

THE POWER AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT II

A Passion for Fullness

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“But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29, NKJV).

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. . . . To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:16,19, NKJV).

In discussing the power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism, we are at the cutting edge of the miraculous. God’s works are all wondrous, but five definite points mark the Spirit’s miracle workings in the spread of the gospel:

1. The immersion of power by which the Spirit calls, equips, and anoints the messenger to bear witness to the gospel
2. The quickening of the Word proclaimed, as the Holy Spirit causes it to become prophetic and powerful—penetrating and convicting the hearer
3. The confirmation of the Word with signs and wonders, by which the Holy Spirit verifies the living presence of Christ Jesus and demonstrates his superiority over all human and satanic power
4. The regenerating power, by which the Holy Spirit transforms souls from spiritual death to eternal life and brings abiding peace, hope, and joy
5. The reproductivity of this grace, by which each disciple may also be empowered by the Holy Spirit as the cycle of witness renews itself

The process of evangelism is wholly miraculous. The essence of the word *witness* is “to bear testimony,” “to give evidence for the case.” Evangelism is not merely conveying a message, but the delivery of power. It is the proof that Jesus is still alive; still working as miraculously as he is saving and forgiving. Without *all* his fullness we have no adequate resource to make global impact. Thus, the passion for fullness rises among all who want to see sin conquered and human need met.

In John 9, Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. When questioned about

Jesus and the miracle, the man began to describe his experience by saying: “One thing I know: . . . now I see” (John 9:25, NKJV).

He claimed no great wisdom or accomplishment; what he knew was the result of Jesus’ miracle. We can all appreciate how that blind-now-healed man felt. He was a classic Bible example of McCandlish Phillip’s comment, “A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.” We all have an *experience* of salvation, not just a theology. Our testimonies, therefore, include the experiences of the Holy Spirit’s miraculous power.

As an infant I was healed of a life-threatening affliction through the prayers of a congregation in Long Beach, California. Our family physician told my parents that my healing was unexplainable apart from God. The Holy Spirit had gained my parents’ attention and as a result, they were later converted at the church which had prayed for their baby.

A few years later, I contracted polio. I was completely healed through the laying on of hands and anointing with oil by the church elders. By God’s grace through the Holy Spirit’s miraculous power, my parents were born again and I can walk and stand before you today.

As a teenager, I answered God’s call to a ministry committed to allow and expect Christ’s miracles, signs, and wonders because my life was a result of them. Though I have often been frustrated by witnessing excesses, fanaticism, and foolishness among some who exercise such gifts, I have held constant in this community because I have found that for every case of lamentable excess there are a hundred examples of depth, reality, and divine power.

For the past twenty years, I have ministered God’s Word simply and without sensation in one pastorate: The Church on the Way, in Van Nuys, California. In that time I have watched the church grow from less than thirty believers to more than ten thousand. Thirty thousand decisions for Christ have been registered, dozens of churches have been planted, and scores of workers have been commissioned to minister the gospel across the nation and around the world. Only God deserves the praise for these miraculous results. I exclaim with the blind man, “This is all I know—I couldn’t have accomplished this; Jesus did it!” Such results have become common worldwide, replicated in scores of nations and vastly exceeded in hundreds of cities—especially in the last fifteen years.

The Lausanne Covenant

This is the fifteenth year of the Lausanne movement. Together, we have witnessed and continue to see a phenomenal proliferation of the Holy Spirit’s works of power throughout the church. Church growth and ministry are increasing and abounding at an exponential rate, as at no other time in history. Often, it is a direct by-product of God’s Word being confirmed by signs, wonders, and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s gifts. Though an enormous unfinished task is still before us, faith for its completion is rising as a renewed passion. The fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power is resulting in Christ being glorified in *all* his works as he confirms *all* his Word.

In 1974, the first Lausanne Congress made a bold, welcoming declaration concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In speaking for such a broad representation of evangelicals, it was unlike any such statement before:

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. . . . Worldwide evangelism will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love, and power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and

that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice (Lausanne Covenant, article 14).

In view of what has happened the past fifteen years, who can estimate the degree to which the Lausanne Covenant has been key in welcoming a release of the Holy Spirit's power across the earth? The words of that covenant have opened doors for multitudes of leaders:

- A doorway to investigating the Word of God and its present promise of power, with signs and wonders;
- A doorway to broadening fellowship, overcoming fears, and dissolving stereotypes which hinder boldness in faith and divide brethren; and
- A doorway to God Almighty, giving his Spirit license to move freely in our midst, unshackled by the restraints of our doubt and unbelief.

A new passion for the fullness of the Spirit's power has released a new presence of the fullness of Christ's works. Something has undoubtedly begun and is moving forward. But what is this "something," and how can we respond most fully?

Affirming the Biblical Base

This "something" is, as Peter said of the miracles at Pentecost: "That which was spoken of by the prophet." He noted the biblical basis of the phenomena at hand, and thus, revealed how this ministry of the Holy Spirit's power is rooted in the Scriptures.

Christ's Continuing Ministry

The book of Acts opens by asserting that what follows—the church at work—was, and is, a direct continuation of Christ's ministry: "The former account I have written, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1, NKJV). The text declares that the *actions* (what Jesus began to do) are as essential to this mission as the *proclamation* (what Jesus began to teach).

Jesus' ministry was *both* a teaching/preaching ministry and a miracle/healing ministry. For example:

So they were all amazed . . . saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36, NKJV).

Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness. . . And they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. And great multitudes followed Him" (Matthew 4:23–25, NKJV).

Acts begins by presuming the church's intended dimensions of ministry are defined in the Gospels, as Jesus said: "The works that I do, he [you] will do" (John 14:12, NKJV). Acts shows how the Holy Spirit has come to help us continue all Jesus began, both to teach and to do—to help us proclaim the Word and expect the wondrous.

The Bible itself removes any excuse for reticence to expecting the supernatural signs of Jesus at work in a ministry. Candor with the text makes us accountable today to allow Jesus to do through our ministries the kinds of things he did in his. In whatever

part of his church he places us, we need to encourage and sustain this balance: *to declare* the Word Christ proclaimed, *to show* the love the Father revealed in him, and *to expect* miracles as the Holy Spirit works.

Today's "world need" calls for no less power than he displayed in the first century. Only as God's eternal Word is confirmed by the Holy Spirit's mighty works, can New Age error be exposed at its deceptive roots, Muslim nations be penetrated by God's love, urban centers be visited by divine grace, and campus intellectualism be shown inadequate. Only God's miracle grace can overthrow satanic strongholds and break demonic bondage.

And Jesus wants to touch today's lepers—all who suffer amid the welter of pain and disease. He wants to heal today just as surely as his love touched the sick long ago. Beyond whatever superficiality we may deem present in some who practice healing ministries, we need a personal passion for fullness to answer the human passion for wholeness.

A balanced ministry is possible. More and more in the church hunger and thirst for Christ's fullest works in every dimension: his truth, love, and character, *with* his healing, authority over demons, and resurrection power displayed.

Christ's Continuing Power

The biblical call for Jesus' complete ministry includes a promise by which Jesus' power may be received. Jesus said, "You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit . . . You shall receive power" (Acts 1:5,8, NKJV). Whatever "the baptism with the Spirit" may mean to us, whenever we may feel it is experienced, or however it may be evidenced, this much is sure: Jesus said it is to provide us a resource for fullness; with power to minister everything Jesus has and is to the world he loves, died to redeem, and wants to touch with his forgiveness, healing, and wholeness.

Explosive and expanding results are present today where Christ's disciples seek and welcome a distinct experience of the Holy Spirit's infilling. It is often inappropriate and unnecessary to debate differing theological viewpoints. They are essentially immaterial in the light of the larger question, "Is the power of God's Spirit as evident in our works as the truth of God's Spirit is in my words?"

In his book, *Joy Unspeakable*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones acknowledges the need for each believer being baptized in the Holy Spirit as a distinct experience, but concludes in saying:

May God give us all grace in this matter. It is not a matter for controversy, nor for proving who is right and who is wrong. The issue before us is the state of the Christian church, her weakness, her lethargy, with a world on fire, a world going to hell. We are the body of Christ but what do we need? The power! The Pentecostal power! Shall we not with one accord, mind, and spirit, during these coming days, wait upon him and pray that again he may open the windows of heaven and shower down upon us the Holy Spirit in mighty reviving power? . . . The need today is for an authentication of God, of the supernatural, of the spiritual, of the eternal, and this can only be answered by God graciously hearing our cry and shedding forth again his Spirit upon us and filling us as he kept filling the early church ([Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 1985], 265, 278).

It is clear the first church had no restricting notions about when or where they had been filled with the Spirit. The issue for them was *being* filled—for this moment—for God's present purposes to be served by the Spirit's present surge of supernatural power.

When Paul confronts the satanically inspired Elymas, whose demonic control over

the regional governor parallels barricades to evangelism we face today, Acts 13:9 (NKJV) says he was “filled with the Holy Spirit.” In the fresh anointing of that moment, Paul moves to confound the works of hell and advance the purposes of God. This passion for the Spirit’s present fullness explains Paul’s words to the Romans (15:29, NKJV). He declares his expectation of coming to them, “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” The same passion marks his prayer for the Ephesians (3:14–21, NKJV), that they may be “filled with all the fullness of God.”

Whatever our various traditions may hold regarding Jesus’ words, “You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit . . . You shall receive power,” we should not be satisfied with only a theological position. Doctrinal precision is no substitute for the Holy Spirit’s demonstration. Paul said,

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4–5, NKJV).

Re-studying the biblical call to Holy Spirit-filled ministry is not to question doctrinal positions, but to re-stir our passion for fullness, that we “stir up the gift of God which is in [us] . . . For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6–7, NKJV). In the light of God’s Word, hosts of leaders and laity are responding. Recent research indicates explosive evangelism and church growth where the spirit of fear is overcome and the Holy Spirit is revealing the fullness of Christ through the church.

Confirming the Evidence Today

David Barrett’s monumental work as the editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1982) has provided a wider perspective on the church’s world witness. Objective analysis of its report shows the widest growth in most areas regularly correlates with one given feature of Christ’s ministry: the ministry of the supernatural—of the Spirit’s gifts, with signs and wonders.

Miracles and Miraculous Growth

Barrett’s study records good growth where evangelistic vigor is alive, Christ is exalted, and the Word of God is preached. But it also notes “many situations of explosive, uncontrollable growth,” where the Holy Spirit’s gifts are active and where signs and wonders confirm the Word (see D. B. Barrett, “The Twentieth Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal,” in Burgess, McGee and Alexander, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1988], 811).

Statistics reveal this segment of the global Christian community, which in 1900 represented only 7 percent of all Christians, now involves almost one of every four believers (*Dictionary*, 812). Another researcher notes that while a general awareness of this phenomenal growth still exists, some prominent evangelical journals seem to ignore it. This reticence is provoked by prevailing and perfectly understandable fears.

Fears of the Miraculous

Two kinds of fear seem to relate to the Holy Spirit’s supernatural workings. Some leaders are often bewildered or frustrated—especially in the realm of miracles, signs, wonders, and manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. Fear blocks freedom in ministry, and those fears *can* be overcome.

The first is *fear of the unfamiliar*. I remember, as a boy, the first time I ever swam in a river. Until then, I had only been in public swimming pools. I found myself caught up in a slow but mighty stream, which relentlessly carried me beyond my entry point in the water. It was a new sensation, and a memorably frightening one. Much in the same way, first contacts with the dynamics of the Holy Spirit can be very disconcerting; where the miraculous occurs, where demons are confronted, and where spiritual gifts that before were only verbal ideas are being manifest as vital realities.

Compounding the fear of the unfamiliar, is an even more troublesome fear: *the fear of fanaticism*. It is justifiable that people fear the risk of fanaticism when the Spirit’s mighty works are present. Sensationalism and exploitation have always been a problem. Peter faced that long ago, and in rebuking Simon the Sorcerer he provided us with a challenging model (Acts 8:18–23). Could the Holy Spirit be calling *all* of us, to exercise today the choice Peter did then?

As a Christian leader, it is worth my determination to gain an acquaintance with the supernatural operations and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. I can’t let him have full control and not risk losing control of some situations. But I can learn to trust him, and learn how to move with his power in a way that restrains foolishness and releases fullness. We need to be open to the moving of the Holy Spirit. He’s clearly ready to bring broader breakthroughs in evangelizing every nation. If we as leaders, are open to him, two tragedies can be avoided: (1) Ministry in the gifts of the Spirit with signs and wonders will be shaped by leaders who prioritize biblical values, rather than be forfeited to the few who may seem indifferent to those priorities; and, (2) We shall all be equipped throughout all the church to reach to all the world with all the resources Jesus promised; rather than attempting to pursue all the task without all the power he commanded us all to receive.

We all feel a passion for fullness. We all hunger for the Spirit’s works of power. With the Word of God unfolding before us and the Holy Spirit poured out upon us, let us reach out to the world with power. The world needs Jesus—in all his *saving* power, in all his *healing* power, in all his *delivering* power.

Reaffirming Our United Quest

A dear friend of mine, who pastors one of America’s most respected traditional evangelical churches, said:

Jack, I want to find a word that describes us both. Because my heart is as yours and I know yours is as mine, we want all the power, gifts, and miracles the Holy Spirit has to give, and I don’t want people putting us in separate pockets because you’re Pentecostal and I’m not.

He has addressed a point critical to the subject of the Holy Spirit’s power in evangelism. As long as we either hedge on the Spirit’s call to us, or build hedges against our unity in answering that call, something of pure power will be sacrificed. Christ’s prayer for our unity, “that the world may know,” is not his mandate to our total doctrinal agreement or our uniformity in church policy. But he *is* calling us all to acknowledge his fullness—to be people with a passion for “all the fullness of God”; people who all are candidates to minister in the power, gifts, and grace of the Holy Spirit.

A Spirit-filled ministry is characterized by all that Jesus is, all that Jesus does, and all that Jesus wants. Spirit-filled ministry is Christ-filled ministry; when Christ, the Anointed King, is manifest in and through us by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. His

anointing enables, ensures, and enlarges.

The Spirit enables the believer for service and witness, giving gifts which focus on answering human need, not personal, selfish, or private interests; gifts that bear witness to the faithful Word, exalting Christ and the triumph of his Cross as signs and wonders confirming his resurrection rule.

The Spirit ensures the uniqueness of each personality. He doesn't violate the Father's handiwork by forcing any of us into a robot-like mold. He'll use each of us in different ways—even in the same gifts.

The Spirit will enlarge our heart and vision. He will make us more like Jesus and help us love all who are his. He will deal a deathblow to sectarian smallness, and help us understand the vastness and variety of the members who form his body.

Lausanne II and “All the Fullness”

In Paul's prayer “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God,” *pleroma* is the word translated “fullness.” This grand New Testament word is most often used to describe the “full content, entirety, and whole sum” of the person of Christ (Gerhard Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968], 298). Perhaps *pleroma* is the word for a new millennium. As we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, could it be that this is the word—the ministry—he would give us; a ministry which breaks through in all Christ's fullness and power as we are filled and energized by the Holy Spirit?

The result would be a fullness in evangelism; our ability to say with Paul, “And when I come to you, I shall come in *pleroma*—the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”

That fullness brings breakthrough because it declares the Word of the Cross and the glory of Christ. That fullness brings breakthrough because it confronts demonic powers in the power of the blood of the Lamb and the spirit of prayer. That fullness brings breakthrough because it is attended by signs and wonders as the Lord works with us, confirming his Word with signs following.

That's the ministry of the people of the *pleroma*, the fullness of Christ. Their ministry is filled with the Holy Spirit and his power. They preach the Word, but they're more than biblical. They baptize their converts, but they're more than Baptist. They govern their congregations in orderly ways, but they're more than Free Church, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Congregational. They may speak with tongues, but they're more than Pentecostal. They move in the resources of the Spirit's gifts, but they're more than charismatic. They flow in the river of the Spirit's power, but they're more than Third Wave.

What shall we call these people who want the full power of the Holy Spirit? Since they're people of the *pleroma*, the fullness, we might call them *pleromatics*; that is, people committed to witness God's Word in all the Spirit's workings until all the world is reached with all Christ's fullness! Or, we might call them believers, saints, or disciples. But perhaps, we may best return to the label the world hung on us long ago, when Holy Spirit-filled people first shook a pagan city through God's miracle grace and power: “And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch” (Acts 11:26, NKJV).

Christ is Jesus' title as the Anointed One. *Christian* is the name given people who continue in that anointing.

We need to give full acknowledgment to the biblical basis for our call to continue Jesus' ministry, both in the Word of truth and in the Spirit of power. We should accept

and rejoice in the evidence that such fullness of ministry is available and abounding today. And, with one heart together, we need to affirm our passion for that fullness; answering anew the call of the Lausanne Covenant, to “pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ”; and then “the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice.”