



The Ministry of the Spirit: The Power

1 Corinthians 12

ILLUSTRATION

Once, an old lumberjack was told by a friend that he should buy a chainsaw. The guy said, "You'll chop four times more wood with a chainsaw than with your ax." But after several outings with his new chainsaw, the lumberjack was chopping less wood. In frustration, he returned the saw to the hardware store. The clerk was surprised. He cranked it to troubleshoot the problem... As soon as it roared to life, the lumberjack got a weird look on his face and asked, "What's that noise?"

BIBLE PASSAGE

1Co 12:1 NKJV - 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

CUSTOM

Gifts - added by the translators for context, but literally, Paul says, "Concerning spirituals", or spiritual things. Paul has spent the past 11 chapters dealing with the physical, carnal problems with the church, but he wants to address now the spiritual roots and spiritual health of the church.

Right off the bat, we see an incredibly essential truth for us to understand—

The Church is namely a spiritual entity.

The church is not a religious, social club, governed by natural business models and structural charts. The church is a spiritual organism. Of course, there are physical implications and physical manifestations in the church, but underneath the hood, there is an engine fueled by spiritual horsepower, or should I say dove power of the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION

The Church of Jesus Christ is a beautiful entity, but it won't accomplish much spiritual good until they crank up and allow the power of the Holy Spirit in its midst. The church without the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit is a car without its engine, a musician without his instrument, a light without its electricity, a brain without its consciousness!

The first church had to wait before they acted on the mission that Christ gave them. They had to wait to be endued with power from on high... that is, from the highest place of God, they needed supernatural power to accomplish christ's supernatural mission.

Jesus made a promise, a promise that came from the Father that He would not leave those who believe in Him orphans, but that He would come to them in the third person of the triune nature of God, the Holy Spirit. I have yet to know God ever to break a promise!

But how would they know it's time? The answer from Jesus: WAIT. Before you go, you need to WAIT.

Why?

- The disciples had the best ministry seminary training available. Three years in the school of Jesus beats any doctorate from a seminary.
- They had experience. Jesus had given them a taste of ministry when he sent them out to heal the sick and cast out demons.
- They had a good team. There were a decent number of followers now that had gathered during Jesus' ministry.
- They were undoubtedly excited about and committed to the cause after experiencing the resurrected Jesus!
- [But apparently, education, experience, people and passion were not enough to accomplish the mission. This is why they had to WAIT.](#)

The promise of the Father that the Holy Spirit would come is found in three forms in scripture. The Spirit is **WITH** us, he wants to live **WITHIN** us, and He desires to come **UPON** us.

Up to the point of Acts 1, the disciples had experienced two of those three relationships. We see two of these [earlier in John 14:17](#):

Jhn 14:16-17 NKJV - 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he breathed on His disciples to receive the Spirit. I believe this is when the Spirit's indwelling first occurred. In Acts 1, Jesus tells us what the power of the Spirit enables us to accomplish:

1 Power for Witness

BIBLE PASSAGE

Act 1:5, 8 NKJV - 5 "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This echoes John the baptist's words that Jesus would be the one to baptize "with the Spirit and fire."

- Jesus, Himself certainly had the Spirit of God in Him, but upon His baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, lighting down from heaven.

Baptized - to be immersed. What are we immersed with? POWER (Remember the power team).

- Luk 24:49 NKJV - 49 "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."
- Endued - to sink into clothing. To put in garments.
- Power - Doonamis - capability - supernatural capability from a supernatural source.

WITNESSES

The same word used for martyr - In being clothed with the Holy Spirit, you shall bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus, even if it means to the laying down of your life.

- That day, Peter, who at one point denied Christ 3 times to servant girl before Christ was crucified, stands up in front of thousands and proclaims the gospel to people of every tribe and tongue. The Spirit supernaturally allows the gospel to be heard in multiple languages simultaneously, and 3000 people were saved (1000 for every time Peter denied Christ).

One author put it well when He wrote, "The Holy Spirit is present in all believers, but is president only in some."

- QUESTION - is your life clothed with power that causes you to have the boldness to preach Jesus, stand for Jesus, and live by faith in Jesus? If not, you might ask the Holy Spirit, even tonight, to cloth you and immerse you with His power.

2 Power for Ministry

APPLICATION

The Spirit clearly clothes us in power to witness to the world. Still, He also moves in power through us to minister to one another. 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 are dedicated to teaching

us how the Spirit works in the midst of a congregation of believers so that they are comforted, encouraged, built up, equipped, and in awe of Jesus.

ABUSED AND MISUSED

I believe there are two extremes when it comes to Spiritual gifts in the church today: In one the Spirit of God is grieved, and in the other, the Spirit of God is quenched. The operation and gifts of the Spirit are often abused and misused when people begin to operate in the flesh in order to gain a spiritual experience. When people begin to crave an experience over a relationship, they will do many things to work themselves up in order to attain a spiritual high, then they will attribute those things to the Holy Spirit. The mentality is usually, "If it feels spiritual, it must be from the Spirit."

Unfortunately, this is not true.

- If it feels spiritual, it might be from the flesh. I've had "spiritual" experiences at concerts that had nothing to do with Jesus. I have had "spiritual" experiences at sports events with thousands of people feeding off of each other's excitement and passion.
- ***Not everything that stimulates and excites us in an emotional way is always from the Holy Spirit.***
- **Some churches are preoccupied with power over piety and dynamic over discipleship. They ignore biblical precedent, and chase after the latest thrill, no matter how trivial or silly. They're emotionally-charged rather than biblically-led. Instead of an orderly, edifying display of power, their services are like a rowdy circus designed to entertain.**
- I have been in services where the Holy Spirit looks more like a rodeo clown than a symphony conductor.
- This is why a precedent needs to be established when it comes to how the Holy Spirit works.

Now, believe me, I recognize that the Holy Spirit is not tame. When I see the operation of the Holy Spirit in the early church, I tremble with awe and excitement.

- The Holy Spirit is like a gentle dove, but He is also like a mighty rushing wind. In the NT, His operation is described as water, fire, and wind.
- At times He moves quietly behind the scenes, and at times he manifests His presence with signs, wonders, and power that cause the unbelieving world to stand in a stupor.
- He brings supernatural power that emboldens, encourages, heals, discerns, and enlightens. When God's Spirit shows up, He can cause us to stand in wonder and

amazement.

- But in all those things, He has given us certain litmus tests. He has placed within the Word of God that He Himself inspired boundaries, limits, and identification marks so that we know Him when He shows up.
- **When the Holy Spirit is working, Jesus will be glorified, the church will be edified, and the world will be mystified.**

IGNORED & DISMISSED

On the other side, people have seen certain abuses and have thrown out the entire concept of the Spiritual. They have a spiritual phobia and, as a backlash, have taken the full reign of control in the physical and have forbidden the Holy Spirit to do anything outside of their own controlled environment.

- It's true, Hyper-emotionalism and religious theatrics give the Holy Spirit a bad rap... What's often credited to the Holy Spirit is not holy or spiritual.
- But this is not a good reason to neglect the Spirit, just as drinking bad coffee is not a good excuse to dismiss all coffee!
- Rather, we ought to go to the Word in order to have a spiritually safe environment where we can experience the fullness of what the Spirit has to offer without the mess that the flesh can create.
- I love the adage, "The Word without the Spirit will cause a church to dry up. The Spirit without the Word will cause a church to blow up. But the Spirit working through the Word will cause the church to grow up."

What the church needs today is a comprehensive, biblical understanding of the gifts God's Spirit gives, why He gives them, how they are to be used, why they are to be used, and how they are not to be used.

BIBLE PASSAGE

You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

Here, Paul recognizes that these converted gentiles' spiritual backgrounds would lend themselves to spiritual ignorance.

- Often, a person's past experiences can be their compass and dictionary when it comes to experiencing the Holy Spirit.
- These people came out of recklessly following dumb, mindless, mute idols. It would be very easy for them to transfer their past ways of operation onto the Holy Spirit, and Paul didn't want that. He wanted them to operate spiritually according to the truth of God's Word and who the Holy Spirit was.
- Next, he gives the overarching principle of recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit:

BIBLE PASSAGE

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATION

Here is a contrast:

- If someone claims to have a prophecy or a word from God, but they start speaking out against Jesus, those words aren't coming from God!
- I know this seems elementary, but for the Corinthians, apparently some people were getting confused that someone was speaking in the name of God, but speaking against Jesus.
- Paul says this will NEVER HAPPEN. The Holy Spirit from the birth of Jesus to His resurrection, has done nothing but testify and glorify Jesus... and that is still what He is doing today.

QUOTE

“Whenever the Spirit is truly working, Jesus will take center stage!”

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 15:26 - “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

APPLICATION

The Holy Spirit is most interested in bringing attention to Jesus. This doesn't lessen His own divinity or worthiness, but the Holy Spirit is always willing to drive behind the scenes in order for Jesus to be more clearly seen.

- The Holy Spirit is not interested in showcasing a man's ministry, only in using men to bring glory to Jesus. He wants people to leave a corporate gathering being more in awe of and in the likeness of Jesus.

On the other end, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit:

- Now, this can sound confusing at first, because of course someone can say the words “Jesus is Lord” and not have the Spirit. Paul spends a lot of time in his letters warning against these kinds of people.
- But to live out the reality of Jesus being Lord is not possible apart from the Holy Spirit.

JESUS IS LORD: What does this short statement imply?

- Jesus - what Jesus are they preaching? The biblical Jesus or another Jesus? Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians, “If anyone preaches another Jesus, don't receive that person.”
- Lord - master - to say Jesus is Lord and truly mean it means that I submit to Jesus commands, His words, His instructions. That means my prophecy or tongue, or word, or teaching won't contradict the sound teachings of Christ and His apostles.
- If someone claims to be an apostle and claims to be a minister of Jesus, but their teaching or their practices regularly contradict the words of Jesus or the words of scripture, then their claim is false.

With that precedent in place, Paul begins to describe the nature and operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

BIBLE PASSAGE

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Things that are diverse: Gifts, ministries, and activities

Things that are the same: Spirit, Lord, and God

ILLUSTRATION

Being in the coffee shop and looking at all the different blends, origins, and roast profiles, but they all came from the same coffee roasting machine and the same person roasting the coffee. Though there are differences in the various products, they all share some of the same characteristics that identify them as coming from this particular roaster.

APPLICATION: it is incredibly beautiful that people within the body of Christ are all different in their supernatural gifting, callings into ministry, and abilities. But when people are operating in the Spirit of God, for the glory of the Lord Jesus, in worship to the one true God, they share a similar supernatural quality that identifies them as coming from God.

- Our differences in giftings, passions, drives, and desires, shouldn't cause us to divide and despise one another, but rather recognize that the same God, same Spirit, same Lord has created me and gifted me uniquely to complement the other people that He has done the same with.
- Neither should it cause us to exalt certain people based on their gifts (as a source of pride) or disregard others based on theirs.
- EXAMPLE: The guy with the mission's heart and the gal with a knack for worship—they serve the same Kingdom for the same purpose and have been equipped by the same God.

“One of the main characteristics of God actively working in a church is unity through diversity.”

THREE CATEGORIES

Gifts - 1 Corinthians 12 & Romans 12

Ministries - Ephesians 4 & 1 Peter 4

Activities - Impact

BIBLE PASSAGE

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all

APPLICATION

1. The Spirit operates through manifestations:

Manifestation - (Root: phaneros) - make actual and visible, realized.

Though the Spirit is invisible, He makes Himself visible through the operation of supernatural gifts.

2. The gifts are from the Spirit:

In other words, these are more than natural gifts and talents. These are supernatural gifts outside of a person's natural capacity. It might be a natural gift that is being supernaturally empowered, but the quality of it is supernatural in nature. When people look at the operation of these gifts, they recognize the Spirit of God at work.

3. The gifts are to profit the entire church

To the profit of all - a person is not given supernatural gifts for their own profit. A true prophet of God should always be a nonprofit prophet. Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give."

QUOTE

“The gifts are not given for rivalry and jealousy but for the common good. That is the point of it all. Spiritual gifts are always given to be used, and to be used in such a way as to edify the whole body of believers, not just the possessor of a gift.”

Leon Morris

OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS...

We will be studying all of the gifts of the Spirit, what they are, and how they should operate.

- We may come to realize that we've quenched the Spirit at times, and at other times, perhaps we've grieved the Spirit.
- We will discuss the gift of tongues, which is far less complicated than one might think. We will look at prophecy in light of God's word, and most importantly, we will seek the Spirit and desire that He empowers us with spiritual gifts and helps us operate in them.