

It Brings Power

by Aaron Hills

The sermon emphasizes the importance of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit for service and to be holy, and how it is the supreme need of the Christian today.

Scripture: Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:31, Romans 15:19, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 4:20, Ephesians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Power"

Description

Aaron Hills preaches about the desire for power that many individuals have, seeking honor, prominence, and gain through ambition and dominance. However, Jesus promised power to His disciples only after their hearts were cleansed by the Holy Spirit, as entrusting carnal men with power often leads to abuse and selfishness. The power given by Jesus is not for selfish gain but to bear witness for Him, to speak boldly about Him and lead others to salvation. This power, received through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, equips believers to preach with divine unction, win souls for Christ, and be effective in their ministry, as seen in the lives of great soul winners throughout history.

Transcript

Power is universally coveted. Men love to gratify ambition and be dominant. Achievement will bring notoriety and publicity; conquest will be succeeded by renown. Authority calls forth the consideration and obeisance of others. How highly these things are esteemed by multitudes! Oh, yes people want power. It will bring honor, prominence, and gain. Everybody is after it. By it the railroad magnate car down his rivals; the politician can secure a better office and lay a heavier hand upon the state; the lawyer can get more clients, and the doctor more patients, and the preacher a larger audience and a bigger salary? What a fine thing it is to have power!

Jesus promised power to His disciples. But be it noticed that their hearts were first cleansed by the Holy Ghost. It is not safe to entrust carnal men with power. It would almost certainly be abuse and perverted to selfish ends. Witness what men have done with power through the ages: warriors that have ravaged realms, kings that have wasted the resources of empires, prelates that have ruined churches and impeded the progress of the kingdom of God. Jesus' own disciples would have done it before Pentecost. John and James wanted first and second place in what they supposed would be a material and visible kingdom of God. Had they secured such positions, without an increase of grace, they would most likely have been ruined.

But the great gift of power to the disciples was wisely postponed until their hearts were cleansed by the Holy Spirit. Then they were free from selfishness, and would use their extraordinary power with an eye single to the glory of God. Peter could then preach his moving sermon, not at all for Peter's exaltation, but for the glory of Jesus. The whole apostolic band, suddenly clothed with an unwonted power that made men marvel, could remain sweet, humble, and modest without a touch of which so often disfigures the character of carnal man. Paul, cleansed of the Holy Spirit, could move like a conqueror and king among men, and yet on himself as the servant of all, and rejoice in the privilege of suffering for the blessed Lord.

What then is the power which Jesus gives?

It is a power to bear witness for Jesus. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is painful to observe how many professors of religion there are who have no testimony to give for their Lord. They are silent in the prayer meeting (or never go to it), silent in the private conversation about their spiritual life. If the world depended upon them for knowledge, it would never hear that it had a Savior.

A friend of mine once asked President Finney why Prof. _____, of Oberlin College, never told his experience. He promptly replied, "I think it is because he has none to tell." Whether these dumb Christians have any experience at all, God knows. But it is more than likely that their heart-life is so unsatisfactory, and the pulse-beat of their piety is so feeble, that they are reluctant to talk about it to others. There is no gushing spontaneity and overflow of soul, no burning fire within that will not suffer them to keep silence.

But let these same believers come to a Pentecost, and they would at once be like the early disciples of whom it is written, "And they were all filled with the Holy. Ghost, and began to speak."

When Peter and John were forbidden to talk about Jesus, their prompt answer was, "We cannot but speak." Their hearts were too full; like an artesian well, they must pour out what was in them. When men and women get the Pentecostal pressure and power upon them, their religion will be heard from.

But that witness-bearing was the early form of preaching. Men will have power to preach with a divine unction when the Holy Ghost comes upon them, which will be manifest to all. Sinners will be pricked to their hearts, and will hasten to the altar to unburden their souls, and be rid of their load of sin. Believers will be fed and built up in the faith of the gospel. President Mahan said that prior to his baptism with the Holy Ghost he was successful in leading men to Christ, but he could get them no further; he did not know how to feed the flock of God. All ministers have a similar experience. Indeed it is now getting worse than that. Without a Pentecostal experience ministers are now finding themselves unable to win converts.

It would be difficult to name one conspicuously great soul winner during the last two hundred years who was not by the baptism with the Holy Spirit equipped for his work. Such men as Edward, Wesley, and Whitefield, Fletcher, Finney, Caughey, A. B. Earle, Moody, Bishops Matthew Simpson, W. M. Taylor, and the Booths, Phoebe Palmer and Maggie Van Cott, are illustrations of the enduement of Pentecostal power. A hundred others only less famous might easily be named who graduated from the Pentecostal chamber into usefulness and fame. It is not at all an exaggeration or overstatement to say that they were made by the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

I find the following in the Texas Christian Advocate, in an article on "The Enduement of Power":

"In the last twenty-five years the subject of spiritual power for service has engaged the earnest and prayerful attention of Christian men as it has not since the days of the apostles. We are to review the results of these profound studies as given to us in the published works of the leading pastors and evangelists of Europe and America. A symposium of views upon this subject that, so far as I am aware, has never before been made.

"I ask first of all, in what does this endowment consist? what does it do for men?

"It is what the Scriptures call a 'baptism of the Holy Ghost,' by which a Christian becomes endued with power for the work to which God has called him. It was received by the disciples upon the day of Pentecost, and by multitudes in every age since that time.

"Dr. Fletcher Wharton, in a published sermon, asks, 'What is it, then, to have this spiritual power?' He answers: 'Let me answer. Let me answer slowly. It is to have God in our souls. Not some other one's experience of God, but God. Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.'

"President Finney says that the term 'power,' used in our text, means 'The power to prevail with God and man, the power to fasten saving impressions upon the minds of men.'

"Dr. Adam Clarke says: 'The apostles were endued with power for three purposes, one of which was that their preaching might be attended by the power of the it, so that their hearers might believe and be saved.'

"It is the united testimony of all effective workers that the apostolic baptism of fire, giving power for service, is the supreme need of the Christian today.

"Says Dr. B. M. Long: 'Our efforts will be futile unless we are anointed by the Spirit of God.' He adds this important truth: 'Too many of us are satisfied with conversion, and therefore fail to go forward and get the anointing of the Spirit, the baptism of power.'

"Mrs. Booth: 'I most unhesitatingly assert that the great want is power.'

"Mr. Moody: 'God has a great many sons and daughters without power. A great many people are thinking that we need new measures. That is not what the Church of God needs today. It is the power that the apostles had. When the Spirit of God is upon us for service, we are anointed, and then we can do great things. So we are not going to lose anything if we tarry till we get this power.'

"Mr. Finney said: 'No one has at any time any right to expect success unless he first secure this endowment of power from on high. It is the supreme need of today.'

"The importance of this matter is vastly intensified if we remember that Jesus sought and obtained this endowment by the Spirit. It was at His baptism by John that the Spirit came upon Him, anointing Him for His life work.

"F. B. Meyer: 'His human nature needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit before even He could do successful service. If Christ waited to be anointed before He went to preach, no young man ought to preach until he, too, has been anointed by the Holy Ghost.'

"Mr. Moody: 'Even Christ Himself did not undertake the great work of preaching until the Holy Ghost descended upon him for this special service.'

"A medieval legend relates that once upon a time Satan turned preacher and spoke with great beauty and eloquence upon the humble birth, the lowly life, the cruel death of the Son of God upon Calvary. He spoke with such tenderness and pathos that his hearers wept at the recital of the tragic story. At the conclusion of the sermon, one who knew him asked why he preached. He replied: 'I preach without unction, therefore all who hear me, although I give them the pure gospel, are but hardened by it.' St. Paul refers to just this thing when he says to the Church at Corinth: 'My speech and my preaching are not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'"

Surely Bishop Thoburn is right when he says: "If we could bring back the church of Pentecost to earth, or, rather, if we could receive anew universally the spirit of that model church of all ages, the idea of evangelizing the world in a single generation would no longer appear visionary; but on the other hand it would seem so reasonable, so practicable, and the duty to perform it so imperative, that everyone would wonder why any intelligent Christian had ever doubted its possibility, or been content to let weary years go by without a vast universal movement throughout all the churches of Christendom at once to go forward and complete the task."

But still more dear to God than all our achievements is ourselves, and God gives us not only power to do but power to be. Multitudes are willing to do great and brilliant things for every one who is willing to be like Jesus. People prize notoriety above character, and achievement more than personal worth. God is pleased to have us like Him. The Holy Spirit, therefore coming into the heart in Pentecostal power, cleanses us -- in other words, gives us the power to be holy. This is the power that will make us pleasing to God, and like God. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Oh, how wonderful a feat it is for the Holy Spirit to fix us up so that Jesus shall not be ashamed to own us as kinsfolk in the presence of the Heavenly Father and the holy angels! This is power indeed! power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the evil; power to be "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

This above all else is dear to God, to have us show to an onlooking universe that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin," that we are redeemed from the curse of the fall, and by this redeeming grace can walk the earth in the white robes of righteousness, and remain "unspotted from the world shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall be witnesses."

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