

The Spirit of Power

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual power, which is the power of the Holy Spirit, and how it can be cultivated through personal union with Christ and recognition of His presence.

Scripture: John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Peter 4:11

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Power"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, asserting that true spiritual power is not derived from intellect, organization, or numbers, but from the personal presence of the Holy Spirit. He explains that this power convicts of sin, elevates Christ, and compels decisive action among believers. Simpson encourages the church to seek this divine power, which is available to all who are willing to be vessels for God's work, regardless of their status or circumstances. He highlights the importance of holiness, faith, love, and the right motives in accessing this spiritual power, ultimately pointing to Christ as the source of all strength.

Transcript

"Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you."--Acts i: 5.

The world is discovering, even in the scientific field, that power is not to be measured by mere mechanical and material forces. There was a time when the strength of an army could be estimated by the numbers and the fighting qualities of its soldiers, but today a small battery of artillery could destroy an entire phalanx of Nebuchadnezzar's, Alexander's, or Caesar's army.

The walls of Babylon would not stand a month against the mines and missiles of modern military science. The hand of a baby was mightier than the massive rocks of Hell Gate. The power of a sunbeam is stronger than the momentum of an iceberg. A single jet of gas will move the mechanism of machinery, when wisely applied, and we are approximating to some knowledge of the great fundamental force of electricity, which will perhaps ultimately be proved to be the principal form of material force in the natural universe. Of course, we know that power belongeth to God, and that the Holy Spirit, the Executive of the Trinity, is the dispenser and agent of the divine power.

Hence our departing Lord said "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." He is the personal power, and as we receive Him we are empowered for all His will and work.

Let us first consider the nature of true spiritual power.

1. It is not intellectual force. There is force in the human mind. Man can move his fellow-man by eloquence and persuasion, and can overcome the forces of matter by his ingenuity and skill; but this is not the power that the Holy Spirit gives us for the work of Christ. Often it is a hindrance to His effectual working, and it is not until our confidence in our own thoughts and reasonings has been renounced that He can "use the foolish things to confound them that are wise, and the weak things to confound them that are mighty, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

The power by which the orator sways his audience, producing deep emotion and enthusiasm, and is admired as the master of all hearts, is not the power of the Holy Ghost. The same effect may be produced by delightful music or splendid acting; and the tears of the sanctuary may be no holier than those of the opera or the theatre. Even the most logical presentation of divine things, which delights the hearers and impresses the imagination and the understanding, may be utterly destitute of real spiritual power. Hence, some of the most splendid preachers of the Christian pulpit classics of the past two centuries preached almost without definite spiritual results in the known conversion of souls.

It is not the mere truth as truth that produces spiritual results, but it is the power of God accompanying it through the Holy Ghost.

2. It is not the power of organization or numbers.

Much of the power of Christianity today is the natural result of organized forces. Many a successful church owes its prosperity, in a great measure, to the business principles on which it is run, and its influence is made up largely of the social elements which constitute it, the numbers which attend it, or the effective machinery by which it is moved; but this may involve no spiritual power whatever.

It is not inconsistent with spiritual power; the Holy Ghost may work in the channels of order and systematic work, but all of this may exist in the most complete form and yet it be simply a religious club and ecclesiastical machinery.

A minister may build up his church just as a man builds up his business, and the ambition which accomplishes his splendid ideal may be of precisely the same kind as that which has founded and consummated the great financial enterprises of our age. There is no more perfect organization in the world than Romanism. Its machinery is superb, but it knows nothing of spiritual power.

Hood has drawn the picture in the "Ancient Mariner" of a ship of death drifting across the ocean, and manned by lifeless forms of men; a dead man at the helm, a dead man in the rigging, a dead man on the bridge, a dead man on the deck, drifting in silence across the deep. Some one has represented a formal church as a ship of death, with all the forms of life, but without the life; a dead man in the pulpit, and dead souls in the pews, while the voice of heaven sadly complains, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Some writers are very fond of quoting statistics of Christianity, and speaking of the four or five hundred millions who today are under Christian governments, so-called, and the more than three hundred millions who are nominally Christians. If we were to deduct from these figures the numbers who belong to the Papal church, and then the members of national Protestant establishments, which do not even profess to admit members on the ground of conversion, there would be a frightful deduction, and a very small

remnant who might even be claimed as genuine Christians. How many would be left who even would themselves admit that they knew nothing of the power of the Holy Spirit? Spiritual power may operate without any organized basis. Like the torrent, it is very apt to break through the banks and barriers and sweep over the church of God regardless of its forms and formalities.

In our own day God has been pleased to give it in the most eminent degree, to the men and women that are not even members of the formal circle of the ordained ministry, but have been chosen by God partly because they represented none of the elements which are usually connected with power. We can have this power under any circumstances, and the feeblest church, the most isolated worker, the least influential minister of Christ, may become an instrument of blessing to the whole church of God.

I.

What is Spiritual Power?

1. It is the power which convicts of sin. It is the power that makes the hearers to see themselves as God sees them, and humbles them in the dust. It sends people home from the house of God not feeling better but worse; not always admiring the preacher, but often so tried that they perhaps resolve that they will never hear him again. But they know from their inmost soul that he is right and they are wrong. It is the power of conviction; the power that awakens the conscience and says to the soul, "Thou art the man;" it is the power of which the apostle speaks in connection with his own ministry, "by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

They that possess this power will not always be popular preachers, but they will always be effectual workers. Sometimes the hearer will almost think that they are personal, and that someone has disclosed to them his secret sins. Speaking of such a sermon, one of our most honored evangelists said that he felt so indignant with the preacher under whom he was converted that he waited for some time near the door for the purpose of giving him a trashing for daring to expose him in the way he had done, thinking that somebody had informed on him.

Let us covet this power. It is the very stamp and seal of the Holy Ghost on a faithful minister.

After some of Mr. Moody's evangelistic meetings, it is said that thousands and thousands of dollars have been returned anonymously, or otherwise, to the original owners. Men's consciences have been awakened; the power of God has arraigned them before the bar of justice.

2. It is the power that lifts up Christ and makes Him real to the apprehension of the hearer.

Some sermons leave upon the mind a vivid impression of the truth; others leave upon the mind the picture of the Saviour. It is not so much an idea as a person. This is true preaching, and this is the Holy Spirit's most blessed and congenial ministry. He loves to draw in heavenly lines the face of Jesus, and make Him shine out over every page of the Bible, and every paragraph of the sermon as a face of beauty and a heart of love.

Let us cultivate this power, for this is what the struggling, hungry world wants, to know its Saviour. "We would see Jesus" is still its cry; and the answer still is, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

3. This power leads men to decision. It is not merely that they know something they did not know before, that they get new thoughts and conceptions of truth which they carry away to remember and reflect upon, nor even that they feel the deepest and most stirring emotions of religious feeling, but the power of the Spirit always presses them to action, prompt, decisive, positive action.

This is the best test of power. It was the test of ancient eloquence; it was the glory of Demosthenes that while under the eloquence of other orators the multitudes hurraed for the speaker; under his matchless tongue they forgot all about Demosthenes and shouted with one voice, "Let us go and fight Philip."

The power of the Holy Ghost leads men to decide for God, and to enlist against Satan, to give up habits of sin, and to make great and everlasting decisions.

The Lord grant us so to speak in His name, in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that the result shall be, as Paul himself expresses it on writing to the Thessalonians, "Our word came unto you not in word only, but in power, and ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, which saved us from the wrath to come."

II.

The Elements and Sources of Power.

1. It is the power of Christ. It is His own personal working both in the worker and upon the hearers. "All power," He says, "is given unto me in heaven and on earth, and lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the age."

Power is not given unto us, but unto Him, and we are constantly to recognize His living and perpetual presence, and to count upon His direct working. If, therefore, we would have this power, we must be personally united to Him and have Him as an abiding presence. God does not want to glorify us and to show to the world our importance, but to glorify His Son Jesus Christ, and hold up His power and glory.

2. It is the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is the agent who reveals Christ, and manifests His mighty working; therefore, the power is directly connected with the Spirit personally, in the very promise of Christ respecting the Comforter. "When He is come He shall convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." It is not said that we shall convict, but that He shall convict, operating both in the worker and in the hearer's hearts.

So, again, in the promise of Christ just before His ascension, it is said, "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you;" it is not power through the Holy Ghost, but it is the very power of the personal Holy Spirit.

In the account of 1 Cor. xii, of the gifts of the Spirit that were to remain in the New Testament church, all are directly connected with the personal working of the Holy Ghost, "To one is given faith, by the Spirit; to another the working of miracles;" but, lest in any case the power should be connected with the individual in any undue personal sense, it is added, "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

The history of the Christian church has no more striking feature or lesson than that connected with the phenomena of the Spirit of power. All that have been mightily used of God in the conversion of souls, and

the building up of the kingdom of Christ, have recognized His personal baptism as the secret of their power. It was after He had come upon Peter at Pentecost that three thousand souls were converted by a very simple message. It was His fiery truth that made George Whitfield the power of God unto the salvation of innumerable thousands. It was He who fell upon Charles Finney and his audiences, and so filled the whole town, sometimes, where he ministered, with the Divine Presence, that the hands in the factories would fall down at their work and begin to plead for mercy. It is to the day when He fell upon an illiterate Sunday-school worker on the public streets, until he wept for holy joy, that Dwight Moody traces back all his unparalleled usefulness. And many a lowlier worker could tell of a similar story of weakness changed to might, and ignorance made into a channel of divine teaching and blessing through the power of the Holy Ghost in a consecrated heart and life.

Let us honor Him as the personal source of all spiritual power, and He will surely honor us. He holds the key to every human heart, He is the source of the highest thought and the truest feeling, and He has given to us our equipment for our holy ministry for Christ, and we may boldly claim His all-sufficient power and presence.

3. The power of truth.

When united to Christ and accompanied by the Holy Spirit, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Apart from the Spirit it is only "the letter that killeth," but accompanied by the Holy Ghost it is wonderfully and divinely adapted to convict of sin, to lead to Christ, and to establish the foundations of faith, hope, love, and holy character. It is not the way we present the gospel, but it is the pure and simple gospel itself which is the power of God, the fundamental elements of the gospel, especially the glorious truth that Christ has died for our sins, and brought in an everlasting righteousness and salvation by His resurrection and intercession.

It is simply wonderful how God uses the plain statement of the gospel oftentimes for the salvation of souls. The sermons of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles are destitute of either logic or rhetoric. They are simply statements of the great fact that Christ has died and risen to save men, and that by simply accepting this message we are saved. It does indeed seem foolish in its weakness, and yet again and again has God shown that it has the power to change the human heart as nothing else has. How stupendous its result at Pentecost when thousands were saved under the simple proclamation! How marvelous its fruits wherever Paul proclaimed it, not with wisdom of words, but purposely in great simplicity, lest it should be made of none effect!

The early missionaries in Greenland supposed that they must spend a long time in preliminary teaching, preparing the natives to understand the gospel; and so they taught them the principles of the Old Testament, the law of God, etc., but without spiritual fruit; but one day, when the missionary happened to read the story of the third of John, the old chief was overwhelmed with wonder and joy, and immediately spiritual fruit began, and he and many of his people gladly accepted the Saviour of sinners.

One of the most remarkable results that we ever saw follow a single sermon, occurred through the preaching of a plain evangelist, especially on one occasion when his discourse was, humanly speaking, weaker than ever before, lacking animation and rhetorical effect, and consisting simply of a clear, plain, and rather a dry statement of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the ground of the sinner's hope. But the Holy Spirit used that simple truth to the conversion of a great number of people that night, many of whom remain until this day monuments of the grace of God.

There is in the gospel itself a divine potency that we may fully trust, when we present it in the power of the Spirit, to become God's instrument unto the salvation of all that believe. It has power to transform the whole eternal destiny of the soul, and to change its entire views of God and motives of life.

Let us be sure that we do not dilute its power by trying to mix with it our human reasonings, and let us be careful that we do not depend unduly upon the clearness or persuasiveness of our appeal but wholly upon the truth of the gospel itself, and the power of the Spirit that accompanies it.

4. The personal qualities which the Spirit produces in the instruments through whom He works. For, while the Spirit is the worker, He prepares the vessel through whom He works to be a fitting instrument for His service.

Let us look at some of the elements of power with which the Holy Spirit endues the consecrated heart.

1. Perhaps the most obvious quality in such a person would be earnestness; that intense fusing of all the capacities of the soul and being into one's work.

It is the secret of success even in human affairs, but it is pre-eminently the very element of power in Christian workers. It is a quality which the hearer instinctively discovers, and whose absence is fatal to effectiveness, notwithstanding all other gifts. Its essential root is sincerity and honesty of purpose. It was this which made the Master say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." It was this which enabled Paul to exclaim, "If we be beside ourselves it is to God; for the love of Christ constraineth us." "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

This was the secret of Whitfield's wonderful power; his whole soul was engrossed in his work. His one business was to preach the gospel and win souls. No sacrifice could appease him or deter him from his delightful task. It was an enthusiasm with him, and so it is with every earnest soul. This is the true meaning of the word enthusiasm, which literally signifies, God within us. Where the Holy Spirit possesses the heart there always is intense enthusiasm. The true minister should be both a burning and shining light, and the baptism of fire is always a baptism of intense earnestness.

2. Another element of spiritual power is holiness.

There is a certain atmosphere which a saintly soul carries with him which communicates itself to others, and is instinctively perceived even by the careless. There are men and women who awaken in all they come in contact with an irresistible respect, and even reverence. The spirit of godliness, like the nature of the rose, betrays itself in the look, the tone, the bearing, and awakens an unconscious response even in the hearts of ungodly men. The good man compels the homage of the bad, even when they hate and persecute him. The very look of the saintly McChesney often filled the hearts of his hearers with strange solemnity. The tones with which George Whitfield pronounced the simplest word sometimes made people weep. The godless Chesterfield declared, after a visit to Fenelon, that another day in his house would have made him a Christian in spite of himself. The very factory hands were sometimes smitten with conviction at their work as Charles Finney passed through the room. The influence of the Countess of Huntington was such, through her simple piety, that even her profligate king respected her, and said that He would be glad to go to heaven clinging to her skirts.

It is possible for us, like a spice-ship entering the harbor and filling the air with fragrance, so to bear about with us the atmosphere of heaven that it shall be true of us as it was of the apostles, "We are a sweet

savor of Christ unto them that believe, and unto them that perish. To the one we are the savor of life unto life, and to the other of death unto death; and who is sufficient for these things?"

The Christian worker and divine messenger who comes to men fresh from communion with the skies, will have, like Moses, "some of the glory upon his brow, and the world will again take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus." It was said of the good Mr. Aitkin, of England, the father of the well-known evangelist, that one always felt in his presence as though encompassed with the very presence of God. He seemed to carry Christ so about with him that people forgot the man in the overshadowing glory of the Master. This is the honor and the power which He will bestow upon every consecrated servant.

Let it be our high ambition thus to carry the seal of God upon our brow, and the witness of heaven in our every attitude, and look, and tone.

3. Faith is another element of spiritual power imparted by the Holy Ghost.

Our success will bear proportion to our expectation of results. The motto of the effective worker will be, "We believe, and therefore have we spoken."

A minister complained to Mr. Spurgeon that he thought that he must give up his ministry, and doubted if he had ever been called to it, giving as a reason that he had labored untiringly for four years, and had not seen a single fruit from his ministry. Mr. Spurgeon simply asked: "Have you always preached expecting conversions at each service?" He acknowledged that he

had never thought of such a thing, but had eagerly desired them, and wondered that they did not come, "Why," said the good minister, "you did not expect them, and you did not receive them; God's condition of blessing is faith; and it is as necessary for our work as for our salvation."

This is, indeed, true; it is not in proportion to our desperate efforts that we should see the results; but to our simple trust in the power of God, to honor His own Word, and work by His own Spirit in the hearts of men. The most of the great revival movements have thus begun.

A humble working man in the north of Ireland read the story of Geo. Muller's life, and immediately thought, why cannot I have the same answer to prayer in the salvation of souls? He immediately began to pray for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his city and country; soon he was joined by another, and then another, and before long a flood of fire was sweeping over all the land, and hundreds of thousands of souls were mightily converted to God. It was thus that Mr. Finney always prepared for his work. We can read in his biography how he used to retire with a friend, sometimes into the woods, and spend hours on his knees until he felt the blessing was claimed and the power was coming, and then he would go forth about his work with the tranquil certainty that God was there and would be revealed in all His power and glory, and the result always was the mighty working of the Holy Ghost.

Not always is it the preacher who exercises the effectual faith; sometimes it is a silent and obscure heart whom no one shall know until the day when all things shall be revealed.

A celebrated preacher of the middle ages was always accompanied by a quiet and insignificant man, without whom he would never preach. The man never opened his lips in public, and seemed to be a useless appendage. He afterwards explained that while he preached his companion prayed, and that he attributed all the marvelous results of his messages to his believing intercessions. There is no Christian but can thus claim and exercise the very power of God even in the most silent capacity, and it will be found

in the great day that God has not failed to credit the recompense to the real instrument through whom the divine working came. It will very likely be found in that day that the voice that spake from the pulpit had but a fractional share in the real work which the Holy Ghost accomplished, but that some humble saint was the real channel through whom the fire of God fell upon convicted and converted souls.

But it is not only for the conversion of souls that God will give us His power, and faith to claim His working, but for everything connected with His cause, and our ministry shall touch every part of His work.

Faith is the true channel of effectiveness, simply because faith is merely the hand by which the forces of Omnipotence are brought to bear upon the work. The removing of obstacles, the influencing of human hearts and minds, the bringing together of workers, the obtaining of helpers, the supply of financial needs; all these are proper subjects for believing prayer, and proper lines for demonstrating the all-sufficiency of God. And if, instead of begging for help, and compromising the honor of Christ by despairing appeals to the church and the world, the people of God would more simply trust Him, they would be saved a thousand embarrassments, and His name would be constantly glorified in the manifestation of His all-sufficiency before an unbelieving world.

A few stupendous examples of God's faithfulness in answering the prayers of His people in the supply of money and men, such as have been afforded by the story of George Muller's Orphanage, the China Inland Mission, and similar works by faith, were not intended to be isolated instances, but to prove to the world that Christ is able always to meet His people's needs, and to be but samples of a principle which should be the rule of Christian work; that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ, not only in the spiritual, but in the temporal and practical needs of His kingdom.

4. Love.

Still more necessary is the spirit of love as the very element and character of every true Christian worker. "Lovest thou me?" is the prime condition on which Christ's saints are to minister to His flock, and love for souls is the only bond that can win and hold them and can sustain our own heart amid the trials and discouragements of Christian work. Human love will make any task a delight. For the child of her affection the mother can toil and suffer without weariness, and count life itself a small sacrifice for her loved one.

And so the love of souls will inspire us and sustain us in the face of every discouragement and disagreeable surrounding, until the most loathsome and offensive scenes will be a delight to us, and the most coarse and degraded souls will be dear to our hearts as our beloved friends, and it shall become the passion of our life to win them for Christ.

A noble woman died lately in Indiana, who had a remarkable record of success in dealing with hardened women. She was the superintendent of a large institution for this class, and her influence over them was irresistible; it was the power of love. Often when met by stormy passion and wild, coarse, desperate wickedness, has she thrown her arms about some degraded woman, and by a kiss of unfeigned love and the hot tears of her tender compassion, melted the heart of stone. We must love people if we would do them good, but such love must be divine. Mere human sympathy does not go to the depths of their heart, but the love which is born of God and inbreathed of the Holy Ghost, always finds its way to every citadel of rebellion, and wins the soul for God.

At a railway station a brutal criminal was being conveyed to the penitentiary. Sitting on the benches with his keepers, he was awaiting the incoming train. A little girl sat watching him beside her father. Her heart

was overwhelmed with the strange sight, and at length she stole up to him, unnoticed by her father, and looking earnestly in his face, she said, while the tears were in her eyes, "Poor man, I am so sorry for you" The shock aroused him for a moment to realize his condition; his eye flashed, his frame shook with passion, and he repelled her from his presence as though he had been insulted, and almost tried to strike her. She cowered back to her father's knee, the tears still in her eyes, and still watched him; but in a little while she managed to slip away again from the arms of her father, who supposed she had been frightened effectually away from approaching him, and stealing up to him again she looked once more in his hideous face and said very slowly, "Poor man, Jesus Christ is so sorry for you." Instantly he seemed utterly changed and subdued. That name had power to overcome the demon in his heart; his wild defiance broke quite down and he began to weep like a child. Years after he often told the story himself, when a happy, useful Christian man, and he said it was that message that broke his heart, and never left him till he found the Saviour. It was not the child's love merely, but the Saviour's love in the child that won.

There is much danger of turning the gospel of Christ and the power of God into human sentiment. Mere compassion for people, and even a costly show of interest and sympathy, will not save them, but the love born of the Holy Ghost will go as deep as the height from which it springs; and if we walk in the Spirit we shall find Him ever breathing upon us in our work that love which will brood over souls with a divine motherhood, loving them even before we know them, praying for them in the Spirit before we have singled them out of our audience; and then when we meet them recognizing them with a thrill of joy as the souls that we have been bearing on our hearts as a burden of prayer.

This love will strangely endear to us the most repulsive beings and make the most dreadful scenes more delightful than the surroundings of culture and affection, and a life of luxury and indulgence. This is the passion that has drawn so many noble men and women to the wretched fields of sin, until their heavenly love has gathered, like the magnet to itself, the lost and wretched, and bound them forever to the heart of Christ. This is the sweetest, highest gift of the Holy Ghost; the most tender, irresistible element of spiritual power. This was the force that drew souls to Jesus, who loved them to Himself. He was the Shepherd on the mountains, facing every privation and peril, to find the sheep that was lost; the weary wayfarer by Samaria's well, longing for the heart of that poor woman more than for meat and drink; the tender face that looked on Peter and broke his heart by a single glance of love, and that still says to each rescued, ransomed soul, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

This was the power of Paul's ministry. How he loved his flock! "We were willing to have imparted unto you even our own souls; we exhorted every one of you even as a father doth his children; we were gentle with you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, according to the flesh." Men can make burning glasses of iron which will confront the solar rays, and kindle fires in polar seas. Not so can souls be set on fire; the medium must itself be glowing and burning, "a burning as well as a shining light."

5. Tact.

This is difficult to describe. It expresses a kind of heavenly wisdom which is not low, cunning policy any more than coarse inconsiderate abruptness, but a holy judiciousness and fitness of manner and method which nicely adapts itself by the teaching of the Spirit to diversities of character, and in a proper sense becomes all things to all men that it may win them. "He that winneth souls," the preacher says, "is wise." "I will make you fishers of men," said the Master. "I caught you with guile," says the apostle.

The word tact literally means touch. There are many kinds of touch. There is the touch of a mother which even the dying boy can recognize when unconscious of all else, and there is the touch of a blacksmith or a policeman. Not thus are we to touch the souls with which we are dealing for eternity. He that possesses the Holy Ghost will have a holy deference that will feel its way to their hearts, gently approaching them, dispelling their prejudices, tolerant of their faults, patient with their dullness or slowness, and pressing steadily and wisely to the goal of their hearts.

So the Lord drew to Him the woman at Jacob's well. First, He awakened her interest, next, disarming her prejudices, and winning her confidence; next, awakened the hunger in her heart; then venturing to arouse her conscience to the recollection of its sin, carefully avoiding any controversy about doctrines and religions, and at last bearing straight to her heart with the revelation of Himself as her Saviour.

Nothing can teach tact but the Holy Spirit and a heart so full of love for souls that it is vigilant from its very desire to win them. It is the very wisdom of the Holy Spirit and of the heart. There is only One that can make us fishers of men. This power is not always manifest in the public discourse, or the wholesale dealing with souls. He charges, himself, of every minister to reap, even as reapers gather their sheaves by hand and one by one. And he who is not willing thus to seek and find the lost by personal, patient, wise and loving ministry, shall never know the fullness of the Spirit of power.

We have to learn that no two hearts can be dealt with on general principles, and in the same way. The message that was blessed yesterday to a special assembly may not be the one for today. The promise, the incident, the illustration which helped that one to the Saviour cannot be applied as a cast-iron pattern to the next one. In each case we must be distinctly led by the Spirit of wisdom and grace, and if we trust Him "it shall be given us, in the same hour, what we shall say."

Thanks be to His name who has promised us something better than our poor, weak common sense, even that divine endowment, the Spirit of power and of love, and of a sound mind.

IV.

The Conditions of Spiritual Power.

1. Of course, the prime condition ever is that we ourselves are walking in holiness and obedience, and pleasing the Holy Spirit for our own life. We cannot expect to impart to others what we do not possess ourselves. There is nothing tells on human souls like reality, and men instinctively know whether we have experienced what we teach.

No man has a right to give to others what he has not tasted and tested himself. The mightiest force in all our work is to know and to have all men know that our life is back of our work.

2. The next condition is that we work on Scriptural lines.

We cannot expect the power of God to accompany a minister or a church, to any great extent, which allows itself to be compromised by entanglements with the world, or with methods which are contrary to the Scriptures. We cannot expect a lasting revival to follow a series of religious entertainments, or to be followed by a scene of dissipation or spiritual relaxation. The church and minister who may expect the most divine and abiding fruit are those who always work on strictly spiritual lines, and in simple accordance with the Word of God.

We must be careful of resorting too much to human attractions to draw people to Christ. There is a sense in which it is quite proper to use the legitimate power of consecrated music and the social element to promote a congenial and radiant spirit in the work and worship of God, but a work which has to be sustained by the aid of social receptions, musical entertainments, and the operatic stage behind the pulpit, can never be sanctioned or crowned by the power of the Holy Ghost to any considerable extent.

In spite of these things, God does make the best He can of His own truth and the baffled efforts of His individual people even in such a work, but it is a sad, hopeless confusion, and always leads to ultimate disappointment, and impermanent results.

3. In order to enjoy the power of God we must use His own instrumentalities and weapons, His Holy Word, and a simple, pure, and full gospel. There are the weapons of our warfare, which are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; and if we would expect His power we must preach His truth in faithfulness and fullness, and it shall prevail, if proclaimed in the spirit of faith and love.

Many sermons do not possess enough of truth to give them converting power. The Holy Ghost cannot use fully a mere appeal to the sensibilities, or even to the fears of an audience. An inspired messenger should present Christ and Him crucified, and where this is done the Holy Ghost will make it the power of God unto salvation, if His working is rightly claimed and expected.

4. Finally, our motive must be pure.

The glory of Christ. Merely to desire power that we may be powerful preachers or successful workers, will bring bitter disappointment. God will not lend the Holy Ghost to any man to dishonor His own dear Son. He shall testify to Jesus, and not to any man. Self must be dead, and Christ alone exalted, if we are to have much of the power of God.

Some men cannot stand much usefulness, and God loves them too much to set them on the pinnacle of a temple, for there is no fall so great as that which falls from thence. There is no sacrilege so dangerous and shameful as that which uses the gifts of God to glorify any man. Not only must every faithful minister fear for himself the faintest shadow of self-consciousness, but his people must ever guard him from the peril of their own idolatry; for, as surely as they recognize in him ought but God they shall do him cruel harm, and bring upon him humiliation and loss.

An old fisherman was asked how he was so successful. He gave the very sensible answer that he always kept himself out of sight of the fish; and many a minister and worker may find a hint of their failure in this simple illustration.

When Alexander the Great first met his famous war-horse, Bucephalous, he found that the animal became terrified whenever he turned his back to the sun, because his own shadow was thrown before him, and, like a spectre, haunted his vision and hindered his progress. The wise hero instantly leaped into the saddle, turned his face to the sun, threw his shadow behind, plunged his spurs in his steed, and galloped off in majestic style to the amazement of all beholders. From that hour the steed was his master's inseparable companion, and led many an invincible charge, and always to victory. So, let us throw our shadow behind us, set our faces toward Christ, and press on in the power of God to victorious service and at last to imperishable glory.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ab-simpson/the-spirit-of-power/>

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