

By My Spirit

by Glenn Meldrum

The Holy Spirit is the Creator of Revival and is essential for the existence of the church today, bringing glory to Jesus, guiding into truth, and empowering people to live surrendered lives to Christ.

Scripture: Luke 24:49, John 15:26, John 16:8, John 16:13, Acts 1:8, Acts 6:3, Romans 5:8, Titus 3:5

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Revival"

Description

Glenn Meldrum preaches on the Holy Spirit as the creator of revival, emphasizing the importance of exalting the Spirit for the growth and life of faith. Throughout history, revivals have erupted when believers gave preeminence to the Holy Spirit, leading to powerful outpourings like the 1904 Welsh Revival. Surrendering to the Spirit's leading and embracing His lordship are key to experiencing the glory of His presence and witnessing His transformative power. The ministries of the Spirit, including glorifying Jesus, guiding into truth, conviction of sin, faith, holiness, and baptism of the Spirit, are essential in revival, empowering believers to be effective witnesses and live surrendered lives.

Transcript

The Holy Spirit is the creator of revival. Approximately two thousand years ago, a small band of believers gathered in prayer on the day of Pentecost and learned this truth. They discovered that giving preeminence to the Spirit was essential to the growth and life of their newfound faith. Three thousand were gloriously saved on that momentous day. It could even be reasoned that the church would not be in existence today if the first Pentecostal outpouring never occurred.

An examination of the history of the church unfolds the reality that whenever the people of God exalts the Holy Spirit the fires of revival burst forth. The 1904 Welsh Revival is a perfect case in point. Prompt obedience to the Spirit's leading was one of the governing principles of that awakening. When the Holy Ghost was exalted to His rightful place, He swept through the country like a fire in a drought stricken land.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in Wales was tangible, affecting Christians and non-Christians alike. People flocked into Wales to partake of the revival. "One man and his daughter went to the railway station and bought train tickets to attend revival meetings. When they asked the porter at the station how to find the meeting, he responded, 'You'll feel it on the train. Go down that road and you'll feel it down there'" (Towns, 34).

William Stead, the famous London editor of the Pall Mall Gazette, was interviewed after visiting this awakening. He stated, "A revival is something like a revolution. It is apt to be wonderfully catching."

The interviewer, sensing an apprehension in his voice, commented; "You speak as if you dreaded the revival coming your way."

"No, that is not so," Stead quickly corrected. "Dread is not the right word. Awe expresses my sentiment better. For you are in the presence of the unknown . . . You have read ghost stories and can imagine what you would feel if you were alone at midnight in the haunted chamber of some old castle and you heard the slow and steady step stealing along the corridor where the visitor from another world was said to walk. If you visit South Wales and watch the revival, you will feel pretty much like that. There is something there from the other world. You cannot say whence it came or whither it is going, but it moves and lives and reaches for you all the time. You see men and women go down in sobbing agony before your eyes as the invisible Hand clutches at their heart. And you shudder. It's pretty grim I tell you. If you are afraid of strong emotions, you'd better give the revival a wide berth" (Pratney, 193-194).

When the Spirit unveils His glory to mortal men, there will be no question that they have encountered the Living God. This means that people can literally experience the glory of His presence. Equally as much, when the Holy Ghost is absent from the church it is painfully known and felt.

Every revival throughout history has been the result of the Spirit being exalted to the place He rightly owns as God. The 1904 Welch revival compelled G. Campbell Morgan to testify that the Spirit moved from "day to day, week to week, county to county, with matchless precision, with the order of an attacking force" (Roberts, Glory, 172). A truly yielded church becomes a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Then He will do "awesome things" that we have not expected. He will come down and cause the kingdoms of men to tremble before His splendor (Isa. 64:3).

The Korean and Chinese revivals during the early twentieth century are wonderful examples of what happens when the Spirit is given preeminence in the church. The missionaries and national Christians had come to understand the heartbreaking reality that they were grieving God by not granting the Spirit His rightful place in the churches and mission stations. Presbyterian missionary Jonathan Goforth honestly confessed, "That which weighed most heavily on the consciences of all was that we had so long been grieving the Holy Spirit by not giving Him His rightful place in our hearts and in our work. While believing in Him we had not trusted in Him, to work in and through us. Now we believe, we have learned our lesson that it is 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.' May we never forget that lesson" (Rosalind, Goforth, 97). Revival swept through those two nations when the saints fully surrendered to God and gave the control of their lives and ministries over to the Comforter.

The value of embracing the lordship of the Holy Spirit can be seen in an interesting story Goforth shared of a minister who wisely relinquished the control of the service over to God. "Mr. Swallen, along with Mr. Blair, visited one of the country out-stations. While conducting the service in the usual way many commenced weeping and confessing their sins. Mr. Swallen said he announced a hymn, hoping to check the wave of emotion that was sweeping over the audience. He tried several times, but in vain, and in awe he realized that Another was managing the meeting; and he got as far out of sight as possible" (Jonathan Goforth, When, 8). Mr. Swallen humbled himself before the Almighty. By yielding to the Spirit a work was accomplished that infinitely exceeded the abilities of mortal man. How few ministers and churches today would allow the control to be taken out of their hands and be placed into God's.

THE PROBLEM OF OUR AGENDAS

The Word plainly teaches that the kingdom of God advances through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This means that Christ's kingdom progresses through men and women who are filled with, and thus moved by, the Spirit. R. A. Torrey noted that, "Two passages of Scripture might well form the watchwords of every true revival, watchwords that should never for a moment be forgotten. The first is a portion of Zech. 4:6, 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts;' the second is, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth (gives life), the flesh profiteth nothing' (John 6:63). In the conduct of any real revival, the Holy Ghost must occupy the place of supreme and absolute control. Revival is new life, and only the Holy Ghost can impart life" (Torrey, 11). True spiritual life comes only through the Spirit. The flesh life, or sinful nature, is hostile to God and cannot fulfill His will (Rom. 8:6-7).

When Christians walk in the lusts of their flesh, they grieve the Holy Ghost and hinder His outpouring in our world. Paul told us that, "the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:17). This is why he warned us not to, ". . . grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30). He further counseled, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire" (1 Th. 5:19).

Far too often our goals and agendas are nothing other than the works of the flesh which the Scriptures call "self-ambitions" (Gal. 5:20). What lies at the core of this issue is who will be god--the Almighty or the individual? We must move beyond Christian clichés in answering this important question. Whoever defines the life and worship of the church is the god of that person or people--whether it is the Lord, man or Satan. In essence, if the Counselor is not guiding our lives then what is directing us is something sinisterly evil.

We must ask ourselves another challenging question. Who has the preeminence in the church on the issue of evangelism? Whoever holds the reins of the church will define how evangelism will be done (if it is done at all). Either evangelism will be done through the power of the Spirit or through our programs, campaigns or Christianized secular marketing techniques. The truth of the matter is that God does not need our programs or church growth strategies in building His kingdom. The Lord of Host is not looking for our abilities, talents and agendas, just our loving abandonment and faithful obedience. This truth desperately needs to be grasped by pastors and church leaders or genuine revival will be kept from the land.

Our agendas can be extremely detrimental to the move of God. Even our desires for revival can be mingled with pride and self-will. The Biblical principle that it is "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty" must be more than a pop religious phrase. Giving preeminence to the Holy Spirit must be a way of life, a principle that defines how we worship, live our daily lives and fulfill our ministries. J. Hudson Taylor addressed this topic when he said, "We have given too much attention to methods and to machinery and to resources, and too little to the Source of Power, the filling with the Holy Ghost" (Brown, *Revolution*, 294).

Churches that give preeminence to the Holy Ghost are very rare in America. This includes the vast number of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Scores of ministers and church folk have never been taught the Scriptural mandate of relinquishing the control of the church to the Spirit. A large number of church leaders are afraid of the Holy Spirit and the holy chaos that could happen at a modern day Pentecost. This leads them to control the spiritual atmosphere of the church or denomination. Though they

may offer a vast array of arguments as to why they do not allow the move of the Spirit, they none-the-less grieve God. Alice Reynolds Flower, wife of J. Roswell Flower, an early Pentecostal leader said, "We were taught to court the Spirit's moving, and through the intervening years the urgency of this has greatly dominated my personal life along various lines of ministry. There were no ruts to our training, no spiritual habits; we were encouraged to expect a fresh working of God in any service, noting whichever direction the heavenly winds blew and learning to trim our sails accordingly" (Gardiner, 33). Oh, how we desperately need ministers today to understand and apply this foundational principle that defined the early Pentecostal movement.

Smith Wigglesworth, another early Pentecostal, saw many revivals because he endeavored to live yielded to the Comforter. He wisely asserted, "Any assembly that puts its hand on the working of the Spirit will surely dry up. The assembly must be as free in the Spirit as possible, and you must allow a certain amount of extravagance when people are getting through to God. Unless we are very wise, we can easily interfere with and quench the power of God that is upon us. . . . If you want an assembly full of life, you must have one in which the Spirit of God is manifested. In order to keep the boiling point of that blessed incarnation of the Spirit, you must be as simple as babes; you must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Wigglesworth, 199-200).

If we grieve the Lord through sin, unbelief, control or dead traditions, we hold back His transforming power in our own lives and our nation. Only when the Spirit is given His rightful place will His glory and power be known in the church and to a perishing world.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Scriptures reveal many dimensions of the Spirit's ministry to humanity. Understanding His work is of enormous value in helping us to be open and sensitive to His leading. Briefly listed below are seven essential ministries of the Spirit that are dynamically evident in revival.

1. The Spirit glorifies the Son.

The Bible teaches that the Spirit will always glorify Jesus. "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me" (Jn. 15:26). Theologian Thomas C. Oden said it this way, "All that we understand of the Father and the Son, we understand through the illumining work of the Spirit" (Oden, 3). Revival is a work of the Spirit that brings glory to Jesus by drawing vast numbers of people to love and serve the King of Creation. The degree to which the crucified Christ is revealed will directly relate to the depth of the Spirit's outpouring.

The Moravian Revival that began on August thirteenth, 1727 in Herrnhut, Germany is a perfect example of how the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in an awakening. John Greenfield wrote, "Their spiritual vision became so keen that they could 'see Him who is invisible' (Heb. 11:27). The form in which He appeared to them most frequently was when He was 'led as a Lamb to the slaughter,' wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities.

"In this divine presence of their bleeding and dying Lord they were overwhelmed with their own sinfulness and with His more abounding grace. Hushed were their controversies and quarrels; crucified were their passions and pride as they gazed upon the agonies of their 'expiring God.' . . . Their prayers, their litanies, their hymns, their conversation and their sermons had one theme, viz., the wounds, the blood and death of Jesus" (Greenfield, 44).

2. Guides into truth

Because the Spirit of Truth is the embodiment of truth, all He says and does is absolute truth. "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (Jn. 14:26). Revival is an invasion of the Spirit of Truth upon a people. It is impossible for the Holy Ghost to make mistakes in leading His flock. He always leads them into truth and empowers them to live the truth. Errors in doctrine, character and actions are always the fault of men and women, for there are no errors in the character and acts of God.

3. The Spirit of surrender

Jesus taught His disciples, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (Jn. 16:13). Notice that the Spirit of Truth is in perfect submission to the will of the Father. There is no rebellion in the Holy Spirit, only submission and loving obedience to the Father. In like manner, those led by the Spirit will live surrendered lives to Christ.

The work of the Spirit in revival empowers people to live abandoned lives to Jesus. Through radically surrendered saints, the Holy Ghost can turn the world upside down. One historian commenting on the Moravian Revival explained that the extensive influence of this move of the Spirit related directly to their profound surrender to Christ. "Everyone desired above everything else that the Holy Spirit might have full control. Self-love and self-will, as well as all disobedience, disappeared, and an overwhelming flood of grace swept us all out into the great ocean of Divine love" (Whittaker, 193-194). The extensive missionary endeavors that the Moravians undertook demonstrate their surrender to Christ. They abandoned their lives to the service of their King to reach unsaved people throughout the world, often at the expense of extreme personal sacrifice.

4. Conviction of sin

Mankind is powerless to convict of sin. Only the Holy Ghost can bring a person to see the reality of his sins and then empower him to flee from them. When the Spirit comes, "he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (Jn. 16:8). "Pleading does not produce conviction," stated C. E. Autrey. "The Holy Spirit works conviction. Evangelists always call upon sinners to accept Christ, but in revivals sinners beg Christ to accept them. Sinners never do this unless they realize their condition. . . Revival brings men face to face with their actual need" (Autrey, 21).

The conviction of sin is always followed by the Spirit's empowerment for repentance. The 1857 Prayer Meeting Revival clearly demonstrated the power of the Holy Ghost to convict multitudes and lead them to genuine repentance. "The fires of revival spread up and down the eastern seaboard and then moved westward into the heart of the country as the Great Spiritual Awakening of 1857-1858 burst full force. City after city received the testimony of God's mighty convicting power as the consuming fire of the Holy Spirit purged the church of the dross of unconfessed sin. As God's people began to pray, the heathen began to respond to the holy conviction of the Spirit of God, and the churches were filled as never before" (King, 19).

5. Faith and regeneration

Faith is a work of the Spirit that enables people to place their trust in Jesus as Savior (1 Cor. 2). Left to ourselves we would remain in our sin, trusting in the philosophies and idols of our own creation. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8; NKJV). This means that God pursued us, not we Him. The Holy Spirit is the Hound of Heaven that chases after us, moving us, even driving us to the foot of the cross. Only in light of Calvary can we begin to comprehend our desperate need and deep rooted wickedness. Then He opens our eyes to the only remedy for our sin-sick souls--Jesus Christ. The Spirit leads us to the foot of the cross so we can place our trust in Jesus.

Regeneration, or the new birth, is the imparting of new life to a person who was dead in trespasses and sin. Paul proclaimed that salvation is, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5; KJV). After regeneration, the Holy Ghost gives the assurance of salvation by the inward witness to the spirit of the believer that he or she is a son or daughter of God (Rom. 8:16). The assurance of salvation is alone the work of the Comforter, never our responsibility. If we tell a person he is a Christian when the Spirit of God has not, we could damn that soul to hell by lulling him into a false spiritual confidence when he is still at war with the Creator.

6. Holiness and sanctification

Sanctification is a ministry of the Spirit that has a twofold meaning. Firstly, when an individual is born again, he is sanctified, or set apart and made holy by an act of God (Rom. 15:16). For a person to be a Christian the Holy Spirit must take up residence within his being. A man can only be holy according to his relationship with the Holy God.

Secondly, sanctification is a progressive work (1 Pe. 1:2). After a person is made holy by entering into relationship with God, he is commanded to practice a lifestyle of holiness according to God's righteous standards. This dimension of sanctification is a cooperative work the Spirit does with, and through, the believer. As a man grows in holiness he will grow more humble, selfless and sensitive to the sin in his own life. According to his longing desire to draw near to God will be his striving after personal holiness.

7. Baptism of the Spirit

The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Ghost is to empower Christians to be witnesses through the power of the Spirit. John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would "baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt. 3:11). Our Lord told the disciples that it was needful for Him to return to the Father so He could send the Comforter to make them powerful witnesses of His resurrection (Jn. 16:7). He commanded them to, "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49; NKJV). After His resurrection He told them, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The great emphasis and commands that Jesus placed upon believers to seek and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit are still relevant for us today.

More than anything, the church in America needs a fresh Pentecost. How can we expect to see revival if we are not yielded to the Spirit, nor desiring to be truly filled by Him? Evan Roberts, the primary evangelist of the 1904 Welsh Revival preached, "The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the essence of revival, for revival comes from a knowledge of the Holy Spirit and the way of co-working with Him which enables Him to work in revival power. The primary condition of revival is therefore that believers should individually know the

baptism of the Holy Ghost" (Whittaker, 108).

Only the Holy Spirit can make us useful to Christ's kingdom. Wigglesworth declared, "Beloved, if God lays hold of you by the Spirit, you will find that there is an end of everything and a beginning of God. Your whole body will become seasoned with a divine likeness of God. Not only will He have begun to use you, but He will have taken you in hand, so you might be a vessel of honor" (Wigglesworth, 130). The Spirit filled life is far more than speaking in tongues. Though the gift of tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is not proof that a person is full of the Holy Ghost (there are a tremendous amount of worldly Christians that speak in tongues). Being filled with the Spirit also means giving Him the preeminence in our lives through intimate prayer, a passion for holiness and fully yielding to the purposes of God. The Spirit baptism was given so we can be saints full of the Holy Ghost as was Stephen.

The power of Calvary and Pentecost are irrevocably united. To be Spirit-controlled we must understand, and identify with, the cross. Jesus shed His blood on Calvary to save us from our sin so we could intimately know His love and be filled to overflowing with the Spirit. Arthur Booth-Clibborn forcefully wrote, "Any cheapening of the price of Pentecost would be a disaster of untold magnitude. The company in the upper room, upon whom Pentecost fell, had paid for it the highest price. In this they approached as near as possible Him who had paid the supreme price in order to send it" (Bartleman, 56). True Pentecostal power is very costly. It costs us our sin, our will, our ambitions, our very life.

The cross was the starting point for those who partook of that first Pentecost. This is still true today! Those who want a Biblical Pentecost must embrace Calvary. Arthur Booth-Clibborn further declared, "Do we ever really adequately realize how utterly lost to this world, how completely despised, rejected and outcast was that company? Their master and leader had just passed, so to speak, through the 'Hangman's rope,' at the hands of the highest civilization of that day. Their Calvary was complete and so a complete Pentecost came to match it. The latter will resemble the former in completeness. We may, therefore, each of us say to ourselves: As your cross, so will your Pentecost be. God's way to Pentecost was via Calvary. Individually it must be so today also. The purity and fullness of the individual Pentecost must depend upon the completeness of the individual Calvary. This is an unalterable principle" (Bartleman, 56-57).

The power of Pentecost is alive and well throughout the world. What it did 2000 years ago it is accomplishing today, and even more. Dr. Michael Brown revealed an astounding statistic on the present Pentecostal outpouring: "Around the world, the fastest-growing religious faith is not Islam, nor is it some cultic New Age ideology or some atheistic philosophy. Not at all. Rather, on every continent on the globe, the fastest-growing religious faith--far and away!--is Spirit-empowered signs-and-wonders Christianity. . . . Or, to put it another way, the largest Protestant group in the world today consists of those who would call themselves Spirit-baptized, tongue-speaking believers" (Brown, Answer Book, 153). The Lord of Pentecost is revealing Himself around the world through those who give Him the preeminence that He justly deserves.

Since the Holy Ghost is the author of revival, and since revival is the unleashing of the His power upon humanity, all the works and ministries of the Spirit are manifested in incredible ways in the throes of revival. It is true that the works of the Spirit are present to some degree apart from spiritual outpourings. Unfortunately, what we have called "normal" in many of our American churches is an atmosphere void of His presence. Biblically speaking, "normal" is being "full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55). Nothing can compare to the Spirit breaking forth in powerful, earth shaking displays of His glory.

The answer to our church problems is not a new building, a new pastor or a new pastorate, a larger budget or the latest church growth strategy; it is the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. The early church exploded because they were Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. This is still true today! Only those who have yielded to the Spirit will be agents of revival. Those simple souls that came out of the upper room brought tremendous glory to their resurrected Lord. When the tangible power of heaven fell upon them the world could not ignore that ragtag bunch of believers. And so the infant church grew astronomically. It can happen again if we will only return to the upper room until we are ". . . endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24:49b; KJV).

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