

3. Empowered by the Spirit

by Chuck Smith

The empowering experience of the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct experience from conversion and indwelling, where the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer to give them power and effectiveness in ministry.

Scripture: John 7:37-39, John 14:16-17, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 8:15-16, Acts 9:17, Acts 10:44-47, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit", "Witnessing for Christ"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the necessity of being empowered by the Holy Spirit, which is a distinct experience from the indwelling of the Spirit that occurs at conversion. He explains that the Holy Spirit's empowering presence enables believers to be effective witnesses for Christ, flowing out of their lives to impact the world. Smith highlights biblical examples, such as the apostles and the Samaritans, to illustrate this separate experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. He encourages believers to seek this empowering relationship, which he describes as an overflow of the Spirit, essential for ministry and transformation into the image of Christ. Ultimately, he challenges the congregation to reflect on whether they have experienced this empowering of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Transcript

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8

Another Calvary Chapel distinctive is our position concerning the Holy Spirit. We believe that there is an experience of the empowering of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer that is distinct and separate from the indwelling of the Spirit that takes place at conversion. Paul asked the Ephesians if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, or since they believed. No matter which translation you choose, the Scriptures clearly teach that there is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is separate and distinct from that of salvation.

When Philip went to Samaria preaching Christ unto them, many believed and were baptized. When the church in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the Gospel, they sent Peter and John, "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)" (Acts 8:15-16). Once

again we see an experience of the Holy Spirit that was separate and distinct from conversion.

In the second chapter of Acts, when the people said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38). Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, but Ananias came to him and laid hands on him that he might receive his sight and receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9).

We believe there is an empowering experience with the Holy Spirit that is separate and distinct from conversion. We acknowledge a three-fold relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believer that is represented by three Greek prepositions - 'para', 'en', and 'epi.'

In John 14, Jesus told the disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16-17). 'With you' speaks of the 'para' relationship, the coming alongside. The 'en' in the phrase 'in you' is equivalent to our English preposition 'in' as in "He is going to dwell in you."

We believe that the Holy Spirit is dwelling with a person prior to conversion. He is the One convicting him of his sin, convincing him that Jesus Christ is the only answer. The Holy Spirit is constantly testifying of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. We also believe that the moment a person receives the witness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus takes away his sin. When anyone invites Jesus to come into his heart, to take over the rule and control of his life, we believe that the Holy Spirit then comes into that person's life. He is with each one of us to bring us to Christ, and when we come to Christ, He begins then to dwell in us.

Paul said, "...know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price;" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). He also told the Ephesians, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" (Ephesians 5:18). Thus, we believe that every born again believing child of God has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. He is under the injunction of the Scriptures to yield his body to the control of the Holy Spirit and to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

We also believe that the Holy Spirit provides the power in the life of the believer to give him victory over sin and over the flesh. We are taught to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. He that walks after the Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit is the power over the flesh life, giving us power over our fallen nature. He is the power in our life to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Corinthians 3:18). So we see the dynamic power of the Spirit in us which comes when we accept Jesus. He begins that work in us of transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

We believe that there is a third relationship that the believer can have that is separate and distinct from the first two. In Acts 1:8 we see this promise, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." This relationship is when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. The word is 'epi' in the Greek, which means 'upon' or 'over.' I prefer the translation of 'overflow' because I believe that this experience allows the Holy Spirit to flow forth out of our lives. Our lives then are not just a vessel containing the Spirit, but they become channels by which the Spirit flows forth to touch the world around us. I also believe that this is the objective work of the Spirit. The first work is subjective, when the changes and the transformations

take place within me. This 'coming upon' experience provides objective evidence of the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit, allowing us to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. That is God's ideal and plan, that my life be the instrument through which He can reach the world around me as the Spirit flows forth, as the dynamic of the Spirit goes forth out of my life.

We find in the New Testament that Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22). I believe that when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," that they received the Holy Spirit.

Some people claim, "Well, that was just a symbolic action." Show me the Scripture where we are told that this was just symbolic! Why didn't John say, "Well, He did a symbolic thing here." There's no Scriptural support to say that this was only a symbolic action. I believe that at that moment the disciples were born again by the Spirit of God.

Then Jesus told His disciples that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father which He had been talking to them about. "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1:5). He also said, "But ye shall receive power (dunamis), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon (epi) you," (Acts 1:8). They needed that overflowing of the Spirit to effectively serve the Lord.

We believe that this is the experience that Jesus was referring to in John 7 when, on the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He stood and cried to the assembled multitude, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37-38). And John, giving the commentary, wrote, "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:39). This 'coming upon' has been referred to as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the overflow of the Spirit. What kind of overflow would that be? It would be like a torrent of living water flowing out of the life of the believer.

So it's one thing to be filled with the Spirit, and it's quite another to have the Spirit flowing out. The inlet of the Spirit is powerful and dynamic, but there has to be that flowing forth of the Spirit from my life to affect and touch others around me.

Jesus made three promises to us about the Spirit - He is with you, He shall be in you, and you will receive the power when He comes over you, or upon you. The Holy Spirit is with us prior to conversion. It's the Holy Spirit that reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It's the Holy Spirit who brings conviction of sin to your heart. It's the Holy Spirit that draws you to Jesus Christ and points out that Jesus is the only answer to your sin. It's the Holy Spirit who, once having drawn you to Christ, when you open the door, comes into your life and begins to indwell you. The power of the Holy Spirit indwelling you conforms your character into the image of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit helps you to live the Christian life and conforms you into His image. He does for you what you can't do for yourself.

As Paul said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Corinthians 3:18). He also said, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Through God's work of salvation my body has become the temple of the Spirit. He's dwelling in me. He has the power to change me in order to conform me into the

image of Jesus Christ.

It's the Lord's desire that He flow forth out of my life. It's one thing to pour water into a cup, but it's another thing to pour it out of the cup. It's one thing to have the Holy Spirit poured into your life and another thing to allow the Holy Spirit to pour out of your life. That's the necessary dynamic for the ministry. Even the disciples were not permitted to engage in the ministry until they had received this dynamic of the Spirit. "Being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." (Acts 1:4). The "promise of the Father" is this dynamic of the Holy Spirit. It's the 'epi' experience, the coming upon.

This experience is usually separate from salvation, but it can be concurrent with salvation, like in the case of the house of Cornelius. As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon them, 'epi', and they began to speak in tongues. So the apostles decided that if God would baptize them with the Spirit, the apostles should also allow them to be baptized with water. (Acts 10).

So we believe that there is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is distinct from conversion and indwelling. Some call it baptism. Some call it being filled with the Spirit. Whatever we choose to call it, it means being overflowed with the Spirit. You can fill a cup, but if you keep pouring, it's going to overflow. This is distinct from just being filled. This is overflowing with the Spirit. Some call it the gift of the Spirit. Some call it the empowering of the Spirit. It doesn't matter what you call it, the main thing is that you have it. We could argue over theological terms, but the experience is described as a gushing forth of torrents of living water from our innermost being. So whatever name you call it isn't important. The main question we must ask concerning this necessary empowering experience for the ministry is simple: DO YOU HAVE IT?

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