

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE VICTORIOUSLY

PART 6A – LIGHT & POWER & FIRE

Two weeks ago, I made the following statement: “Doctrines have value only to the extent that they influence our thoughts, our words, and our deeds, AND make a difference in our lives.”

Today I want to explore with you more regarding the doctrine of The Holy Spirit and how a complete application of this doctrine can indeed influence our thoughts, our words, and our deeds, AND make a difference in our lives.

I plan to cover three general areas regarding the Holy Spirit; however I will only cover two today.

You might want to write these down and leave space after each one so that you can add your own notes under each area. Hopefully you will then be able to bring your notes home to meditate upon and seek further illumination on these areas from the Holy Spirit.

The first area is the Illumination or Light of the Spirit, the Second is the Power of the Spirit, and the third is the Fire of the Spirit.

In the 3rd Chapter of John’s Gospel, the writer tells of how John the Baptist made an extremely insightful statement when he was approached by some of his disciples and issued what might be considered a complaint. Turn to Verse 25 on page 561: “Rabbi, He [Jesus] who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!”

In effect what they were saying was, “Jesus is drawing disciples away from you John, He’s proselytizing, and He shouldn’t be doing that.”

But John, being filled with the Spirit replies in verse 27, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.” One might say that in this short sentence, John the Baptist captured both the hope and despair of all mankind.

We see the despair in the phrase, “A man can receive nothing...” and from the context we know that John is speaking of truth, and more precisely divine truth. And so what John is saying is that we can expect to receive no divine truth, none.

But the hope of all mankind is captured in the phrase, “...unless it has been given to him from heaven.”

Thus our quest for divine or spiritual truth is not hopeless. The problem that man has had throughout the ages, and especially in modern times, is that we tend to put our quest for spiritual truth in what we consider our greatest capability, our human intellect.

This is not a new revelation, for Isaiah in Chapter 55; Verses 8-9 prophesied:

⁸ “...My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.
⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

What John the Baptist has exposed for us is that not only are God’s thoughts higher than ours and His ways higher than ours; but God’s ways are quantitatively **and** qualitatively higher than ours.

God’s thoughts are of the realm of the Spirit while man’s thoughts are in the realm of the intellect. And although Spirit can comprehend intellect, intellect can never comprehend spirit.

In the 11th Chapter of Romans, verse 33, Paul writes: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

It is clear that through our intellect we can know **of** God, but through our intellect, **we cannot know God**. God is spirit; intellect is not. Our intellect cannot, in and of its own, come to know God; God remains a total mystery to us “unless it has been given to him from heaven...” that is until we receive illumination from above.

It is not until we receive in our hearts that light from above which illumines our spirit with the knowledge that we never knew before; a knowledge that the most illustrious thinker will not and cannot imitate.

It is the knowledge that provides perfection in knowing in a deep and authoritative way that we need no reasoned proof of God’s power working in us through His Holy Spirit.

Yet our intellectual approach to God in our worship, both corporately and individually, has taken on an orthodoxy that is fundamental in its adherence to the text of the scriptures yet lacking in the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The result is that we adhere to a powerless orthodoxy.

And so, over the past decades we have raised up congregations that are being taught the literal Word of God, while failing to be taught the Spiritual Word of God. And so it is that today we have a body of people who are knowledgeable about what the Lord expects of us, but is powerless to follow in His way.

And we labor under the truth from God that “A man can receive nothing...” without appreciating the hope of the truth which is captured in the second half of this sentence, “...except it be given him from heaven.”

Paul expounds on this theme in 1st Corinthians 2: 9-12, where he writes:

⁹ But as it is written:

*“ Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.

I'll let you read the remainder of that passage for yourselves during your time of prayer and meditation.

Yet I hasten to point out that truly, this is confirmation that through our own intellect we cannot fathom that which God has in store for those who love Him. We can receive that knowledge only when we receive illumination from above; when we see the light of God through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

Let's turn now to discussing the second area regarding the Holy Spirit, which is the Power of the Holy Spirit.

In His final discourse with His disciples, Jesus said,

“...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; ... (Acts 1:8a)

Many of us will misread this as receiving the Holy Spirit followed by power; and a quick run through of this verse might lead us to that conclusion.

However, what Jesus taught is not the coming of the Holy Spirit followed by power; rather that the two are one.

Sometimes our language is confusing because of the way we use the words available to us. When we hear the phrase, “The power of God,” our thoughts run to thinking of some form of human muscular development that belongs to God. A trait that could be separated from God, much as our muscle tone departs from us as we age.

Yet this is not the case, for there is nothing of God that can be separated from nor added to Him. He is unity for eternity, one inseparable entity. All of the attributes that we read about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable from the unity.

Thus the attributes that we have used over the centuries to describe God, are not to be taken as what God **has**, but what God **is**. When we say “the grace of God,” we are not adding an attribute to God; we are saying that God is Grace.

It is a function of our human intellect that is limited and unable to fully comprehend God that leads us to describe Him with attributes as if they were separate from Him. God understood our limitations when in Exodus 3:14 he said, *“I AM THAT I AM.”* Our response can only be “O God, you are.”

Before His Ascension, Jesus said to His disciples, *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

From this statement of Jesus, we can understand that until the moment in time that the disciples “are endowed with power from on high,” they had not received it. However, after that point in time, they had received “the power from on high.”

And we know precisely when the disciples received “the power from on high,” the day of Pentecost; the day that power from God came to the church of Jesus’ disciples.

It is that same power that continues to be active in His church that has made it possible for the church to survive through persecutions and threats of extinction.

This “power from on high” was to be nothing less than God entering into the disciples to reproduce His likeness in them. It is this same “power from on high” that we as Jesus disciples of this age have available to us, that can enter into us so that God’s likeness might be reproduced in us. And it is this “power from on high” that separates Christianity from all occultism and every form of oriental cult, faux Christian cults, and eastern mysticism regardless of the age.

It is this “power from on high” that gives us the wisdom and discernment to reject the pull of cults that have come on the scene, including:

- The Peoples Temple led by Jimmy Jones and that ultimately resulted in the death of 900 men women and children in 1978.
- The Branch Davidians led by David Koresh, which resulted in the deaths of 55 adults and 21 children.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, which as of 2007 had an active membership of over 13 million; imagine that today, over 13 million folks are being led down the road to perdition all because of one man, Joseph Smith.
- And I would be remiss if I failed to mention the 20th Century Religion, Scientology, with its guru, L. Ron Hubbard and its prophet Tom Cruise.

These cults, and legions more like them, are all **lacking** a major influence that can change the lives of their members; the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

It is a power that can be matched by no other force in heaven or earth. A power that gently descends upon man, bringing a moral strength that is infinitely greater than any self conjured-up, self-induced energy, desire, or drive.

It is a power that is neither physical nor mental, yet it most likely touches every facet of our mental and physical being as it works in us to conform our wills to God’s. It is that power that transforms our lives from being egocentric to being God-centric. And it is this power, that when we are working totally in God’s will, gives us the ability to move mountains as Jesus promised.

Yet, the Holy Spirit’s long-range objective is not to make us movers of mountains, after all, we have mechanical earth movers that can do this, rather His objective is to transform previously

evil and sin-filled men, women, and children into men, women, and children who have the character and likeness of God; to return our spiritual image to its original image of God that was in Adam and Eve in the Garden before the fall.

Now that we are fully aware of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we need to appreciate how the Holy Spirit operates. Of course, since the Holy Spirit has all of the attributes of God, it goes without saying that He operates anyway He desires. Yet there is a boundary which the Holy Spirit will not cross; there must be a willingness in the hearts of believers to receive Him in.

There are indeed tools available to the Holy Spirit that He can use to soften our hearts to seek Him; it might be a hymn or song of praise, perhaps a well constructed and spirit-filled sermon, a verse from Scripture, or a spring blossom.

Regardless of the catalyst that He uses, the ultimate result is the application of pressure by the life-giving Spirit of God upon our hearts.

When we consider all of these factors, we can recognize that our worship services are barren and to a great extent, meaningless. The means for the Holy Spirit to operate freely are in evidence; the poetry, artistry, and mystery that emerge from combining:

- Well read lessons from scripture,
- Music that is selected and performed with a design to move and enliven our spirits
- Artistry and mystery of the liturgy,
- Majesty of the vestments and paraments,
- The solemnity that invades our prayers, praises, and thanksgivings,
- Orthodox teaching and preaching.

Yet too often the supernatural divine inspiration seems to be missing. The power from on high seems to be either unknown or undesired. It is a sad commentary on the spiritual health of our church that we cannot leave church every Sunday with the full knowledge and experience that the Holy Spirit showed up in power. This failure of the Holy Spirit to descend upon a congregation is most likely because He is either unknown or unwanted by the pastor, the congregation, or both.

In this 8-part series, and in earlier Bible Studies, I have endeavored to ensure that there is a full knowledge of who the Holy Spirit is and His role in our lives. At this juncture, I believe that we can safely say we are not lacking in knowing who the Holy Spirit is and how He operates.

I can also testify to the fact that it is the desire of my heart that everyone who enters in this place would be graced by the Holy Spirit and know that they have been in the presence of God incarnate in the same Holy Spirit that visited power upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

As for the desire of our hearts, I can only hope and pray that our hearts' desires are that the Holy Spirit descend upon us as a dove and move in each of us to change our hearts, our very spirits, into the image of God Himself.

Perhaps we need to take a break from powerless worship and invest some of our energies into preparing our hearts for an invasion of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps we can arrive well before the service begins and set about preparing for sincere worship instead of catching up on the latest news. News gathering can be done after we have been spiritually filled.

How can we prepare ourselves for worship that will be spiritually awakening? The following preparatory steps will take us a long way towards achieving this goal:

1. When you arrive, enter with the Prophet Habakuk's words ringing in your ears and in your heart: "...the Lord is in His Holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him."
2. Attend to any chores you have to complete before the service in a silent and reverent demeanor, and complete them hastily without fanfare, talking or distracting others who may be already worshipping and seeking the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
3. Get seated as quickly as possible, and begin seeking the Lord in prayer. Some suggestions for your prayers are to pray the general confession or a confession in your own words, bringing to mind the sins you know you have committed since you last confessed to the lord, and asking for His forgiveness. Once you have sought forgiveness, seek the presence of the Holy Spirit, you might want to use the prayer that is in the inside front cover of the Worship Liturgy notebook or you might wish to seek Him using your own words.
4. Remain in a worshipful stance, praising and seeking the lord and His Holy Spirit until the call to worship Hymn is announced.

If we all would approach our gathering for worship in a manner consistent with our goal to "Worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness," our time together will profit our Spirits and our lives more than anything else we could imagine.

In the name of the God, Abba Father, and of His Son, Jesus our Savior and Mediator, and of His Holy Spirit, our Great Comforter who desires only to transform our hearts and renew our spirits to the likeness of God's. Amen.