

Power to Be

by Chuck Smith

The sermon highlights the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to live as witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 32:42

Scripture: Joel 2:28, Joel 2:32, Zechariah 4:6, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38-39, Romans 7:18-19, Romans 8:26, Philippians 3:12-14

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Personal Growth"

Description

This sermon focuses on the power of the Holy Spirit to transform our lives, emphasizing the need for God's Spirit to enable us to be true witnesses of Jesus Christ. It highlights the importance of seeking the Holy Spirit's power for personal growth, acknowledging our weaknesses, and relying on God's strength to make necessary changes in our lives. The message underscores the promise of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts chapter 1 and Joel, encouraging believers to call upon the name of the Lord for salvation and empowerment.

Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to Acts chapter 1 for our scripture reading today, the first eight verses of Acts chapter 1. I'll read the first, the odd-numbered. We ask you to join together as you read the even-numbered verses. Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, to whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen to them for forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for the gift of the Holy Spirit that was promised and that you fulfilled that promise, and that as the early church waited upon you, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began, Lord, to go forth in the power of the Spirit to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. Thank you, Lord, for that power that you made available to us today, that same power of your Holy Spirit abiding in us, enabling us, Lord, to be your witnesses here in our Jerusalem, throughout our Judea, into Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Lord, we just pray that today, as we study your Word, we might have a greater hunger for the power that you have made available to us to live the kind of lives that you would have us to

live.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. You may be seated. Tonight we'll be studying the book of Joel, as Pastor Skip will take us through the scriptures.

Tonight the book of Joel. Read it over. Join with us for these exciting studies on Sunday night as we go through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the second chapter of Joel, beginning with verse 28. Here is the promise of the Holy Spirit. And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions.

And upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out of my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heaven and in the earth, blood and fire, pillars of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. Several years ago, our older daughter, who was going to UC Irvine at the time, came home from a Bible study that she was attending of college students.

She was quite excited, as she shared with her mother and myself, that that night at that Bible study the Lord had given to her the gift of prophecy, which she exercised that evening, and was just so thrilled that God had given her this gift. I turned to one of my sons, who was sort of going through a trying time, and I said, you know the Bible says your sons and daughters shall prophesy. I said, son, when are you going to start prophesying? He looked at me and said, when are you going to start dreaming dreams? I knew he put me in the category of the old men shall dream dreams, and I thought, well, at least he knows the words.

Question. Are you fully satisfied with your Christian walk? Are your devotions everything that you desire that they should be? Is your life a true reflection of Jesus Christ, or are there areas in your life that you are hoping to improve on? The psychologists speak of the ego and the superego. The superego is how you picture yourself, the ideal self, what you would be, providing all things were equal, providing that there weren't these extenuating circumstances that you have no control over that keep you from being that sweet, wonderful, generous, affable self that you really know that you are.

The ego is the real self, what you really actually are. And they say that the difference between the ego and the superego determines how mentally well-balanced you are. If there is a vast difference between the real you and the ideal you, then you are subject to many mental problems.

The closer the ego is to the superego, the ideal self to the real self, the more well-balanced you are. So many people have that wide variance between the real self and the ideal self. I think that most people realize that there are things in their lives that they would like to improve upon.

Most of us have areas that, if we were questioned, we'd say, well, I'm working on that in hopes of changing things that we know are not really pleasing to the Lord. These desires for change can be as divergent as

wanting to lose weight or actually wanting to lose the temper that causes us to fly in a rage when things don't go as we want them to go. And here is where we find the weakness of our flesh as we try to accomplish the changes in our own power or ability.

There are things that we promise ourselves that we will never do that again, and yet we find ourselves doing it. There are things that we promise ourselves, I'm going to do this this week, and yet the week goes by and we find that we haven't done it. Resolutions that we make that we're going to be better and we fail to keep them.

Paul the Apostle described his own personal dilemma with this problem in Romans 7, the latter portion. He said, I find myself doing things that I said I would not do, and I do not do the things that I vowed I would do. I hate myself for some of the things I do.

I've come to realize that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. For the desire to do the right thing is in me, but I can't seem to find the power to perform it. The good that I would, I don't do.

The evil that I've promised not to do, I find myself doing. It is as though there were some kind of a perverse law that's working in me so that when I desire to do good, evil is present with me. I agree to the law of God in my heart, but I cannot seem to find the power to keep it.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Does that sort of describe you? As Paul talks about his own personal difficulties in trying to live a victorious life, note the final cry of Paul, Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? It isn't, Oh, wretched man that I am, how can I deliver myself? He had given up on that. He realized that he couldn't deliver himself. So he's calling for help beyond himself, for a higher power.

Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of flesh? It's important that we come to the realization that we can't do it ourselves, and thus we seek that power beyond ourselves to do what we would like to see done, but can't do it within our own flesh or ability. So God's remedy for our weaknesses is found in this promise in the book of Joel. It shall come to pass in the last days I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.

Now in Acts chapter 1, as we read this morning, Jesus was talking to his disciples concerning the promise of the Father which he said, I've been talking to you about. This promise of the Father is a reference to Joel chapter 2, where God did promise in the last days he would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. Jesus said, John, indeed to baptize you with water, you're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.

And then he said to them, and you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be witnesses of me, both in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Note that the Spirit is to be poured out upon all, that is, all of the believers in Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter had preached the message to the people, again referring to this prophecy in Joel, telling them that what they had seen that day, and were seeing, was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

And as he preached to the people about Jesus, they were convicted, and they said to them, what shall we do inasmuch as we have crucified the Lord of glory? Peter said, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this promise, that is of Joel, is unto you and to your children and to those that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call. So through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have, according to Jesus, the power to

be witnesses of Him.

Now a witness in this case is not a person who verbalizes his faith, but a person who lives his faith. The Bible tells us concerning Jesus that He was a true and faithful witness. That is, He came to be a true and faithful witness of God to man.

So if you want to know what God is like, you can look at Jesus. As He said to Philip when Philip said to Him, Lord, if you will just show us the Father, we'll be satisfied. Jesus said, have I been so long a time with you? Haven't you seen me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

How is it then that you say, show us the Father? Now we are to be witnesses of Jesus. And if a person should say to us, well, just show us Jesus, we should be able to answer them, well, haven't you seen me? If you've seen me, you have seen Jesus. That's ideal.

That's the ideal that we seek to attain. As we used to sing, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. All His wonderful passion and purity, O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine, till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

And that is why God has given to us the Holy Spirit. That He might make those changes in us that we can't make ourselves. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and we with unveiled faces, as we behold the glory of the Lord, we're being changed from glory to glory into that same image.

Through the working, he said, of the Spirit in us. So as God's Spirit is working in me, the purpose is to conform me into the image of Jesus Christ. That I might be like Him.

Again we used to sing, to be like Jesus, to be like Jesus. All I ask, to be like Him. All through life's journey from earth to glory, all I ask, to be like Him.

I think that as we realize this truth, that it is God's desire to conform me into the image of Jesus Christ. That it is a very convicting thing to my own heart, as I realize how far short I fall of God's ideal for my life. Paul wrote to the Philippians concerning himself.

As he was talking about the past glories that he had, as a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He said, the past glories that I had attained, I counted as nothing for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. For whom I suffered the loss of all things.

But count them but refuse, that I might know Him, and be found in Him. Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of Christ through faith. And he said, that I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect.

But I seek to apprehend that for which I was apprehended of Jesus Christ. Now brethren, I don't count myself to have apprehended, but this is what I'm doing. Forgetting those things which are behind, the past glories or whatever, and pressing forth to those things which are before me.

I press towards the mark for the high calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Paul is acknowledging, I'm not yet arrived. I'm not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended by Him.

God has a plan and a purpose for my life that has not yet been fulfilled. Now I don't count myself perfect. I don't believe that I've yet apprehended, but this is what I'm doing.

I'm pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Are you seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to transform your life into the image of Jesus Christ? Today, we need that power of the Holy Spirit as much or more than at any time in the history of the church. I do not believe that God has withdrawn the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I don't believe that God intended that they should cease with the apostles. As Peter said, this promise that is of the Holy Spirit is unto you and to your children and to those that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. I think that encompasses us.

We're afar off from that day of Pentecost, but we've been called of the Lord and thus the promise of God to help us in the areas of our weakness, to be strong in the areas of our weakness, to give us power to become everything that God wants us to be. There are those who do declare that the gifts of the Spirit ceased with the early church and that God just gave the gifts to help them to get sort of a jump start as they went out to proclaim the truth of Jesus to the pagan world in which they lived. But as the church grew and was able to build its cathedrals and develop its seminaries, we no longer needed that supernatural power of the Spirit.

We were now able to do it with our own intellectual genius. And thus, basically they're saying, having begun in the Spirit, we can now be made perfect in the flesh. But I think that we've all discovered that that's not true.

Though we began our walk in the Spirit, we need the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives daily to bring about those changes that need to be made in order that I might be like Jesus, living like Him. Back in the Old Testament again, when Zerubbabel came back to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity with a group of people with the purpose of rebuilding the temple. As they got back to Jerusalem, the devastation was much greater than anything they had ever dreamed or realized.

The pile of rubble of the temple that had been destroyed, the walls and the houses and all, the rubble heap was so great that they became discouraged. You know, they had to clean away the rubble before they could even start building, but the rubble was so high that it was just demoralizing as they looked at the job that was to be done and they began to realize their own inability to accomplish such a great job of removing the rubble. So, as they were becoming discouraged and demoralized, the Lord gave to the prophet Zechariah a vision.

The vision was interesting, it was two olive trees and there were pipes that were coming directly from the olive trees, filling with oil the cups at the top of the candlesticks so that the cups remained continually full because of these pipes that came from the olive tree. And then the Lord spoke to Zechariah and said, Go tell Zerubbabel, it is not by might nor by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts, this mountain of rubble will be removed. I think that often times as we look at our lives and we see the rubble, the pile of rubble that is so great, we get discouraged.

We think, oh, I can never move this pile, true. But it's not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord and he can take away all of the junk and all of the rubble out of your life. He desires to do so and that is the purpose of the Holy Spirit.

You will receive power. The word in the Greek is *dunamis* and from that we get our word *dynamic*, that *dynamic* to be the witness of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. Those changes that need to be made in your life cannot be accomplished by resolve or by purpose

or by counting ten.

They can only be wrought by the power of God's spirit made available for you for the very purpose of doing for you what you cannot do for yourself. Here in the prophecy of Joel, the final portion of it declares, And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. These are the days when if you will call upon the name of the Lord, you can be saved, saved from the wrath of God which is going to come upon this world because of its rejection and its treatment of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

You can be saved from the power of sin that has enslaved you and is destroying your life. You can be saved from the presence of sin as one day we will be with God in the kingdom of God. All you have to do, call upon the name of the Lord.

And as Peter said, repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, that power that you need to be everything you ought to be and God wants you to be and in your heart as you see yourself, you desire to be. The ideal you becomes the real you. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit that you have given to us. To enable us, Lord, to be witnesses of you. Lord, we've not yet apprehended, we've not yet attained, we're not yet perfect, we're not yet what we should be, but thank you Lord, we're not what we were.

And we see that work that you are doing in our lives, those changes that you are effecting and we thank you, Lord, for what you have done and what you are doing today. Help us, Lord, each one this day to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As we sang, Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me and let that be our prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front. They're here to pray for you that you might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit today. If you've been struggling with issues in your life that you know are not right and you're not happy with it, you're not happy with things that you are doing but you can't seem to stop.

It's not by might nor by your power, but it's by the Spirit of God. And these men will pray for you that you might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit today and that enabling power of the Spirit to be changed and to be the men and the women that God would have you to be. Maybe you're not saved.

We would encourage you to come because the Bible said, Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And you can know what it is today to have your sins forgiven. Power over sin in your life.

And that hope of eternal life with Him in His kingdom. So we would encourage you to come and seek the Lord for His help, His strength today. For He will make you what you should be as you yield yourself to the Spirit of God.

May the Lord watch over and keep you in His love and cause you to experience real victory in and through Jesus Christ this week. May there be a real obvious growth in your walk with the Lord as we go forward, as we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May we become everything God wants us to be for His glory.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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