Holy Spirit was sent to do is implied here in Acts 1:8.

Notice the text says 1st that they'd receive the Holy Spirit - and then they would be his witnesses.

This morning is a very important Sunday for our church.

I want to cast a Vision for our Church family in the area of reaching the unsaved for Jesus Christ. The Staff and I want to challenge each of you this morning that we need to become witnesses in the year of 2009 to those who desperately need the Savior.

There are going to be people we care about and those we don't know who are going to miss heaven because of a lack of witness about what Jesus can do to their spiritual life's.

We have decided this year should be a year of evangelism at PCN and we want to entitle it: **EACH ONE WIN ONE!**

Do you believe if everyone would pray and the Power of the Holy Spirit would come upon our church we could reach 200 people for Jesus this next year?

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I wish I had time to share with you the testimony of many churches I have read about where these churches revolutionized their community when the Holy Spirit empowered them and came upon them and they began to reach the lost for Christ.

Last week I told you that churches in America are in decline.

As a matter of fact, our nation compared to the rest of the world is the only nation that is not growing in its churches.

What we mean by that is the churches in America are not reaching the lost and getting them into His Church.

And the churches who are growing are growing from transferring members from other churches. Instead many churches are on the verge of struggling to live or are dying.

That statement should alarm us – it should cause great concern.

However, I want to inform you that this didn't just happen over night or over the past year. This decline of church growth has been happening for almost 2 decades. Each year as our nation grows older – the churches decline more and more.

Dr. Broughton was the founder and the first pastor of the great Tabernacle Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

He used to chuckle as he would relate the following story to different groups.

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Among the annual reports read one year at an District Council of churches, one pastor got up and read his report like this:

Additions to the church during one year by profession of faith: none.

Additions to the church by restoration: none.

Additions to the church during one year by transfer: none.

Losses to the church during one year: none.

Losses by death: none

Marriages: none

And the pastor closed with the following notation: "Brethren, we are holding our own! Pray for us!"

Now we chuckle at that, it kind of reminds me of our Pastor's annual reports we use to give at District Council.

But listen to me - that's where most of our churches are and have been and if we are not careful we could be become just like that pastor and his church, just holding our own!

I ask you the question, "**Can the church in America survive?**"

And the answer is, "**As long as Jesus lives in the hearts of His believers and the Christians are obedient to Jesus' commands the church will survive.**" **It will not only survive, the church will prosper and be spiritually healthy.**

But notice with me that what I just said is –
Conditional!

The church is never perfect, nor will it ever be.

But Jesus said – this is a Promise from Jesus, "***I will build My church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it.***"

The Book of Acts, is a dramatic record of the divine power of the Holy Spirit.

This particular passage is probably one of my most favorite passages in the Word of God.

I like the book of Acts because it's full of Action.

In all of my ministry, I am now more convinced that what this church and other churches need is not more programs.

We don't need more ministries.

We don't necessarily need more fellowship time.

What we desperately need is the Divine Power of the Holy Spirit.

This has been my heart cry for you and me.
 This is so vitally important that I am not going to change my message.

You see - nothing of eternal value is going to happen around this church or any other church until we recognize and respond to the Power of the Holy Spirit.

If you were to study to Book of Acts, and I encourage you to go to Pastor Lonnie's class on Sunday night and diligently learn, but when you study you would find that the New Testament Church was in action.

They were doing the job exactly the way Jesus told them it was to be done.

They were putting emphasis where the Lord told them to put the emphasis.

Let's read it again: "***But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses.***"

They were proclaiming the message that Jesus had commissioned them to tell to all the world.

It is so important for us to realize that the leadership of this church sat for three and half years at the feet of Jesus as He taught them.

So many today are running off undisciplined trying to do something for Jesus and they haven't been Equipped or trained to do.

Listen - People - if we were ever going to do anything for Jesus then we are going to have to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn how to do it.

The problem is - how can you learn if you are not willing to give more to learning than just one time a week?

Remember in verse 1, ***"The former account have I made O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."***

They finished their schooling at the feet of Jesus.

You and I will find the key to the secret of power and progress.

And in finding this key - we need to follow their path in this generation.

I. THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A. The Promise of the Father. Acts 1:4

"and being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me.'"

Charles G. Finney says of his own experience, "As I turned and was to take a seat by the fire, I received the mighty Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul.

I could feel the impressions like a wave of electricity going through and through me.

Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way.

I wept aloud with joy and love; and I do not know, but I should say literally bellowed the unutterable gushings of my heart.

In his writings, Charles G. Finney says, "He who neglects to obey the command to be filled with the Spirit, is as guilty of breaking the command of God as he who steals, curses, or commits adultery.

His guilt is as great as the authority of God is great, who commands us to be filled.

His guilt is equivalent to all the good he might do if he were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told His disciples they would receive the Holy Spirit.

These men who were Christ's disciples were basically unlearned, poor and weak. Jesus was everything to them. He must be everything to us

They needed Him. We need Him.

They couldn't do without Him. We can't do without Him.

They didn't have political or military power. We're not strong on our own.

When Jesus left them and ascended into heaven, here was disciples as helpless as little children.

I don't know about you but I feel so inadequate.

So helpless at times. Like a little child.

But Jesus had given them a strange, and wonderful promise when He said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."** John 14:15-16

But who is He? Who is the Comforter?

Why would Jesus say to His disciples that it would be better to have Him, the Comforter, then to have Jesus in the flesh?

This One who is He talking about must be strong!

This One who Jesus is talking about must be wise! He must be tender. He must be true.

He has to be all of this in order to take the place of the One who died on a rugged cross for us.

You Bible scholars go with me in your remembrance and hear the words coming from Joel 2:28-29 where it says,

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

From the O.T. we get the messianic promise of God.

God tells us that in the last days, He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

God said He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh like

He poured it out on individuals in Israel.

One of the symbols of the beautiful Person of the Holy Spirit is found as a flaming fire.

John the Baptist prophesied of Jesus when He said, ***"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."***

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Our Beautiful Jesus said, **"I have come to bring fire on the earth."** (Lk. 12:49)

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Billy Sunday, the great baseball player turned evangelist in the 19th century used to tell this story. There was a well-known atheist who was seen running vigorously toward a burning church building.

He was determined that he was going to join the others in trying to put out the fire.

One of his neighbors said to the atheist, "This is different, I've never seen you going to church before."

And the atheist replied, "Well, this is the first time I have ever seen a church on fire."

Would you think on this for a moment.

How many people who are in the world would come to church if the people God would be on fire for Jesus Christ and burning with zeal to win the lost that are going to hell?

Benjamin Franklin confessed that he often went to hear George Whitefield because he could watch him burn before his very eyes.

When God gets a hold of us in the power and the fire of His Holy Spirit He naturally burns within us with holy dynamite.

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God said to Jeremiah, **"I will make My words in your mouth a fire."** (Jer. 5:14)

B. The Promise of the Saviour. Acts 1:8
"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."

Jesus first choose His 12 disciples.

Then of those 11 faithful men, He commanded them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high.

You see their problem was they were worried about the restoration of Israel. Don't we get caught up in worrying about things that should worry us?

They had an incomplete understanding for His purpose for their lives.

And listen - our understanding will be incomplete if we don't have Him in His fullness in our lives.

He told them not to concern themselves about authority and power and position.

But Jesus told them WAIT
And Jesus tells us that we have to WAIT.

Wait until they would recieve the energy and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And they waited in the Upper Room.

And that is a future sermon.

But I'll tell you now - It happened on the Day in which we refer to as the Day of Pentecost.

II. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

There are more than forty references to the Holy Spirit in the first thirteen chapters of Acts.

Acts 2:12 says, ***"Whatever could this mean?"***
NKJV

I want you to picture in your minds with me the crowds that had gathered in Jerusalem.

They had no idea of what was going to happen.

They didn't know that 120 disciples were in the Upper Room just WAITING.

They were sitting there waiting as Jesus had commanded them to do.

And they heard a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

Chuck Swindoll describes the working of the Holy Spirit in this manner:

"Air is a force with incredible strength. It can snap a tree in two or demolish a landscape. Given enough velocity, air becomes a devastating wind. Energized by a hurricane or tornado, it can clear out an entire mobile home park in seconds. The power in that invisible stuff! If you contain it in a network of hoses and valves and put in under enough pressure, it can bring a massive commercial bus or truck-trailer rig to a screeching halt. It'll even stop a locomotive pulling over a hundred cars. It will break thick concrete on a driveway if its pushing through the right tools. It will loosen or tighten the lug nuts on your car's wheels if funneled into the right mechanism. In fact, it can lift massive amounts of weight.

" The manager of a granite quarry in North Carolina once said, "We supplied the granite for the municipal building in New York City. We can lift an acre of solid granite ten feet thick to almost any height we desire for the purpose of moving it . . .We can do it easily as I can lift a piece of paper."

"How? Air.

That's all . . .You may be surprised to know that the Bible talks a lot about this (powerful) air . . .it's called wind . . .or it is translated Spirit as in . . .The Holy Spirit . . .Christians need a reminder that the most powerful force in life is something we can't even see."

It was not the wind but rather the sound of a wind.

Next, they saw upon the disciples **"cloven tongues like as of fire."**

What an incredible sight. What astonishment.

And this crowd of people were further amazed when they heard these Galileans speak in tongues that were understood by so many foreigners who were in Jerusalem.

And they responded by asking the question, **"What meaneth this?"**

B. Peter begins to Preach. Acts 2:14
"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.'"

This is where Peter begin to tell that great crowd of people what had happened in the Upper Room.

Let me tell you Christian friend, if you and I ever receive an Upper Room experience that is real and genuine, people will ask the question - What is this? What does this mean?

Oh, I long for this to happen in our church. To see the real moving of the Holy Spirit in a New Testament way.

It's important for us to understand the history that surrounds this truth: Let me take you on a short journey

You see a devout Jew would recognize the cloven tongues of fire as being a visible symbol of the presence of God.

You will remember that God had led the children out of Israel out of bondage, **"by day in a pillar of a cloud . . . and my night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.** Ex. 13:21

When Solomon had dedicated the temple, we read,

"The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house." II Chron. 7:1

This manifestation and outpouring from God caused the Children of Israel to get on their knees and bow before God and worshipped Him.

II Chron. 7:3 **"When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord saying, For He is good; for His mercy endures forever."**

I ask you what would happen if God would pour out His Spirit on us as a Church?

I'll tell you what would happen. We would be in awe His presence.

We would be on our faces before a Living and Powerful God.

Let me take you to another place in the O.T.

When Elijah faced the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel the crucial test between Baal and God was to be that of fire.

Elijah challenged, ". . .the God that answers by fire, let him be God."

And following the contest, we find in I Kings 18:39 ***"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, he is the God."***

John the Baptist said, in Matt 3:11, ***"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."***

This fire is none other than the Spirit's operation in our souls - searching - consuming - refining - and inspiring.

Paul exhorts us as Christians ***"Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you."***

And the problem is this - in our lives today the constant tendency of fire is to go out.

Listen Christian brother - Christian sister in the Lord - Praise the Lord a flickering flame that is almost gone can be fanned into brilliant fire again.

But nobody can do it, but you.

God supplies the fire, but we must keep it burning.

What has happened to your fire?

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General William Booth that great leader of the Salvation Army once said,

"The tendency of fire is to go out; watch the fire on the altar of your heart."

Our constant danger is to cool off spiritually, to lose our fervor, and to slow down in zeal.

Personal revival comes through renewed commitment and reaffirmed consecration.

Everyone needs such personal revival again and again.

He said, "We have the great gift of God, the Holy Spirit, but we need to hunger more for the manifestations of His presence.

Now get this - the events that happened on the Day of Pentecost were intended by God to make a profound impression both on the early church and on the crowds that had gathered from all over the world.

When the Holy Spirit came - the manifestations of God was evident.

I still claim today that in His church when the Holy Spirit of God comes upon us their will be the manifestation of God in our presence.

Acts 2:16, Peter says, "***This is that***"

This was the fulfillment of prophecy given by Joel in the O.T.

The Holy Spirit would come upon all flesh.

He would come then and He will come now.

Why?
I'll tell you why!

He came to empower the Christian Church to take the message of salvation to a lost world that is dying and going to a Devil's hell.

They were to become His witnesses.

We are to become His witnesses.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit came to equip and empower the early church to bear a continuing witness to the

truth as Jesus had done during His earthly ministry.

Without the Holy Spirit in His empowerment we will never be able to witness the truth of Jesus to those who desperately need Him.

Folks, we have to Him. Desperately we need Him to Witness to the Lost in our day.

Luke, the author of Acts declares that in writing His Gospel he set forth that which "***Jesus began both to do and to teach***"

In Acts he sets forth what the living Christ through the Holy Spirit continues to do in and through His church, which is His Body in the world.

A. Witnessing in Jerusalem Acts 1-7

When you take the time and study the first seven chapters of Acts, you will find a dramatic account of how these early Christians being filled with the Holy Spirit went in power to witness for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

B. They witnessed in Judea and Samaria. (Acts 8-12)

In these four chapters you will find These

baptized Holy Spirit filled Christians leading the way to bring all people it did not matter their position in life

And it did not matter the color of their skin.

C. They witnessed to the Gentiles. (Acts 10-11)

In these two chapters we find the Holy Spirit leading these early Christians to witness to the Gentiles.

Praise the Lord, because we are a result of that witness.

These Gentiles were considered pagan outcasts.

They were considered to be outside the concern of God.

D. They witnessed to the uttermost parts of the world.

These early Christians believers moved outside the area that was known to them.

They became missionaries.

They took the message of salvation thru Christ to everyone who would listen

And the Book of Acts tells us how the church changed from a Jewish body to a body that was to become almost

completely Gentile.

IV. LASTLY, THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The supreme qualification for bearing a winning witness was and still is to be filled with the Spirit of God.

If all the Christian believers in this church were truly filled with the Spirit of God, we would not be able to contain the lost who would come to seek Jesus Christ as their Savior.

We are in a Spiritual Warfare.

The enemy is trying to stop us from doing this very thing.

Paul said in Eph 6:12 ***"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."***

A. First, the early believers received a new insight into God's purpose.

Jesus said, ***"Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."*** John 16:13

This is what the early church experienced both on the Day of Pentecost and in the days that were to follow.

B. Secondly, they were given a new liberty of utterance.

Acts 2:4 says, **"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."**

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Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells of two men, they were nominal Christians.

These men worked side by side for five years without finding out that either one was a Christian. One of them, in telling it to Dr. Morgan said, "Isn't that funny?"

And Dr. Morgan said, "Funny! Why, man No! Go find the man and let us get down on our knees before God, for you have never been born again."

I simply preach to you this morning that when we are filled with the Holy Spirit of God we will not be able to be quiet about the best thing that has ever happened to us when Jesus forgave us of our sins and than baptized us with the Holy Spirit.

C. Third, they were given a new power of persuasion.

Acts 2:37 says, **"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the**

rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

Acts 4:33 **"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."**

Acts 6:10 **"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke."**

D. Fourthly, they experienced a new boldness in witnessing.

Acts 2:22 Peter preached to these people and said, **"Men of Israel, hear these words: (Now remember Peter was the coward before Pentecost, he was the Denier before Pentecost) And he says, Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know."**

And Peter closed out his sermon by saying in v.36 **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."**

And see in v.37 **"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"**

THIS HOLY SPIRIT BOLDNESS WAS DUE TO HOLY SPIRIT FULLNESS.

V. THE PATH TO HOLY SPIRIT POWER.

If anyone reads the N.T. they will find the Holy Spirit as a person and One who works on behalf of Jesus Christ.

People - the Holy Spirit is at work in His power right now in the world we live in.

He is available in enduring power to give to the believers to make His church effective in today's world.

The big question is "How?"

A. First, There is Faith.

The Holy Spirit does not work where His presence and His purposes are ignored.

We don't need to pray for His coming, He has already come.

We don't need to recognize that He is present in the heart of every believer - He's already there

If we did more waiting upon the Lord - on our knees in humble prayer and seeking -

If we did more worshipping and praising of the Lord without complaining that someone is too emotional - or we sang the praise choruses one too many times -

If we would spend more time in waiting before the Lord before we did any witnessing
THE RESULTS WOULD BE DIFFERENT!

B. Secondly - There is Obedience.

The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost upon a group of 120 disciples who had determined and committed themselves to obey the command of their Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ had commanded them to tarry, and they responded with trusting obedience.

Our problem today in the church is disobedience to the Lord's command to tarry.

Acts 5:32 says, ***"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."***

Friends - if we are willing to let the Holy Spirit take over He will make us over.

C. Third, The path to Holy Spirit comes by United Prayer.

The early church witnessed in great power largely because they believed in united prayer.

I used to be embarrassed because of our denominations united prayer, but anymore I wished we would get back to praying in united prayer.

Calling out to God - pleading with God - until God would come and send His Spirit.

You see the early church cooperated in prayer.

And listen to this - when the power of God came upon them they became an impact on their world that has never been forgotten.

You know our need is to pray.

If we would examine our hearts and our lives, we would find out that the reason why our lives are not filled with the Holy Spirit is because we have not been willing to pay the price in tarrying on our knees in prayer.

Why doesn't the fire of God fall on our lives?

Why don't we experience the miracles of God?

Why don't we experience the manifestation of God's experience upon our church?

Why doesn't the power and the fire of God fall upon your pastor when he preaches?

**WHEN THERE IS MORE PRAYER IN THE PEWS
THERE WILL BE MORE POWER FROM BEHIND
THE PULPIT.**

Conclusion: