

Spiritual Dynamics

by Daniel Steele

The sermon discusses the relationship between the baptism or fullness of the Spirit and the efficiency of the believer, highlighting the importance of humility and not comparing oneself to others.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, Acts 2:4, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 1:29, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

Dr. Daniel Steele preaches about the relation of the baptism or fullness of the Spirit to the efficiency of the believer, emphasizing that while some believers may exhibit extraordinary spiritual power, others may not, and that both scenarios are valid in the eyes of God. He shares examples of individuals like Father Carpenter and Samuel Rutherford, who, despite being filled with the Holy Spirit, did not manifest the same level of power in reaching and saving others. Dr. Steele highlights that the Holy Spirit's work in believers varies based on temperament and calling, with some being gifted for evangelism while others for pastoral care, both essential in the Church's ministry.

Transcript

The relation of the baptism or fullness of the Spirit to the efficiency of the believer, is a subject of intense interest to all Christians. Though much has been said on this question, there remains much more to be uttered, especially in view of the errors into which many good people have fallen. It is generally supposed that the copious effusion of the Spirit upon the believer to his utmost capacity will render him like an electric battery, emitting such shocks of power that sinners will instantly tremble, and fall down and cry for mercy, as did the thousands under the pentecostal preaching of Peter. Such phenomena do sometimes occur in modern times, but they are exceedingly rare. We are convinced that these large measures of power in individual believers would be more common were the whole Church full of faith in her glorified Head. But even then all would not be endowed with equal measures of spiritual power, all not having suitable spiritual capacity.

Soon after Rev. Dr. Finney's conversion he received a wonderful baptism of the Spirit, which was followed by marvelous effects. His words uttered in private conversation, and forgotten by himself, fell like live coals on the hearts of men, and awakened a sense of guilt which would not let them rest till the blood of sprinkling was applied. At his presence, before he opened his lips, the operatives in a mill began to fall on their knees and cry for mercy, smitten by the invisible currents of Divine power which went forth from him .

When like a flame of fire he was traversing western and central New York, he came to the village of Rome in a time of spiritual slumber. He had not been in the house of the pastor an hour before he had conversed with all the family, the pastor, children, boarders, and servants, and brought them all to their knees seeking pardon or the fullness of the Spirit. In a few days almost every man and woman in the village and vicinity was converted, and the work ceased from lack of material to transform, and the evangelist passed on to other fields to behold new triumphs of the Gospel through his instrumentality.

Another rare instance of extraordinary spiritual power is that of Father Carpenter, of New Jersey, a Presbyterian layman of a past generation. A cipher in the Church till anointed of the Holy Ghost, he immediately became a man of wonderful spiritual power, though of ordinary intellect and very limited education. In personal effort, hardened sinners melted under his appeals and yielded to Christ. Once, in a stage-coach going from Newark to New York, he found six unconverted men and one believer his fellow-passengers. He began to present the claims of Jesus, and so powerfully did the Spirit attend the truth that four were converted in the coach, and the other two after reaching New York. At his death it was stated that by a very careful inquiry it had been ascertained that more than ten thousand souls had been converted through his direct instrumentality. The following is a well-authenticated instance of his power, under God, of reaching difficult cases: --

An excellent and conscientious woman had fallen into a delusion of Satan that she had blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and was beyond the reach of God's mercy. For twelve years this dreadful incubus had crushed her soul. She could never be persuaded to detail the circumstances under which she supposed that she had committed the unpardonable sin. Father Carpenter, hearing of her sad condition, went to her house, insisted on the disclosure of the facts, with the declaration that he would not leave the house till he died if she persisted in her silence, and thus succeeded in opening her lips. Seeing that Satan had fastened the fiery dart of a lie in her soul, and kept it there for many years, and that no human power could pluck it out, in the presence of the distressed woman he boldly addressed Satan thus: -- 'O thou father of lies, thou accuser of the brethren! O thou god of this world, who cost blind the minds of men and hide from them the face of Jesus Christ! O thou tempter of the Son of God, thou roaring lion, thou murderer from the beginning! wherefore hast thou kept this daughter of Abraham, lo, these twelve years? In the name of Jesus, come out of her, and let her go in peace!' Under this bold rebuke of the devourer the snare was broken, and the good woman came out of the captive's cell shouting praises to God for her deliverance.

Here is a degree of spiritual power rarely seen in the Church.

But it is evident that there have been believers just as full of the Holy Spirit, who 'have had no such power to reach and save others. No man in modern times had larger views of Christ and of Christian privileges in the dispensation of the Spirit than Samuel Rutherford, who lived in Scotland in the seventeenth century. His "Letters," the joy of all advanced believers, are full of Christ. The superlatives in the English language are exhausted to express his supreme love to the adorable Son of God, "a rose that beautifieth all the upper garden of God -- a leaf of that rose, for smell is worth a world." "If it were possible that heaven, yea, ten heavens, were laid in the balance with Christ, I would think the smell of his breath above them all. Sure I am that he is the far best half of heaven; yea, he is all heaven, and more than all heaven: and my testimony of him is, that ten lives of black sorrow, ten deaths, ten hells of pain, ten furnaces of brimstone, and all exquisite torments, were all too little for Christ if our suffering could be a hire to buy him. ' Here is the testimony of one whom "Christ led up to a notch of Christianity that he never was at before;" whose experience in the highest altitude of the "higher life" was one constant outgush of rapturous praises. Yet in his ministry no extraordinary power was manifest.

Two years after being settled at Anworth he writes: "I see exceedingly small fruit of my ministry. I would be glad of one soul to be a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ. I have a grieved heart daily in my calling." This is not a solitary case. Many eminently holy men have failed to produce immediate effects in the conversion of sinners. The fault was not with the thoroughness of their consecration, nor in their faith. They walked with God, and were filled with the Spirit; but the power to fasten saving truth upon multitudes of souls was not given to them of God. They do wrong to write bitter words of self-condemnation, and to bewail in tears the absence of this kind of power. God gave to Rutherford another kind of efficiency, which is today working in the Church, training believers up to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It costs more to keep a soul in the love of Christ than it does to bring him to Christ. It is, therefore, really a higher gift. The great work of the ministry is the "perfecting of the saints," and the power that effects this, though not so conspicuous in the eyes of men, may be more excellent in the sight of God.

Evangelistic or converting power is by no means commensurate with strength of faith and fullness of the spirit or outgushing emotional experience. Unusual success in this direction requires that there be, in addition to entire consecration to God, a peculiar constitution of the sensibilities, and a personal magnetism sanctified by the Holy Ghost. It is not derogatory to the Creator to say that he endows men with this magnetic power for this very purpose, not that it may be prostituted to selfish or Satanic uses, but that it may be subsidized by the Holy Spirit and used as a spiritual force to push forward Christ's kingdom. Instead, therefore, of vainly struggling for a gift not designed for us, let us employ to the utmost the gift of which we are possessed, even if it does not glare like a meteor upon the gaping world, nor cause our names to resound through the trumpet of fame.

Our theory of spiritual dynamics is this: The Holy Spirit sheds abroad love in the believer's heart. Love is power. This power is always efficient to conquer sin, and in its higher degrees to overcome self. But its effect upon others is modified by our temperament and mental constitution. Some are designed by nature to be, when surcharged with the Spirit, like galvanic batteries of a thousand-cell power, electrifying vast multitudes with the shock of saving Gospel truth; while others, endowed constitutionally with a smaller capacity for the exercise of immediate suasive influence, are more largely gifted in the direction of a well -- balanced intellect, adapted to instruct and edify believers -- the chief function of the pastoral office. See Eph. 4:11-13. The history of the Church, both apostolic and modern, sustains this view. Peter was the preacher on the day of pentecost, not by chance, but by Divine purpose. Thomas could not have been substituted with the same results. His feeble grasp of truth, smaller spiritual caliber, and inferior personal magnetism, could not have been the channel through which the floods of spiritual life and power were borne to the multitude of dead souls. The quick and generous impulses, the inflammable sensibilities, the reinvigorated faith and ardent love of Peter, recently graciously restored to a sense of the love of Jesus, were the divinely-appointed aqueduct through which the first full outgush of the water of life should deluge the thirsty earth. Nor would Philip, with his materialistic turn of mind, nor even John, with his contemplative and subjective cast, though aflame with love to Jesus, have been just the man to carry the Gospel to the headquarters of Cornelius, and be the medium through which the Holy Ghost should fall upon all his household. It was the providential arrangement that both Jews and Gentiles should receive the first outpouring of the Spirit through Peter, because he was the best medium of this great blessing.

Modern days have witnessed the career of great evangelists -- Whitefield, Wesley, Finney, Caughey, and Earle -- through whom multitudes have been aroused from the sleep of sin and awakened to newness of life, to be afterward under the care of thousands of less conspicuous but not less useful "pastors and teachers," having also for their work other gifts and energies of the Spirit. While, therefore, every one

should earnestly covet the best gift, he should not rest satisfied till he has received the grace of the Holy Ghost in the plenitude of his purifying and inspiring efficacy. Then he should thankfully employ the gift bestowed, and not in vain repinings covet the more showy gift of his fellow-laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

In conclusion, we cannot be too well on our guard against the mistake of inferring great grace from great apparent usefulness, and vice versa. Men with very little grace, and some with none at all, have been very successful in awakening slumbering sinners; while holy men, in the most intimate communion of the Holy Ghost, have toiled on for years in labors apparently fruitless. I say apparently, because the whole chain of sequences is badly tangled, and it is impossible to trace the invisible footsteps of each man's influence. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. He may see more fidelity and sacrifice in the humble water-carrier than in the dignified seed-bearer, and proportion his rewards accordingly.

The chief effect of the Spirit-baptism is to secure strength of impulse and continuity of effort in the worker himself. Love makes all toil for its object a delight, and furnishes a motive for constant activity in behalf of others. We have recently heard a venerable bishop quoted as saying that "a revival may occur at any place where are God and a Methodist preacher." We understand by this that every preacher, who is as holy and as believing as he ought to be, may at will, at any time and in any place, see the simultaneous conversion of sinners. The necessary inference is, that all who do not constantly witness this are living in a cold and semi-backslidden state. This inference is afflicting thousands of Christian ministers who enjoy the fullness of the abiding Comforter. Both the inference and the assertion from which it is drawn are untrue. The great work of a preacher in a certain place may be almost wholly within the Church, to save those who are but slightly healed, and to fill the membership with spiritual power to such a degree that they may act with saving efficacy on the impenitent long after he has passed from that to another field of labor, or to his final reward. God has varieties of work and different agencies, and it is just as foolish for the hand to say to the foot, "You might be a hand if you only had faith," as to say, "I have no need of thee." When we hear such extravagant assertions we are inclined to say "Amen" to a wish recently expressed in our hearing, "O for a baptism of common sense!"

We cannot conclude without exposing and refuting the widely prevalent and mischievous error of estimating the usefulness of a preacher solely by the number of penitent seekers who crowd his altar and receive baptism at his hands. This great and glorious work may be done while neglecting to instruct and build up believers, leading them on from first principles, the milk for babes, to that advanced experience of the perfected believer who requires strong meat for his spiritual sustenance. Thus his Church may be increasing in quantity and decreasing in quality at the same time. The real power of a Church may decline under a revival preacher. He may be repeating the folly of the priest who undermined the temple in his eagerness to get coal to keep its altar fires burning. Methodists especially cannot be too often told that the hidings of spiritual power are not found in the last census report. "Not by might, (a host in the Hebrew,) nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Zech. 4:6. The people who, in these modern times, have largely taken the appointing power in their own hands, should understand that in clamoring for a preacher who may make the greatest stir in their community, and secure the largest rental of the pews, and in passing by the man through whom the highest spiritual purity and power of the Church may be attained, they are not wise. A Church whose members are all aflame with the fullness of the Spirit will always afford a healthful attraction to the unconverted, and will always be making aggression upon the unbelieving world. "Star preachers" are the poorest possible substitute for a sanctified Church.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/spiritual-dynamics/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net

