

Power with God

He had a splitting headache.

It was insufferably hot in the cramped control room. The last light had been cut off a long time ago to conserve current, and it was dark. The only sound was the raspy breaths of the others as they panted for air. Somewhere, someone was praying.

It had been a violent little meteorite shower, slamming the ship like buckshot on tin. Automatic sealant systems had taken over, there were no cabin leaks and they were still alive. But the same freak rock-storm that had wiped out their radio links had also cut their solar cell connections. The satellite fed on the sun, drawing life for the thousand separate systems on board, changing the flaming radiation into power, power to keep them alive. Sun power refrigerated the hull during the light cycle and stored energy for battery warmth on the night side of earth. The storm had hit when the batteries were low from the dark-cycle. Unless the solar cells were fixed, there was no power. Without power there would be no heat or cooling, no light and no air.

No air.

He wished he could see. His head felt like it was wrapped in a blanket soaked in tepid water. The air was foul and thick as cotton. It was all he could do to keep from screaming.

Why had he volunteered? He had been satisfied with his home, job and family. He had enough prestige already to keep him in laurels for life. Somehow, however, he wasn't satisfied with himself. He had weighed the risks against the challenge and felt he would be a fool to go. Yet he had gone.

The captain had clinched it, he decided. It was when he had painted a picture of what they wanted to do, and told them that it must be done, even though it could well cost them their lives. He had looked at the captain, and the captain had looked at him, and he chose.

Now the captain was outside somewhere by the stars, where the silence was a shout and the whole world stood on its head above you. He had gone an age ago, taking the spare air tank and tools. They had let him out while the air lock still functioned, but if he didn't find and repair the trouble soon, no one would ever use the air lock again. At least no one on this crew. He fought away the thought that wormed into his mind.

They were going to die.

The silver ship was a silent tomb. Earth swam outside, a green, ghostly jewel. He had been snuffling on the floor for air, his mind pounding in pain. Blood salted his lip where he had tried

to bite back the scream that surged inside. A great wave had billowed dark over his mind, and he felt himself slipping, falling, and falling...

Whrrr....

Light stabbed his eyes, light so bright it hurt. Somewhere he felt wind blowing. The control board was alive with lights, and he began to laugh in sheer joy, despite his sickness. The Captain had made it. He had made it, and the power was on.

All Agree... Power Needed!

Even a cursory reading of revival history is convincing. Among all God's servants that have deeply affected their generations there is a harmony of deeper experience with Him. Terms used to describe this power have been as different as their denominations, conversion experiences and education; but the experience itself has always been essentially the same. As there is practical agreement among evangelical Christians with regard to the way of salvation, so there is a practical agreement among those who believe in a deeper Christian experience than conversion. In a court of law, testimonials are rejected if all testifying give the same evidence in the same words and manner; it would prove there had been collusion among the witnesses. But if each witness uses his own words and way of presentation, yet their testimony agrees in essential facts, the evidence is convincing. And the evidence of history is this; no man or woman has ever been used of God until they had first discovered the secret of power with God.

Christians have called this experience by many different names. Men like D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, C.G. Finney, William Booth, Andrew Murray, George Witfield, A.B. Simpson and others have called it "the baptism of the Holy Spirit"; others, like G.Cambell Morgan, Robert Murray McCheynes, Praying Hyde and C.H. Spurgeon have preferred "the filling with the Holy Spirit". Some have called it "empowering", others "the anointing of God"; but the question is not "Can you name it?" but – "Do you HAVE it?"

Billy Graham, in his message "How to be Filled with the Spirit" put it this way:

"The very fact that we believe one thing and some of us another does not do away with the fact that GOD says – "Be filled with the Spirit". I believe that is the greatest need of the church of Jesus Christ today. Everywhere I go, I find God's people lack something: God's people are hungry for something. Many of us say that our Christian experience is not all that we expected. We have oft-recurring defeat in our lives, and as a result across the country from coast to coast there are hundreds of Christian people hungry for something we do not have. ...I am persuaded that our desperate need tonight is not a new organization, a new movement – or even a new method. We have enough of these. I believe the greatest need tonight is that men and women who profess the Name of Jesus Christ be filled with the Spirit! We are trying to do the work of God without supernatural power. It cannot be done! When God told us to go and preach the

Gospel to 'every creature' and to evangelize the world, He provided supernatural power for us. That power is given to us by the Holy Spirit. It is more powerful than atomic power...It is more potent than any explosive made by man. Do you know anything of the power of the Holy Spirit?" (Greater L.A. Crusade, 1949)

This enduement of power is NOT the receiving of the Holy Spirit in salvation. When a man is truly born again his conversion is dependent on and effected by the Holy Spirit in response to his repentance and committal to Christ. (John 3:5-6, 7:37-39, 14:16-17, 20:21-22; Rom 5:5, 8:9-16; I Cor 2:10-12, 3:16, 6:19, 12:3; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:5, 6:16; Gal 3:2, 4:6, 5:25; Eph 1:13-14; 2 Tim 1:14; I Jn 2:27; 3:24, 4:13) But this conversion to Christ is not to be confused with a consecration to the great work of world evangelism and the enduement of power to carry out this task.

R.A. Torrey, world-renowned evangelist and Bible teacher of the last century, explained it this way: "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a definite experience of which one may and ought to know whether he has received it or not...the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from, subsequent and additional to His regenerating work. In regeneration there is an impartation of life, and the one who receives it is saved; in the baptism of the Holy Spirit there is an impartation of power and the one who receives it is fitted for service." ("What the Bible Teaches")

The word "baptism" used by Torrey here is a symbolic term in scripture that signifies (1) Complete exposure and cleansing from all sin and (2), an overwhelming sense of God's presence and power to energize for Christian service. By following the example of the Lord Jesus in water baptism, many Christians understand this symbol in the first sense (Rom 6:3-11; I Cor 12:13; Eph 2:1-7; Col 2:10-12) but have never known it experimentally in the second sense – a clothing of energy for Christian service. Without this sense of covering, surrounding and energizing of the Holy Spirit, Christian work and witness is fruitless, joyless and practically impossible.

In CONVERSION, the soul is drawn by the Holy Spirit (Prov 1:23; Jn 16:7-11) God's own Agency of salvation. The Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit, Himself God, is a Divine Person Who carries out the executive work of the Godhead. (Matt 28:19; Is 11:2; Jn 14:26; John 15: 26; Acts 8:29-39, 10:19, 13:2, 15:28, 16:7; Rom 8:9; I Cor 12:11; 2 Cor 13:14) This conversion experience is a personal transaction between the soul and the Lord Jesus relating to its own salvation. To accomplish this, the Holy Spirit first convicts of sin – (Gen 6:3; Ps 51:12; 13; Mic 3:8; Zech 12:10; Jn 16:8-11; Acts 2:37) – then points the convicted sinner to Jesus, magnifying Him and making His sacrificial death real to the penitent. In salvation, the soul yields up its doubts, rebellion, self-righteousness and its pride; it accepts Christ as Lord and Savior, trusts Him and supremely loves Him. The sinner's pride is humbled; his selfish purpose of life is finished; he is cleansed and all his guilty past is forgiven. The Holy Spirit enters his life (Rom 8:9, 11; I Cor 3:16; Eph 3:17; 2 Tim 1:14; Jas 4:5) there to abide in settled union (Jn 14:17; I Jn 2:27, 3:24) and baptizes him into the Body of Christ, the Church. (I Cor 12:13)

The disciples had already been saved before the day of Pentecost. (Luke 10:20; Jn 15:3, 15-16; 17:6-9) The resurrected Christ had breathed (emphusao – breathing of impartation) on them (John 20: 20-22) and said “Receive ye – (2nd Aorist Imperative – when spoken by one in authority, command is obeyed immediately) – the Holy Ghost”. They had already utterly renounced any idea of living for themselves and devoted their lives to the reaching of a world. The Lord Jesus had commissioned them to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19, marg.) But they still lacked the promised power to fulfill their task! The Lord’s last promise to them was “You shall receive POWER after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...and you shall be witnesses unto Me.” (Acts 1:8) They were told to wait until they were endued with power “from on high” before commencing their work. (Luke 24:29) They had met the Lord; they knew Him as Savior; but they did not have the power of the Holy Spirit to do His work. (cf. Samaritan Christians; Acts 8:14-17; believed and were baptized already, but not empowered; Paul: Acts 9:17 (“brother”))

The Purpose of Power

The 120 gathered expectantly in the Upper room on the day of Pentecost knew what they were waiting for. This energizing experience was to be an overwhelming sense of God’s Presence. It was to mean even more to them in terms of intimate, loving communion with God than the physical Presence of Jesus had meant on earth. Then, He had been WITH them; now by this anointing of the Holy Sprit He would seem not only back with them, but also welling up inside them and all around them! They were to be utterly flooded in the sense of his closeness and power. They had already been given one “power” – that of legal right or authority, to become the sons of God (John 1:12). Now they were to have “dunamis” (greek) power – strength, might, energy, explosive enabling power – to act, think and LIVE like their Lord with the outpouring energy of Heaven! (Luke 24:49; Rom 15:13; I Cor 2:4; I Thess 1:5)

In this empowering, the soul is introduced BY the Lord Jesus TO the Holy Spirit. The role of Christ and the Spirit are thus reversed from that of salvation. The Holy Spirit has introduced the soul to Christ; now Christ makes the indwelling Presence of His Spirit real to the believer. The climax of this energizing process is the flooding up of God’s reality in the soul like a fountain, until the believer is utterly immersed in His power and love. Once initially understood and experienced, this is to be the continuous experience of each believer – deeper and deeper baptisms or fillings with the Holy Spirit as we look to Him in faith for delivering and transforming power. (Acts 2:4, 4:8-31, 6:3, 5:8, 7:55, 9:17, 11:24, 13:9, 13:52; Eph 3:18, 5:18; I Jn 1:4)

SYMBOLS and emblems of the Holy Spirit used in Scripture describe the results of a Spirit-filled life. WATER is an emblem; (Ex 17:6; Jn 7:38-39) it cleanses, fertilizes and refreshes; it is abundant and freely given. So the Holy Spirit cleanses, brings life, revives and refreshes the soul – He too, was fully and freely given when the risen Christ was glorified. FIRE is an emblem (Acts 2:3; Luke 3:16) Fire purifies, illumines and searches. The Holy Spirit accomplishes what we

cannot do ourselves; He searches our hearts, illumines and purifies us. The WIND is a third emblem (John 3:8; Acts 2:2) – it is independent, felt in its effect, powerful and reviving. God the Holy Spirit is independent in His operation – He is not controlled by anyone! He moves with power, His presence is felt and how He revives the work of Christ when He comes to the dropping members of the church! The DOVE (Jn 1:32) teaches us the work of the Spirit in making us gentle, innocent and loving; the VOICE of the Spirit His teaching, guiding and warning ministry, the SEAL, His work to impress, secure and make us Christ's own.

Receiving Power

The Holy Spirit is the gift of the Risen Christ. His anointing filling, empowering work is a baptism of love that gives power to make Jesus real to you and known to others. The most impressive evidence of this power is the ability to make the things of God real; a man filled with the Spirit of God becomes deeply, intensely believable. The Holy Spirit works to impress the heart and seal the preached word of God with conviction. When an empowered man speaks or prays, his words strike fire. His words stick in the heart like darts of love. “Now, how is it with you, beloved” Have you obeyed God's command to be filled with the Spirit? His gift is offered to every child of God who is willing to simply meet these conditions:

1. **HONESTY** – Do you really WANT God's power? God will not give His gifts for self glory (to make you a “great” man or woman or to “build up your church” etc.) He will not grant His power so that selfish pride may be exalted. (Acts 8:18-24; Jas 4:3) He does not empower to free from trouble, to make you happy or even to make you holy, although of course these often follow a Spirit filled life. He fills only for His glory, and that must be your motive.
2. **CLEANLINESS** – Are you in dead earnest to be used of God? William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army and man of God said – “Before we go on our knees to receive the baptism of fire, let me beg of you to see to it that your souls are in harmony with the will and the purpose of the Holy Spirit. See to it that the channel of communication by which the Holy Spirit must be received is kept open. It is no use praying, singing, or even believing if there still is something you are holding back or even refusing to do. Out with it; give it not rest; give it up. Destroy your idols and stoppages with an everlasting destruction. Let there be free communication between you and God. Let all go and you shall be flooded before you rise from your knees...the world shall feel the power of it, and God shall have all the glory.” (Salvation Soldiery)
3. The **GIFT** of the Holy Spirit is neither earned nor deserved. He is not given on the basis of “special attainment” in holiness with God. The gift of the Holy Spirit is primarily for POWER; a man who receives this empowering has no more Christian character immediately after his experience than he had before. The fullness of the Spirit is a SOURCE of help to BUILD a Christian character, and is certainly not given BECAUSE of a high degree of consecration to Christ. Therefore, He is to be invited to energize only on the basis of the clear promises of

God, and with the condition that all obvious sin is forsaken. (Gal 3:2) Scripture shows that God is more than willing to give the Holy Spirit to His children and longs to do so. You do not have to beg and plead with your heavenly Father to obtain this promised power, the very fact that He not only promises but commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18) is the highest possible evidence that we can receive it. For God to command is equivalent to a certainty that we can obtain, for He does not command unless we have power to obey. Once the dams of conscious hindrances are swept away, you may not even have to ask God to fill you. In fact, you will probably not be able to keep Him from doing so!

4. **OBEDIENCE** – When you have dealt with all obstacles, you must receive by faith from the hand of God. There is nothing to be afraid of in receiving God’s power. The Lord Jesus said – “If you, being evil know how to give GOOD gifts to your children. HOW MUCH MORE shall your Father which is in, heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? (Lk 11:13) If you come as a little child in love to your Father, do you think He will give you something to harm or frighten you? (Luke 11:11-12) Don’t you think you can trust GOD to keep you from excess and extravagance? The Holy Spirit’s power is a LOVE gift for every child of God. You need not be afraid to fully open your life to His love. If there is something you are not willing to have happen, some personal point of pride you hold, or some right you don’t think God need ask you to surrender, be sure that VERY THING will be the reason why you still have no power with God or man. Obedience is better than sacrifice. (I Sam 15:22)

Now dare you do it? If you are willing and obedient, God will meet you! Don’t try to copy another experience; get yours from God and you will know it is real. Accept His gift and trust Him NOW for power. Let the sense of His love well up in your heart until it floods and fills you with praise. He may come quietly as a river or mightily like a flood; but you shall know it has happened and you will never be the same again. Go now, as a little child: let Him make your life a miracle!