

Power and Sanctification

by G.W. North

The power of the Holy Spirit is not just about miraculous demonstration, but also about the condition of life and works, and is essential in making the gentiles obedient to God.

Scripture: Luke 24:49, John 16:13, Acts 1:8, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Power of the Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the dual aspects of the Holy Spirit's power in the life of a believer, focusing on both miraculous works and the essential process of sanctification. He highlights that while many associate the Holy Spirit's power primarily with miraculous gifts, Paul also connects it to the condition of life and the sanctification of believers. North suggests that true sanctification comes through the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit, which is crucial for a believer's growth in faith. He warns against an overemphasis on miraculous signs, reminding us that the gospel must be presented through both word and deed, and that signs and wonders should accompany the preaching of the gospel. Ultimately, North calls for a balanced understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in empowering believers for both sanctification and ministry.

Transcript

In this final reference to the Holy Spirit in the epistle, Paul wishes us to think of power. The phrases he uses are 'the power of the Holy Ghost' and 'the power of the Spirit of God'. Probably in some people's minds this word power is mostly, if not exclusively, thought of in terms of the baptism of the Spirit, as in the texts, 'ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:' and 'tarry ye in ... Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high'. Usually this power is connected exclusively with miraculous demonstration by the gifts of the Spirit. It is a mistake to think this way, as Paul makes clear to the Roman church: in this passage he uses the word power once with reference to works and once with reference to condition of life.

These two quotations are not the only allusions to the Holy Spirit at this point either: His name appears again also. This time, in course of a pungent statement relating to his own apostleship and ministry, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit in connection with sanctification --'the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ ... ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost'.

So the apostle takes us back to the beginning, where, as we know, he started his epistle on this very note, 'Jesus Christ our Lord ... declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'.

Although in this fifteenth chapter Paul does not use the word power in connection with sanctification as he did in the first chapter, it would have been quite correct if he had done so. Without in any way infringing God's commandments or interfering with truth, we may make the insertion, and could read the text thus: 'being sanctified by the (power of) the Holy Ghost'. Even better though, we could read it:- 'being sanctified by (the presence of) the Holy Ghost'.

Perhaps best of all we could link all three insertions together and think of this phrase, 'being sanctified by (the person and the presence and the power of) the Holy Ghost'. If we did this it would be perfectly right and proper, for that is exactly how we are sanctified -- by the person and presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The blessed Holy Spirit sent to us by God is more concerned about sanctifying our lives than about giving us power to do special works, yet sanctification is not the Holy Spirit's exclusive speciality, as we have seen. Paul therefore draws attention to other things and speaks of mighty signs and wonders done by the power of the Spirit of God. Lest over-emphasis brings about our own undoing it is vital to keep all truth in perspective.

This statement leaves all honest people with no doubt in the mind that the gospel is not being fully presented unless signs and wonders are taking place. The apostle is quite clear that, in order to make the gentiles obedient to God, the gospel is to be declared by both word and deed. He does not mean that every preacher of the gospel is to be a Paul, or should expect to accomplish all he accomplished, but he does mean that someone ought to be showing the signs and doing wonders.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gw-north/power-and-sanctification/>

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