

## **The Power From on High**

George MacDonald said, "Whatever man attempts without God will fail miserably or succeed even more miserably." Jesus said, *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5). What a statement our Lord made -- *"...for without me ye can do nothing."* God has designed our lives to be dependent upon Him. Yet, dependency on Him brings independency from the world. We wait not for the world's approval or consent; we wait upon the Lord. This is exactly what our Lord told His disciples to do: *"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"* (Luke 24:49). This power from on high is the visitation of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit to God's people. Just as surely as the disciples in the first century of the Church needed Him, we need Him now, more than ever.

### **1. He can do what we can never do.**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon spoke of this need so wisely back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "The mainspring of everything good and gracious is the Holy Spirit. Where He comes, everything prospers. But when He has gone, nothing but failure and disaster will come. I believe that at this present moment God's people ought to cry to Him day and night that there may be a fresh baptism into the Holy Spirit. There are many things that are desirable for the Church of Christ, but one thing is absolutely necessary, and this is the one thing—the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of His people. You know the very simple imagery which sets forth this blessing. If you go down to some of our Thames bridges, you will find the barges stuck fast in the mud and you cannot stir them. It would be a very difficult thing to provide machinery with which to move them—all the king's horses and all the king's men could not do it! But wait till the tide comes in! Now every black, heavy old barge "walks the waters like a thing of life!" Everything that can float is movable as soon as the silver flood has returned. So, many of our churches lie in the mud. Everything seems motionless, powerless—but when the Spirit of God comes in like a flood, all is altered! Therefore, let us pray— "Come, Holy Spirit, come."

Allow me to share a quote with you from Bruce Thielemann one hundred years after Spurgeon, making the same application: "When the German forces were retreating from North Africa before the Allies, they tried to make the port serving the city of Eritrea unusable by the Allies. They did this by taking large barges, filling them with concrete, and then causing them to be sunk across the entrance to the harbor. The Allies faced quite a problem in trying to discover how they could remove those barges. They solved the problem this way. They took great gasoline tanks — not the kind of tanks we have in our cars or our homes — I'm referring to those huge tanks, many times the size of a home, which we see in refineries. They took these tanks and sealed them and caused them to be floated on the waters until they were in a position directly above the barges. Then when the tide was out, they chained the barges to these tanks. When the tide came in, the tanks were lifted and they pulled the barges out of the sucking mud at the

bottom of the bay and from that point it was a relatively easy job to remove them. Now get the picture of what was happening here. The barges were chained to the tanks. The tanks were riding and tied to the tides. The tides were responding to the magnetic pull of the moon, and the moon was moving in accord with the great sidereal system: immense, unbelievable power. Such is the power of the tides. Now Shakespeare acknowledges this power of the tides and adds another dimension to our understanding of the tides in the 4th Act of Julius Caesar. There he puts these words upon the lips of Brutus, who is trying to persuade Cassius to assist him. He says, "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in misery. We must take the current when it serves," he says, "or lose our venture." Shakespeare speaks then not only of the power of the tides to take us places, but he also suggests to us that the tides are inevitable, that they are unstoppable, and that they are quite unrecallable. And if we miss them, we are left in the shallows and in misery."

I fear that far too many of God's people are being left in "the shallows," doing what only they can do. Oh, but when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He does through us only what He alone can do! "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...*" (Acts 1:8).

## **2. He is easily grieved.**

The Bible says, "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Ephesians 4:30). Three things this text tells us: 1) The Holy Spirit is a person. Inanimate things do not get offended. He is as real as God the Father and God the Son. 2) He will never leave us. We are sealed unto the Lord returns, which is the Day of Redemption. 3) He can be grieved. The word "grieve" is translated from the Greek word "lupeo" which means: to distress; to be sad, to be in heaviness, to be in sorrow.

When we entertain sin in our life we grieve the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*" (Psalm 66:18). The Spirit of God lives in our hearts; He knows if we are sincere. Jesus said, "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*" (Matthew 15:8).

When the Holy Spirit is offended, He does not leave, but the power leaves. We will find ourselves much like Samson of old who compromised his vows unto the Lord, "*...And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him*" (Judges 16:20).

## **3. He shares the presence of our Lord in our everyday lives!**

Jesus said to His disciples, "*These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*" (John 14:25,26). This truth is as applicable to us as it was to those early followers of Jesus. Christ promises us the Holy Spirit to teach and transform us.

The disciples were beginning to get sorrowful at the thought of the Lord leaving, but the Master told them, *“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”* (John 16:7). Then our Lord explains that He has more to say: *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now”* (John 16:12). Although the disciples were not ready for the whole story, He promised, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”* (John 16:13).

The Spirit-filled Christian is the happiest person in the world because he or she has the Spirit of the Lord communicating the thoughts of God, the ways of God and the plan of God in a continual flow that cascades through the heart of every obedient believer. Christianity is so real because our Lord is willing to manifest Himself to and through us! Everyday with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. Pray for His fullness today!

-Pastor Pope-