

(People God Uses) 05 Be Filled With the Holy Spirit

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit to effectively serve God and impact the world for Christ.

Duration: 50:16

Scripture: Acts 3:1

Topics: "People God Uses"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Peter and John healing a lame man at the Beautiful Gate. The speaker emphasizes the characteristics of the men that God used in this situation, such as being people of prayer, faith, and having a good knowledge of the word. The speaker encourages the audience to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to allow God to use their lives for His eternal purposes. The sermon also highlights the importance of relying on God's strength and timing, as sometimes He waits for us to surrender before coming to our rescue.

Transcript

In the third chapter, we find Peter and John going into the temple for prayer in the afternoon. There was a man about 40 years old who had never walked, who was daily brought to the gate that is called the Beautiful Gate, and there he sought alms from the people entering into worship. As Peter and John passed by, he asked for alms and Peter said, look at us.

He said, we don't have any silver or gold, but what we have will give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk. Peter took the man by the right hand, lifted him to his feet, and immediately he received strength.

He began to walk. He entered into the temple with them, walking, leaping, praising God. And the people, when they saw him, were amazed.

They said, isn't that the man who has been lame, who for so many years has been begging there at the gate? They said, it sure looks like him. They said, how is it that he can walk? And as he was holding Peter and John, the people suddenly related the miracle somehow to Peter and John, and they began to look at them with awe, almost worshipful awe. And Peter said, ye men of Galilee, why marvel ye at this? Or ye

men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why do you look on us as though we by our own righteousness or good works have done this good deed to this man? Be it known unto you that the God and the father of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has honored his son, and it is through the faith in him and the faith of him that this man stands here before you whole.

Peter then began to preach to them concerning Jesus Christ, that though they had rejected him and demanded his death even when Pilate was wanting to let him go, but they had crucified the Prince of Life, but God has raised him from the dead, and that God fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament that were all pointing to Jesus Christ and to his death and resurrection and these prophecies he has fulfilled. And so, as they were speaking, chapter four, unto the people, the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them. At this particular time, the priesthood was controlled by the Sadducean sect.

The Sadducean sect did not believe in angel spirits or resurrection. Now, the Pharisees were more literalist. They took the Bible literally, and they were more spiritual or sought to be more spiritual.

The Sadducees were the humanist. They were the materialist. And at this time, the priesthood was controlled by the Sadducean sect.

It is interesting that Jesus received the persecution mainly from the Pharisees, because he was always violating their traditional aspects of the law. He didn't violate the law, but their traditions that they had developed around the law. He spoke against the traditions.

He said, you teach for doctrine the traditions of men. And by your traditions, he said, you've made the law of no effect. And so, he was constantly coming against the traditions and this upset the Pharisees.

And the Pharisees were the ones who actually led to the pressure to persecute and to crucify Jesus Christ. The Sadducees were the ones who stirred up the problems against the early church, because the early church was preaching the resurrection. And the miracles that were being done in the name of Jesus were the proof that they were offering that Jesus had risen from the dead.

And so, the persecution of the early church actually was fomented more by the Sadducees than by the Pharisees. And so, because the high priest was a Sadducee, they were upset that they were teaching the people and preaching through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. So, being grieved that they were preaching the resurrection, that grieved this sore trouble.

So, they laid hands on them, put them in the prison for the next, till the next day, because it was now eventide. So, this whole event started about three o'clock, and now it's the evening. And how be it many of those which heard the word believed, and the number of men was about 5,000.

So, that's quite a response to an altar call. About 5,000 came to the faith in Jesus Christ. So, came to pass the next day, when the council was called together, and we read in verse 5, it was the rulers, the elders, the scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, they were gathered together at Jerusalem.

And when they had set them in the midst, that is, Peter, and John, and the lame man, they asked, by what power or by what name have you done this? Now, that is a lead question, and it was intended to entrap them, and to cause them to actually condemn themselves. Under the law, back in Deuteronomy, if there is a prophet that comes, and he does a wonder or a sign, and all of the people are marveling at it, if he

should lead you to worship some other god, he is a false prophet and he has been put to death. And so, their question is intended to sort of trap them when they said, by what name, by what power did you do this? And their whole intention was to have them confess, well, we did this in the name of Jesus.

And so, Peter is very careful in his answer, and he declares, if you want to know how it is that this man is walking, be it known unto you, and to all of the people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. So, he's not teaching them to worship another god. It was God who raised him from the dead, and even by him does this man stand here before you whole.

Now, we've been looking in the third chapter at the characteristics of the men that God used, knowing that it is our desire that God would use us in the accomplishing of his eternal purposes. We have only one life, and it will soon be past. And we realize that only the things that we do for Jesus Christ are going to last.

All that we amass, all that we gain of the material realm, we're going to leave here. The works of our flesh are wood, hay, and stubble. They're going to burn.

The only lasting thing, the only eternal things, are those things that are done for the Lord. And that is why, when we stop to really analyze life, and our own lives in particular, we realize that we want to count for things that are eternal. And thus it is our desire that God would use us in the accomplishing of his eternal purposes here on earth.

That we might lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. And so, if I'm going to submit my life to be an instrument in God's hands that he might use me in the accomplishing of his will, I want to go all the way. I want to live full on.

I want the Lord to accomplish the ultimate intention and purpose for my life in and through me. Not just a half-hearted kind of an effort, but I want a total effort for the Lord. As Paul said, they that run in a race run all, but only one receives the prize, so run that you might obtain.

So we want to give ourselves fully to be used of God in the accomplishing of his eternal purposes. There is only one period in church history where the church actually reached its generation with the message of the gospel, and that was the early church. Paul writing to the Colossians some 30 years after the birth of the church said, the word of the gospel as it has come to you as it is in all of the world.

Paul was claiming that after 30 years of the church's history, it had reached the whole world with the message of Jesus Christ. That's an effective church. With all of our advantages of modern media communication, we haven't been able to reach even a half of the world with the message of Jesus Christ.

They were an effective church, never again in church history has there been such an effective church as that first church. So what is it that made them effective? And so as we look at the book of Acts as a model for the church, and as we come to the third chapter and we look at these men that God is using mightily, what are their characteristics that we might emulate them and thus perhaps be used also effectively by God in reaching our generation? And so we see that they were first of all in chapter three, men of prayer. Then we noted that they were men of faith.

Then we noted that they were men who did not seek glory for themselves, but when the people were ready to worship them and to glorify them, they turned them immediately to Jesus, the attention away from them and onto Jesus. Then we discovered that they were men of the word. They were men who had a

good grasp and understanding of God's word.

These are the things that if you want God to use you, these are things that are necessary to be an instrument through which God can accomplish his purposes. People of prayer, people of faith, people who have come to the cross and have reckoned the old man to be dead, not looking for glory for themselves, and people who have a good grasp and working knowledge of the word of God. But then there is one more characteristic and perhaps the most important of all, and we find it here in the fourth chapter, where when Peter is standing with the lame man and John before the council, and he has been asked this lead question, how have you done this? Peter, it said, filled with the Holy Spirit.

Those qualifying words, filled with the Holy Spirit. The place where Peter was standing was in the council of the Jews. This was sort of their supreme religious court.

There was no higher religious court than this council before which Peter was standing. These people are the religious rulers of the nation, and thus they are ruling the nation because there was no king except Herod, who was appointed by the Roman government, who really wasn't recognized by the Jews. They looked to the religious leaders for their ruling over them.

Peter had been here before. When Jesus was arrested in the garden and taken to the house of Caiaphas, where they had gathered together all of the religious council, and you read it in Matthew 26, when they had laid hold on Jesus, they led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off under the high priest's palace.

He went in and he sat down with the servants to see the end. Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death. So Peter's been here before, only he was sort of on the outside.

He was on the periphery. Jesus was the one that was being now judged by this religious council. Peter was curious as to what would happen to Jesus as he stood before them, and so he came along, sort of on the outside looking in.

The last time Peter was here, he was trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. And when the young maid came to him and said, aren't you one of his disciples? He denied, saying he didn't know Jesus. Later on, she came back again and said, you know, I've been thinking about it, and I'm sure I've seen you with him.

And again, Peter denied ever knowing the Lord. The soldiers that were standing there outside by the fire, they also said, you must be one of his disciples. You have a Galilean accent.

And Peter began to swear as the third time he denied really ever knowing the Lord. And you remember the story as he was declaring that he didn't know him, the rooster began to crow, and the words of Jesus before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. Those words came back and struck like a dagger at his heart.

Peter discovered what Jesus had said to him earlier that evening in the garden, when he said, your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. And so we see here a demonstration of the weakness of Peter's flesh. In the face of just a little girl who kept the door, he denied his Lord, the weakness of the flesh.

You see, this council was a powerful council. And Peter was so cowed by the council that even standing outside, he was too timid to acknowledge that he was a disciple of Jesus Christ. Now, Peter is not

standing outside, but he is standing in the midst of the council.

And he is the one who is on trial. He's not standing by the fire, he's standing in the fire. He is not now denying his Lord before the little maid, but he is boldly proclaiming his Lord to these religious leaders.

And the fact that there is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. What a radical difference. How can you possibly explain such a radical difference? They're denying that he ever knew Jesus, denying that he was a disciple because some little girl is sort of taunting him.

Now, standing before the council on trial, boldly, boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus, accusing them, the council, of making a tremendous mistake in their crucifying Jesus Christ. Quoting to them their own scriptures. And we do note down at the bottom of the story there, when they saw the boldness of Peter, they marvel.

What turns a 97-pound weakling into an atlas? The qualifying statement there is filled with the Holy Spirit. Notice, and Peter filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the big difference.

That is the big difference in anyone's life. The difference between the strength of our own flesh and the strength of the Spirit of God, the power of our own ability and the power of God. This is the power that Jesus was talking about when back in chapter one, he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And you will be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem. Earlier, Jesus had said to his disciples, back in the gospels, Luke chapter 12, and when they bring you unto the synagogues and unto the magistrates and the powers, take no thought how or what thing you're going to answer or what you're going to say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in the same hour what you ought to say.

And so we see now Peter empowered by the Holy Spirit. We see Peter now anointed by the Holy Spirit, boldly speaking the words that the Spirit is giving to him to this religious counsel. And so we see the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit in any endeavor that we might attempt for Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, apart from me, you can do nothing. One of the most frustrating and difficult things in all the world is to attempt to do the work of the Lord in the energy and the ability of the flesh. You will discover what frustration is all about when you endeavor to do the work of the Spirit with the ability or the energy of the flesh.

We were with Mike and Raul, Greg, last night, talking about the ministry. There were some musicians there too, and they were talking about writing and composing songs. And they were saying that some of the best songs that they wrote, the most popular songs that they wrote, they wrote in an hour's time.

It just seemed like it just flowed. Some of the songs that they composed, they said, took them weeks. They labored over it.

But there are those times when there's just that anointing, and it just seems to flow. And within an hour, they have a beautiful song, worship song. I said, well, that's an awful lot like preaching.

Sometimes it just flows. And there are other times it's a labor. And those times when it's a labor, you'd be better off just to close the book and say, well, let's pray or let's do something else tonight.

But how wonderful it is when there is that anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, and how we learn to rely and depend upon it, knowing that in us, that is in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. And knowing that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. One day, the Bible tells us that we're going to stand before Jesus Christ to be rewarded for our works.

And it says what sort they are. Now, those works that are done in the ability and the energy of my flesh will never survive the fire by which our works will be judged. The Bible says all of our works will be judged by fire.

Many of them will be consumed. Those that remain after the fire will be rewarded for those works that were done in the flesh by the energy of the flesh. With the abilities of the flesh.

Will never survive the fiery trial that will try our works. Because God does not recognize nor is he interested in the works of our flesh. Going back to the Old Testament in the book of Genesis.

When the Lord said to Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom you love and offer him as a burnt offering sacrifice unto me in a mountain that I will show you. Wait a minute, God, aren't you overlooking something? Isaac is the second son of Abraham. Abraham has another son, Ishmael.

What do you mean, thine only son, Isaac? What it means is that Isaac, being a product of the flesh, was not recognized by God. Even as those works that you produce by the flesh are not recognized by God. Ishmael, product of the flesh, not recognized.

Isaac, the son of promise, the spiritual son, the miraculous son. He's the one that God recognized. That which came by the power of the spirit was recognized of God.

So with our works, those that are wrought by the spirit of God. Working through us, God recognizes, God acknowledges, and God will reward us for those. Yet those works, and many times they are great, many times they are wonderful.

As Jesus was addressing the church of Ephesus in Revelation chapter two, I know thy works and thy labor. And again, he repeated, I know thy works and the latter to be greater than the first. It was a working church.

It was a church that was well organized, a lot of committees, active church. But Jesus said, I have this against you. You've left your first love and the fruit of the spirit is love.

So there was an absence of the spirit. And Jesus threatened that unless they would go back and do their first works over, that is those works that were wrought by the spirit. Not only would there be a lack of the spirit, he would actually depart and put the candlestick away.

He would remove the candlestick out of its place. That is, his presence would go. There are a lot of churches today that have all kinds of wonderful works, wonderful social programs.

But there is that lack of the spirit. And thus you have the works of the flesh. And so often in these kind of situations, you are doing out of pressure what you often resent, but you're doing it because you don't like to be bugged.

And if you don't do it, the committee chairman is going to call you and going to ask why it isn't done. And so you find yourself doing it, but not with a willing heart, not with a willing spirit, but in resentment. And how

could you ever expect God to recognize works that you feel pressured and forced to do and griping about doing and resenting doing them, only doing them because you're under a certain amount of pressure to do them, filled with the Holy Spirit, yielded to the Holy Spirit? It's not works.

It's just beautiful fruit. Because of the relationship with the Spirit of God, there's the fruit that is now being produced from your life. Works motivated by anything other than God's love through the spirit will profit you nothing.

Paul said, though I bestow all of my goods to feed the poor, and though I would sacrifice and give my body to be burned, if I don't have love, it really profits me nothing. Paul said in Romans chapter four, talking about Abraham, that if Abraham were justified by his works, then he would have cause to boast, but not in the Lord. He would be boasting of his own works.

But what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and God accounted his faith for righteousness. It wasn't a righteousness of works. Had it been, then he could have boasted in his works.

But it was a righteousness, which was through faith in Jesus Christ. And thus, Paul said in chapter three, where is boasting then? It's eliminated because it's not of the law. It's not of the works of the law, but it's a faith that God honors and rewards me for.

Had Peter been able to stand the pressure of that little maid saying, aren't you one of his disciples? And if he thought, who are you little girl? I'm a tough fisherman. Yeah, I'm one of his disciples. So what? Then he could have boasted.

Well, there was, it was a temptation to deny, you know, a lot of pressure there, but I, I stood. I declared, you know, Jesus as my Lord. He would have had something to boast in.

But the Lord let Peter see just how weak he was. And oftentimes God does that to us. He lets us see how weak we are.

In fact, oftentimes God doesn't come to the rescue until we've given up. One period of my life, I was a lifeguard and we learned that when you approach a person who is drowning, you have to be very careful because they are in a panic and they get a hold on you. They can immobilize you and both of you can drown.

So a lot of times if a person is really flailing and all, you just sort of wait and you talk to them before you approach them and you get them to settle down. And there are times when you have to just let them almost drown before you can rescue them. They've got to quit flailing.

They've got to quit fighting. They've got to yield if you're going to be able to save them. And so often as long as we're trying, as long as we're flailing, God just stands by and lets it flail.

And it's not until we give up that God moves in to help. Now, if he would come any sooner, our tendency is to say, well, I knew I could do it all the while, you know, all I had to do is just make up my mind. And once I can make up my mind, I can do anything, you know, and we'd be wanting to take some credit for it.

And so as long as you have that hope that, well, maybe I can, if I just try it this way, or if I, I'm sure if I just would, and as long as you've got that attitude, God's going to just let you sink. It's not until you cry as Peter, help Lord, I'm perishing, that the Lord reaches out and lifts you up. You've got to acknowledge and

realize, I can't do it.

Now, you see, when you come to that point, then when God steps in and does it for you, there's no place for you to boast. All you can do is give the glory to God for what he has done. And that's exactly what God wants.

He wants to work. He wants to work through you. He has chosen to use human instruments, but he can't work through you until you've come to that place that you realize you can't do it.

You've run out of ideas, and a lot of times out of energy, and then God suddenly begins to move. And it's exciting to watch then what God can do when we become fully yielded. So, the power of God's Spirit works in our weaknesses.

Paul said, wherefore I glory in my weaknesses that the power of God might be revealed, because when I am weak, then am I strong. For God's strength is made perfect in my weakness. Isn't it interesting how that we detest our weaknesses? We get so upset with ourselves and our weaknesses, and we keep struggling and trying harder, thinking if I can just try a little harder, I know I can do it.

That little red engine, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can, you know, and it'll never get you over the hill, believe me. Peter in his own strength failed, but now it's Peter filled with the Holy Spirit. Big difference.

In the early church, we see the place of the Holy Spirit. It says they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then we read they were led by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8.28, as Philip was directed by the Lord, by the angel to go down to the Gaza Strip, saw the chariot with the Ethiopian eunuch heading back to Ethiopia, sitting in his chariot, reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, join yourself to this chariot. You see how he was led by the Spirit.

Acts 10.19, while Peter had received the vision of the unclean animals on this sheet come down from heaven. While he was thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, behold, there are three men who are seeking you. Arise, therefore, go on down and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.

You see how he was directed by the Lord in the ministry. In Acts chapter 13, we read that there in the church of Antioch, certain prophets, and as they were ministering to the Lord, and they were fasting, the Holy Spirit said, separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work wherein do I have called them. In the 16th chapter, now when they had gone throughout Perga, the region of Galatia, they were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

After they had come to Mysia, they had said to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them. And so passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night. And there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go to Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them, led by the Spirit. God's called us. And then, as we've been talking about it, they were empowered by the Spirit.

The question, by what power did you make this lame man to walk? We read in the end of this chapter, verse 33, with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Reading of Stephen in Acts chapter 6, Stephen, full of faith and power, did great

wonders and miracles among the people. When I'm filled with the Spirit, when I'm led by the Spirit, then God can use me in effective Christian service.

And so these are the characteristics, and they're important, each one of them. It's important that we be people of prayer, people of faith, people who have come to the cross, not ambitious for ourselves, people who have a good working knowledge of the Word, and people who are filled with the Holy Spirit. And God can use you.

God wants to use you. And your life can be an instrument in God's hands. And let me say, there is nothing more rewarding, nothing more fulfilling, nothing more exciting in all of life, than to know that God has used you to accomplish His eternal purpose.

There's a satisfaction that comes from that experience that you cannot describe. You have to experience it. Let's pray.

Father, we're so grateful that you have chosen to use humans to accomplish your purpose. And Lord, we want to be used of you. We want to serve you, Lord.

We want to be effective in our service and in our ministries. And so, Lord, we pray that you'll deal with us in whatever area that we are lacking. We ask, Lord, that you would deal with that area.

There are some here tonight, Lord, who desperately need to have the power of the Holy Spirit. They recognize the weakness of their flesh. They've been struggling, and they realize that they are no match for the flesh.

They've been defeated. And how they need, Lord, to know the power of your Spirit within their lives, helping them, Lord, to be transformed, even as Peter, from their timidity into boldness. And so, Father, we pray that they might just open their hearts now and receive.

Of the fullness of your Spirit, enabling them, Lord, to be effective in their ministry for you. In Jesus' name, amen. Shall we stand? For you who would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit as soon as we're dismissed, there will be a time of ministry over in the fellowship hall that you might receive the power of God's Spirit in your life.

And it may be that that's the one thing that's lacking from your being really effective for the Lord. And so we would encourage you to go over there and just wait upon the Lord and be ministered to for the empowering by the Holy Spirit. If you're here tonight and in need of prayer, the pastors are down here at the front to pray for you.

And so we encourage you again, as soon as we're dismissed, come on forward. They're here to minister to you and to pray for you. Pray one for another, bear one another's burdens, the Bible says, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

So they're here to bear your burden with you and to pray with you and for you. So feel free, as soon as we're dismissed, come on down, be ministered to. I will serve you because I love you.

You have given life to me. I was nothing until you found me. You have given life to me.

Heartaches, broken people, ruined lives are why you died on Calvary. Your touch is what I long for. You have given life to me.

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