

“THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH US”  
Genesis 41:25-40, I Peter 3:8-17, Acts 5:12-16  
June 22 & 23, 2024

“A man had the duty of buying his grandson a birthday present. He detested the idea of going into the toy store because he thought that, with the number of toys available, he’d have trouble making a decision. When he arrived, he hunted down a salesperson and asked for help. He gave the young lady helping him the age of his grandson and asked her to lead him to toys that would be suitable. She brought the man to an aisle full of trucks. Some were nice and big; some were small and designed for collection. The man chose a big truck, thinking that it would be sturdy enough to outlast a preschooler.

“The man then realized that this truck would probably require batteries. The sales person pressed the button on top of the toy truck. The truck began to make a heap of noise. The young lady looked at the man, smiled, and said, ‘Sir, the batteries are included!’

“This is what God says about the Holy Spirit after our salvation - batteries are included. The job of the Holy Spirit is to empower the new nature to satisfy the law of God or the demands of God.”<sup>1</sup> Without the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are similar to the big toy truck without the batteries. And we end up getting pushed around by others seeking to use us for their own enjoyment. But when we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we become alive, speaking out the Word of God to those around us, so that they might hear the great things of God.

But notice that in this account, the man had to ask for help in order to receive the necessary guidance to purchase the toy truck. He was lost in that toy store without the help of the salesperson. So, we too, have to ask the Lord Jesus to provide us with the help of the Holy Spirit. We must open our lives to Jesus Christ to be the Savior and Lord of our lives, and then He promises to give us the Holy Spirit as we ask Him into our lives.

The disciples of Jesus were all praying together seeking the filling of the Holy Spirit, and God rewarded their faithfulness with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them. As we ask the help of the

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 152, #459)

Lord Jesus, He empowers us with the filling of the Spirit into our lives, too.

We see that in the life of Joseph, son of Israel, in the Old Testament lesson today. God had given him a dream of what He would do with Joseph (Genesis 37:1-11). Even though his brothers and his father were offended and angered by that vision, God was faithful to fulfill the work He had planned for Joseph. Without their knowing it, God was sending Joseph ahead of them into Egypt so that he would be able to save all of the family when the 7 years of famine came to the whole world.

From a very young child, Joseph was faithful in all that he did, trusting that God was going to do a great work in him at just the right time. Though there seemed to be many pitfalls along the way, each endeavor turned into a training opportunity to get Joseph ready for the next step. Being sold into slavery was step one of getting Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:12-36). Becoming a slave in the house of one of Pharaoh's officials was step two (Gen. 39:1). Becoming the manager of Potiphar's whole house gave Joseph the leadership training needed for his future. This was step three (Gen. 39:2-6a). Being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, while maintaining his integrity and faithfulness to the laws of God, was step four (Gen. 39:6b-18). Being placed into the prison with all of the king's prisoners was step five, but this put him into the right place to touch the lives of two of the king's servants (Gen. 39:19-40:5). And God allowing him to interpret dreams was step six (Gen. 40:5-23). And then, after all that time of maturation and preparation, Joseph was ready to go to work for the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt (Gen. 41:1-24).

Joseph's long years of preparation placed him into the very position to not only interpret Pharaoh's dreams, but to advise him of what was about to happen in the land of Egypt. It was then that God placed Joseph into the position of second in command over all of Egypt, so when the famine came after the seven years of abundant harvests, Joseph would then save Egypt from starvation, and encounter his brothers again, in order to fulfill the dream that God had given him of being in a leadership position over all of his family's households.

Throughout all the "mess" taking place in his life, Joseph stays faithful to the Lord, allowing God to use him and direct him into the right place at the right time to accomplish the plans that God had

for him. Joseph was willing to let the Holy Spirit work through him, and he was able to do amazing things. And all along the way, God was with him, giving guidance, providing wisdom, and blessing him abundantly with not only success as a leader, but also blessing him at home with a wife and 2 children.

The same is true for each one of us, as we submit ourselves into the plans of the Lord our God through Jesus Christ our Savior. As we humbly give ourselves into His control, we are empowered with the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish much in our own day. It may be in our work, or in our community involvements or even at home. As we humble ourselves to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are granted the power of the Holy Spirit to guide our lives.

And with that, the words of 1 Peter 3 come into play for us. Peter rightly advises us, *“Finally, all of you, be like minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”* (3:8-12).

This can only happen when we invite the Holy Spirit into our lives through faith in Jesus Christ. On our own we can accomplish **none** of this; but with His power in us, we are able to not only seek the Lord’s work in us, but to complete it as well.

So when the bottom seems to drop out of our life, as it did with Joseph, we have the opportunity to trust that the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing us through that event for a greater purpose. When hardships come upon us, we have the chance to re-evaluate our lives and get our priorities right with the Lord our God. When people persecute us and say harsh things to us, we have the opportunity to bless them with kindness, not with retaliation or returned wickedness. It might be that the person attacking us has never seen or experienced the love of Jesus Christ in their lives, so how we respond to them will make a difference in how they see Jesus. When we are unjustly accused, maybe separated from our

families or friends, God is right there with us. And when we trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, He just might be training us for a greater purpose, or putting us into just the right place to be used by God to touch the lives of many more. God only knows the leadership positions He is training us to have. Our part is to remain faithful in the middle of everything and to remain humble to the Lord as His servants.

It can be so easy for us to just look at the nearsighted view of any situation and miss the long range purpose that God might have for us. We can get so wrapped up with the events going on around us that we miss the reason that God has us there in the first place. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity to enlarge our vision and see the bigger picture of God's plan for our lives.

Peter encourages us to *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander”* (I Peter 3:15-16).

As we ask the Holy Spirit to direct our lives and give us the courage to live faithfully for the Lord Jesus, we will be able to see the long range effects of our love and gentleness on the lives of those who mistreat us.

And that's what took place in the lives of the apostles and other followers of Jesus after they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They were seeking to be faithful to Jesus' command to go into all the world *“and be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). They were tasked with taking the Good News of Jesus Christ to all peoples everywhere. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that they began their work, and He gifted them with abilities beyond what they could do by their own power.

The power of the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to endure arrests and jailings; that power gave them the ability to stand up to the authorities for the sake of Jesus Christ, even preaching to them about His resurrection from the dead; that power enabled them to perform miraculous healings, transforming the lives of so many people; that power gave them the authority to establish correct standards for the

whole church, calling out the lies that were taking place, and helping the followers of Jesus to rise to higher levels of accountability. The power of the Holy Spirit was enabling people from all nations come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to put their faith and trust in Him. Listen to the mighty things that the Holy Spirit was enabling the apostles and followers of Jesus to do. This is Acts 5:12-16. (READ Acts 5:12-16)

The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles becomes very apparent to the people in Jerusalem and all of the towns surrounding it. Obviously God had not only heard the prayer of all the believers asking for His *“hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the Name of ... Jesus”* (4:30), but now the Holy Spirit is empowering them to do exactly what they have asked God for. *“The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people”* (5:12).

They had also prayed for God to *“enable your servants to speak Your word with great boldness”* (4:29). And now, every day, they are gathering in Solomon’s Colonnade to teach the people of the Good News of Jesus Christ. *“And all the believers used to meet together...”* (5:12). God’s Holy Spirit had given them the gifts of healing and teaching so that they might spread the news of God’s Salvation through Jesus to everyone in the city.

Sadly, we’re not given any details of what healings are being done, but all that had happened to that point had led people to turn to the disciples of Jesus seeking healing of their ailments and getting deliverance from demonic possession. This opened up a ministry that permitted the Gospel of Jesus to be taught so that people could believe in and trust in Jesus as the Messiah.

But alongside of that, there was a fear of the Christians by non-believers based upon the news of Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths. The realization that this is a faith with real power both excites and scares people, but it drew even more people into wanting to become involved in the new church.

Reflect on this for a moment; on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people came to know the Lord Jesus and confessed Him as their Savior and Lord (Acts 2:41). Daily, through the bold witness of the apostles and other followers of Jesus, the numbers of people continued to rise as the word of Jesus

Christ gets out (Acts 2:47). Then Peter and John healed the lame man at the Temple, and everyone was filled with wonder and amazement. They begin to hear how Jesus is the fulfillment of the words of the prophets, and we're told, "*The number of men who believed grew to about five thousand*" (Acts 4:4). That's just the men who were counted. The total number of people coming to follow Jesus as their Messiah was probably doubled that by then, and that was what got the attention of the priests and Sadducees. The new Christian movement was growing exponentially.

So when the believers gathered to pray, inviting the Lord God to empower them to witness boldly and do miraculous healings, God was pleased to answer their prayers, and they were all empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach and heal in the name of Jesus.

But the others in the Temple were observing all that was happening. Imagine the thousands of people gathering at Solomon's Colonnade on the Temple mount. This wasn't a rally to put an end to the Roman tyranny. It wasn't a riot to overturn the leadership of the Temple. It was a gathering of those who were worshipping passionately, loving extravagantly, and witnessing boldly to the things of God done through Jesus Christ. It was the recognition of God finally answering His promise of sending His Messiah to Israel, a Messiah that would save all of Israel, not with war and conflict, but with peace and love as they believed in Jesus Christ as their Savior. The salvation of Israel would come one person at a time as each one heard about Jesus, believed that He is the Messiah, killed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, and then risen from the dead to bring new life to all who would believe.

In the Name of Jesus the people were finding healing from their physical struggles. The Holy Spirit was enabling the apostles and followers of Jesus to bring health to those who were hurting, freedom to those who were oppressed by satanic influences, and new life given to those who were on death's door. Word got out to the whole surrounding area about the miraculous healings that the apostles were doing and they brought their sick and infirm and demon possessed to Jerusalem so that they could lay them out along the street so that even Peter's shadow might fall on them and they would be healed (Acts 5:15). It wasn't through the power of each apostle that healing was happening, but by

the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them to touch the lives of the people as an initial step into becoming a part of the new church. What joy was there as hundreds of folks were able to walk home brand new people because of the mighty work of the Lord in the lives of His followers! And we are told wonderfully, “*and all of them were healed*” (5:16)!

Jesus had told them that they would be able to do greater things in His Name when they were endowed with God’s Holy Spirit. And it was happening! They were turning Jerusalem upside-down for Christ.

So let me ask you an important question; What would it take for us to have this happen right here in this church today? What do we need to do to start worshipping passionately, loving extravagantly, and witnessing boldly to the things that God has done in Jesus Christ?

Step one is to turn our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ and let Him become the Lord of our lives. We must put Him first in all things so that all we do and all we say reflects our faith in Him.

Step two is to pray; to ask the Lord to “*consider us as His servants to enable us to speak His Word with great boldness*” (4:29). We are to ask the Lord to “*stretch out His hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of ...Jesus*” our Savior and Lord (4:30).

Step three is to be “*one in heart and mind*” (4:32) to do the work of the Lord. We can do nothing if our hearts and minds are focused on anything else beyond the work of the Lord. If we are to see this church flourish and grow, we ALL have to be willing to put our lives into the work of the church, not grudgingly, but with joyful hearts and as servants for the Lord. If we are all followers of Jesus Christ, we need to focus on the work of the Lord together. One person, or a hand full of people, cannot do the work that God has called us to do. We have to do it together, with everyone involved.

Step four is to give up all that is false within us, so that we are sincerely focused on serving the Lord. No lie, no self-centeredness, no pride, no selfishness can be present. We are called to a high calling as the people of God. Nothing less than the very best is acceptable to the Lord.

Step five is to trust in the Holy Spirit to empower you to speak the Word of God boldly and

sincerely. You don't have to know the Bible inside and out before you share with another what God has done with you. You only have to be like the disciple Philip who told his friend, Nathaniel, about Jesus. Nathaniel said, "*Nazareth! Can anything good come from there...?*" "*Come and see,*" said Philip." (John 1:46). His invitation brought Nathaniel to faith. All Jesus invites us to do is to be faithful and ask the Holy Spirit to work through us to attract the people.

The Holy Spirit of God desires to work in and through us to go beyond these walls with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The work has to start with each one of us, first, however, and then to the people around us. Like the apostle Paul, we must come to the point where we, too can say, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel (of Christ), because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile*" (Romans 1:16).

The Holy Spirit works through all those who diligently seek the Lord Jesus, and live as faithful witnesses to Him. The question is whether or not we are willing to let all other things go so that Jesus might be first in us? We will be able to do mighty and miraculous things in the Name of Jesus as we are also filled with the Holy Spirit. Let it begin right here, right now.

Let's pray: Father God, thank You for sending Jesus to us to be our Savior and Lord! What a marvelous gift is ours to be saved by Him as we give our hearts to Him. But God, help us to remember that it doesn't stop there. Our salvation is not all there is for us to do. You have called us to do great things through the help of Your Holy Spirit. Father, set us free from any sin that separates us from You. Then, set our hearts on fire for You. Let Your Holy Spirit move into each one of our hearts so that we, too, may become bold witnesses for Jesus Christ. Then, enable us to heal and perform signs and wonders through the Name of Your Holy Servant, Jesus, too, not to make ourselves look good, but to reach out to all those around us and help them to find Salvation in Jesus. Give us the courage we need to depend upon Your Holy Spirit in our lives so that we might worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly the love you have for each person. This we pray in the great and powerful Name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. AMEN.