

The Spirit's Power

by J. Glyn Owen

J. Glyn Owen's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in strengthening believers from within to live out their faith effectively.

Duration: 46:02

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 1:17, Luke 19:10, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 3:8, Ephesians 3:16, 2 Timothy 4:7

Topics: "Spirit's Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the truth and power of the Gospel. He acknowledges that the story of salvation is not a mere imagination but a reality that has transformed countless lives over the past 2,000 years. The preacher highlights the immense power of God that Christians can draw upon and experience in their lives. He mentions the Apostle Paul's recognition of God's power in giving birth to the Gospel and also in transforming the lives of believers. The preacher encourages the congregation to focus on God's provision and forgiveness, and to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the good works that God has prepared for each individual.

Transcript

Looking again from the pulpit, I see that there are quite a number among us today who are new to this congregation. Whether you're visiting us only for the occasion or you've moved into the city or whatever, we want you to be assured of our warmest possible welcome to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May this be a great day of renewal and refreshment in body, soul and spirit.

It's a great thing to be able to meet with the Lord's people and to know that we do not meet in the absence of our Lord himself. Welcome to you all therefore and peace be to you. I have departed from the series that we've been following this morning on this Whip Sunday or Pentecost Sunday, however you wish to refer to it, and I have felt constrained that we should turn for a little while to the words that you will find in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 16.

I'm reading the New International Version, though we shall quarrel a little later on with one or two things here. However, let me read it to you. I think it's the most popular version among us just now, and it goes like this.

The Apostle Paul, of course, is the petitioner here in prayer, and he says I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. It is a prayer that the Spirit

of God would strengthen the Christians in ancient Ephesus in the first place, and make them strong in the inner man to face whatever their duty in God's will and their problems met in the course of obedience to him. Now the New Testament is never satisfied with a mere spectacle of men and women coming to new life in Christ.

You've noticed that, I'm sure. Everywhere the New Testament urges the disciples of Christ to go and make disciples of all nations, leaving no one out. We are all to go.

We are all to be fishers of men. We are all to seek the lost. We are all to be concerned about the Christless and the godless and the dying of this world.

The most miserable man or woman in this world this morning, and will be eternally, is the man or the woman that knows not the Christ whom God sent to be the Savior of the lost. And we are commissioned everywhere in Scripture, directly or indirectly, the burden is laid upon our shoulders as the church of Jesus Christ to be about our business of evangelizing. Even so, the New Testament is never satisfied with that.

It rejoices as the newborn babes creep out of nature's darkness into light. New Testament saints are gladdened and the angels of heaven we are told rejoice when one sinner repents and returns in faith to God in Christ. But the New Testament always yearns to see that young babe growing up, casting off the things that relate to childhood and immaturity, and leaving behind him or her the things of the kindergarten of the spiritual life, and becoming mature in Christ so that he or she, by life and by lip, adorns the doctrine of the gospel.

That's a remarkable statement coming from the pen of the Apostle Paul. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the most wonderful thing in the world, for it is the gospel of his Son. It is the gospel of the power of God present in his Son.

Nevertheless, says the Apostle, it is possible for believing men and women to bring an adornment to the gospel, to beautify the beautiful, to make the excellent more excellent still in the eyes of men. You ask how can we possibly do that? We do it insofar as the life we have received at the new births, matures, grows, develops in us so that our minds think his thoughts after him. We think along the lines of God's thinking, and our hearts breathe his love and his hatred.

His love of that which is good and just, and his hatred of that which is abominable and iniquitous and unjust. We do so when we walk in fellowship and in harmony with God, and are pleased with what he says and what he does, whatever its nature or complexion. We adorn the doctrine.

Now there are multitudes of young Christians, and not so young Christians either, who this morning, even known to me, are languishing. Languishing before the onslaught of temptation in the world. Languishing as they look at the calling, the high calling of the gospel of God in Christ Jesus.

The kind of life they're summoned to live, the kind of things they're called upon to do. And they ponder and wonder, is it practicable? You may be among them. Someone asked me recently, are all these promises in the New Testament, do they all mount up to nothing but a mirage that attract the eye? And when you launch out, you find that really there's nothing there.

That person, for one reason or another, had missed what our text speaks about this morning. I think he would not ask the same question today, but at any rate, at that point in time, he was missing something. He'd taken the wrong turning.

And the promises did not seem to make sense. And all the problems came as clouds in between. And he looked at his problems through those clouds.

On Pentecost Sunday, I'm so delighted to be able to come across a passage like this. I pray, says Paul, that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in the inner man. And if you read the rest of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, you will know what for.

To live our life in the home, in the community, in our workplace, at large, anywhere, everywhere, to the glory of the God who called us and prepared good works for us before the world was made that we in time should come and do them. Now, two things I would like us to look at this morning. First of all, the might by which Paul would have all the Christians of ancient Ephesus, and by which God would have all of us in our modern Ephesus and Toronto, be strengthened, strengthened with his power in the inner man, or the inner being.

Now, you notice the sphere of life with which the apostle is primarily concerned here. This may not be language that we generally use today, but I think it's clear enough for us all to understand what he's getting at. He's talking about the inner being, the inner man, the inner person.

Paul uses the same language again in a number of other places, as for example in 2 Corinthians 4 16. There he says, Whatever translation, whichever translation you have, it may vary a little. In the King James, the outer man is wearing down.

Our outward man is wearing down little by little, getting weaker and weaker. But the inner man, says Paul, according to the King James, is getting stronger and stronger. He's being renewed day by day.

He's referring to two aspects of our experience, two aspects of our natures. The inner man, the man of the soul, the man within, and then the outward man, the man of the body. The emphasis being in the one, of course, upon upon the spiritual, and in the other upon the physical.

The key to success in Christian living lies not in the condition of our physical body, nor in our material circumstances, but rather in the condition of the inner being, or of our inner nature. Remarkable thing in the history of the Christian church is this, that you can show, you can refer to people who have been in all kinds of circumstances. Evil, iniquitous circumstances in many cases.

Difficult circumstances in many more. Circumstances that seem to hedge them in, and make it impossible for them to do the will of God. And yet they've overcome.

Some were weak in body, some were blind, some were deaf, some were destitute, some were maimed seriously. And there were all kinds of conditions, but by the grace of God, they've been able to overcome, because in the inner man they were strong. And this is the key to success.

This is not to minimize the importance of having a healthy body, and so forth. The Bible doesn't do that. Our Lord Jesus Christ spent many, many days, and much of his ministry, in healing the sick, and attending to the physically, and materially needy.

He did not, he did not in any wise, minimize the importance of that. But the secret of success does not lie there. I understand that many societies today will only take on missionaries, and and evangelists that are good looking.

You've got to be a specimen there, that attracts physically. This is sad, you know, but it's true. And if you haven't got that mesmeric look about you, and if you're not a good athlete, or at least you look like one, then you certainly are unacceptable.

As if the secret of success were in the physical attraction. That's a complete denial of the doctrines of grace. They say that the Apostle Paul had a terrible squint, and a long nose, and many other apparent physical blemishes, which I will not repeat.

I will not give the devil the opportunity of smiling. But my, what did he accomplish? In the inner man, in the soul of a man, in the spirit of a man, was the spirit of God, in power, in fullness, with great glory. That's the secret of things as far as the Bible is concerned.

I repeat, the Bible nowhere underestimates the importance of the physical, or of the material even. But the really important element and aspect of life is the soul, is the spirit of a man, is what you are within. If you have the power of God within you, you can face all the circumstances of life and death.

As Paul dares say it, I can't read the passage now, at the end of Romans chapter 8, and he says, we are more than conquerors in the midst of all these horrible things that may or may not happen to us. In the midst of them, he says, we are more than conquerors. And writing to the Philippians when he'd undergone so much anguish and pain and imprisonment and floggings and whatnot by that time, he says, I can do all things through the Christ who strengthens me.

Whether I'm in need or whether I've got more than enough, I can handle both situations, he says, because the Christ lives in me. That's the secret. So, we must be careful to note that Paul is referring to the inner nature of the inner man.

And the inner nature of the inner man who has already come to new life in Christ, who has been regenerate. He's not addressing unregenerate men and women. He's not telling men who have not come to Christ for salvation, look there's something in you and it only needs to be opened up and fanned a little and you'll be all right.

He's not saying that. In chapter 2 and verse 1, he speaks of a spiritual resurrection that must precede all else. But when we have been brought to life from the dead, he says, in that man's soul can be the secret of daily and perpetual success for God.

Not necessarily what men call success, but success in the doing of the will of God. The sphere of life with which Paul is concerned primarily. Now, the strength for which the apostle, please listen to his words, strengthen you, he says, with power through his spirit.

Paul uses two different Greek words here in order to convey the impression of the sheer sufficiency and the sheer adequacy which Christian people may have right there in the very center of our being, in the inner nature. Strengthened, that is one word of power, strengthened with a wealth of power, and then the word power is an entirely different one. So he brings two words together and they make quite a combination.

Now let's just analyze this a little. Paul has in mind here such strength as makes possible the mastery of ourselves and the mastery of our circumstances. And then the God-honoring fulfillment of the service that he has given to us in life.

I have previously referred this morning to the fact that there are certain good works that God prepared from before the foundations of the world for you to do, for me to do. I may not know yet what some of them are, you may not know yet what some of them are, but he's prepared them for you and he's preparing you for them. How can I do what God expects me to do? Here is the answer.

There is a power of God that can be communicated into your innermost being that will make you sufficient to do all that God requires of you, strengthen you with might through his Spirit. A man has not followed far in the footmarks of our Lord Jesus Christ, ere he discovers the opposition of Satan and the weakness of self-will and the subtleties of satanic powers. Even so, Paul envisages the possession by every Christian of such power, notice, in the depths of your being, in your inner man.

You haven't always got to go to church to get it. You haven't always got to run to talk to your pastor to find it. You're not dependent upon any man anywhere at any time.

You're dependent only on God. In your inner man, in your inner being, God can deposit such power there that you have all the resources you need for every day you're asked to live and every night. Power in the depths of one's own being.

This wholly adequate power in the inner being is made possible by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through his Spirit. Now, it's important to note that Paul is not here thinking of any power innate in us then, I must repeat this, but rather he is thinking of a new power which originates in God and is transmitted to us by the third person of the Trinity, by the Holy Spirit. Paul is not thinking of any alleged natural capacity that we may have.

He is thinking of that which the Holy Spirit brings personally into our hearts, into our lives, into our experience. In so far as our possessing salvation or working it out is concerned, actually Paul thinks that the whole of mankind is terribly weak. You remember that great word of his in writing to the Romans? He says, among other things, that when we were yet without strength, Christ died for us.

That is the Apostle's view of human nature as far as capacity to do spiritual things is concerned. We are without strength and we could do nothing to save ourselves and we can do nothing to perfect ourselves apart from the Spirit of God. But here he says, by the Spirit of God, those who were once without strength can have all the strength they need to do all the will of God and all that he requires of them in their life.

But it comes not from the natural part that remains in every believer, not from our fallen natures, but it comes, as Jesus says, from on high, from on high. The Spirit's power is conveyed from on high. Or as Jesus, or as Jesus, that's right, says in Acts 1.8, I was going to say Luke says it, but really it's our Lord's word, when he told his disciples, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come down upon you.

This is not something we generate ourselves from within, work ourselves up to a pitch and say, I've got power. No, no, no. This is something that comes down from above, from a world over which we have no control.

But coming down from above enters into us and imparts there what previously we did not have. That's the ministry of the Spirit. Now you may well ask me, well, give us some illustrations.

What really does the Spirit do there? What can we expect? Here are some young Christians and they've perhaps not had time to read the New Testament through yet. Give us some illustrations. Give us some pictures.

Tell us what can we expect? Let me read you three short passages. First of all, the Spirit is responsible for giving us adequate graces and gifts to do God's will. This is a very basic fact.

Whatever God's will is for you, Christian, the Spirit of God makes himself responsible to give you the grace and the gift that is necessary to do God's will. You say, where does the Scripture tell us that? Let me read to you from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 4 to 7. Paul is introducing himself to them and he's reminding them of certain things about themselves.

He says, I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus, for in him you have been enriched in every way, in all your speaking and in all your knowledge, because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the Lord Jesus to be revealed from heaven. What a remarkable statement.

You don't lack any spiritual gift because you've been enriched with everything is in Christ. Christ, you see, is full of all the plenitude, all the fullness of grace. Everything that we need is in the Christ who has been given to us.

That's the portrait. And having Christ, we have everything, including the Holy Spirit. By the ministry of the Spirit, men may be in every way enriched, in every way enriched.

That's a quote. So that they no longer lack any spiritual gift. Those words are really breathtaking.

They turn back on me and they say you have no reason, you have no excuse to give for your failure this week. Whether it be in doing this or going there or whatever, you have no excuse whatsoever because the Holy Spirit was available to give you all the necessary power and enabling. Brothers and sisters, that is true, you know, of all of us.

When we fall and when we fail, it means that we despise the power and the grace that God has put within our reach. In some way or other, we grieve the Spirit. We do not trust Him.

We act as if we had no confidence in Him. And it is a grieving thing to do. It is a sin so to act.

Let me take one step forward. First of all, the Spirit is responsible for adequate graces and gifts to do God's will. Secondly, the Spirit enables the production of prolific fruit of a manifold nature in the lives of all those in whom He rules.

You give the Spirit of God His way. Let Him have control of you. Hand over your self, body, soul, and spirit to Him.

Let Him control you. And this is what will happen. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And against such things as for there is no law. You can't go too far. You can't grow too many of these.

And you can go on growing them and growing them. And there is no law against it. Do as much as you can.

There are some things you shouldn't do too much of. But here you can go as far as you like. There's a speed limit and you should not overtake the speed limit.

There are other things that guide us on the road here. You shouldn't go through the light when it's on red. Some people do.

But as far as growing this fruit of the Spirit is concerned, you can go as far as you like and as fast as you like. There's no law against it. God says, hell is the ultimate till you grow up into the fullness of the stature of the Man Christ Jesus.

Strange you know, we want to do the things that God has put a limit to. We're so slow to do the things that God says we can do without limit. Here is one of them.

Cultivate in our lives the fruit of the Spirit as far as you can and as fast as you can. Though remember, fruit doesn't generally grow too fast. It takes its own time.

Here you can fructify it. You can get the best circumstances, the best set of circumstances, the light and various other things that may help a little. But ultimately, fruit takes its own time.

First the year, the blade, corn in the year, etc. No, no, things take time. But sooner or later, God has promised this, the Spirit will do it.

You see, this is the challenge when we're asked to do things for the Lord. We say, well I can't do it. You know, that's quite irrelevant.

If God is calling you to do something, it doesn't matter two hoots whether you can do it. If God is calling you, He will provide the wherewithal. He will give you the gift, He will give you the grace, He will enable you, and ultimately our enabling is from Him.

I think that the way of growth involves our accepting the impossible. I don't meet Christians who have really grown by just doing the commonplace. The Christians I notice who grow are those who face the impossible situation that they cannot cope with, and they know that, but they believe God is leading them that way, and so they go forward with God, knowing they can't do it.

And they look to Him, and they find Him faithful. That's growing. You see, that's one reason why God allows many of us to have problems.

We don't trust Him when we And then when we can't go left, and we can't go right, and we can't go backwards, just have to look up. You see, if we were more obedient to the Lord, there would be no need for some of the problems that we have. Now some of you may think that's heresy.

Well, all right, don't take it too far, or it may be heresy. I don't think it's heresy as I said it. Paul says so in 1 Corinthians 11, some of you are sick, he says, and some of you have died, and if you had judged yourselves, I wouldn't have had to chastise you like that, if you had judged yourselves.

That's what I mean. Now I believe there are many circumstances that God allows into our lives. He wouldn't need to allow them, if only we were obedient and trusting and discovering the wonders of his sufficiency in the impossible situation.

The third thing I wanted to note here was this, the Spirit assures the progressive influence of those thus blessed, so that, it's almost a baffling and overwhelming word this, our lives will resemble a life with rivers flowing out of our inner man, our inner beings. Jesus said that in John chapter 7. It was the last day, the great day of the feast, and Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, if any man is thirsty, let him come to me

and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow out of him, from within him.

By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive, up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. Do you get the point? Out of him, rivers. This is influence.

All the world around is arid and desert-like. The place where you work, the place where you live, it's all so difficult. It's like, it's like uncultivated territory.

There's nothing but weeds all around and sand. What can you grow there? Oh, says the Lord Jesus, come and drink of me, you thirsty one. Come and drink of my Spirit.

Come and receive of me. Come and keep on coming. That's the tense here.

Keep on coming, keep on drinking, keep on believing, keep on trusting, and I'll fill you to overflowing. And what will happen is this, out of you will flow rivers, rivers, rivers. That's how God keeps his people going.

He is in them a well of water, John 4, and out of them rivers. John said, he's the water of life. And by the Holy Spirit, he is able to extend his influence into territories unclaimed, alien and full of enmity.

He captures and captivates them. The other thing I wanted to stress this morning, moving from the might by which Paul would have believers empowered, I wanted to stress the measure according to which such might may be prayerfully sought and expected. I'm reading this now from the RSV, that according to the riches of his glory, you notice that's not in the NIV.

The NIV says, out of the riches of his glory, according to the riches of his glory, the RSV, he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man. Now what I want to bring out of that is something which is to my mind absolutely central to Paul's thinking here, namely the immensity of the power that is available for each of us and for all of us who are God's people. It is just incredible.

You cannot take it in until you begin to experience it. The imponderably immense power of God that Christians may draw upon and actually experience in the outworking of their salvation in this world. The Apostle Paul was tremendously impressed both by the power of God in giving birth to the gospel, giving us the gospel, the power of God's mind in thinking about it, the power of God's will in deciding and choosing, the power of God's love, the power of God's goodness, the power of God's persistence, the power of God's righteousness, and so forth.

Paul was very impressed by the power that gave us the gospel, that sent forth his Son to do what was necessary to do that we might be saved. But so was Paul equally impressed by the power that came into our lives through the gospel. And here in this particular passage before us this morning, he just is flooding over with it.

He doesn't know quite how to get it across. He doesn't use normal language here. You remember how he says in Romans 1 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Moreover, the gospel which originated in the omnipotent power of God has brought its incalculable resources into the life of every believer. And as we walk in obedience and by faith, these things are ours to

discover. Now, Paul, what are you saying about the measure of this power? Negatively and positively, there are certain things to notice here with these I close.

Negatively, the measure of spiritual power available for Christians is reflected by the terms the apostle did not use. He put them all on one side. There are certain ways in which you would have expected Paul to express what he says here.

New Greek people can read it over again. Always good to have the Greeks with us. You can read this over and you will be able to say what others have said before you that there are various alternatives that you would expect Paul to choose, but he didn't choose them.

Take one or two examples. Early in this chapter, Paul describes the sheer wonder of the fact that to him, the very least of all the saints, the grace and privilege have been given of preaching among the Gentiles what he calls the unsearchable riches of God. That's chapter 3 and verse 8. Even so, he does not hear pray that God would empower believers according to the riches of Christ.

He doesn't do that. Unsearchable though they are, immediately before that, if you go back to the beginning of the chapter, Paul traced the privilege of being made a servant of the gospel to quote the working of his power and another quote to the gift of God's grace again, his unmerited favor. Paul traced both his salvation and his calling then as a servant of God.

He traced everything to grace, the unsearchable grace of God. Even so, Paul does not pray that God will empower believers in the inner man according to the grace of God, even according to the riches of the grace of God. Well, how does he pray then? What does he ask? Well, positively, listen, that he may grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, according to the riches, not of his grace, wonderful as that would have been, but his glory.

Mark those words, not the riches of his grace, but the riches of his glory. You say, what's the difference? Great and wonderful as God's grace may be, it is infinitely less than his glory. It is but one aspect of his manifold glory.

It is less than his glory. Grace is but one aspect of God's perfection. Glory is the perfection of all the attributes of God functioning in their perfection and casting forth their luster in concert.

God's glory is the luster which is the result of all his perfections shining together like all the colors in the rainbow. Grace is but one of them. And in praying for power for the saints in their innermost beings, the apostle pleads that it should be in a manner, notice, that is in accordance with God's glory.

Consistent with his glory, not just with his grace. And I say two things very briefly. Paul does not ask that God would bless his people then with power even out of the riches of his glory.

Now that's why the NIV is incorrect there. Contrary to what some of the translations as well as the NIV really do, there is no preposition in the text which means out of. None at all.

It's not found in the Nessel text from which most of us work these days. Paul is not simply asking that God would put his hand into the divine treasury and bring out something out of his riches in glory. That's not the point.

And the reason is not far to go. Why? Well you see, now I don't know you good people, many of you, some of you may be richer than others. And assuming that there was a beggar coming into the church today asking for something, now we might all put our hands into our pockets and we might all bring out a dollar.

And I'm sure a beggar would be very pleased if he got a dollar from each one of us. Now each one of us would have given a dollar out of our riches. But there may be a millionaire here.

Though he would have given out of his riches, he would not have given according to his riches. He wouldn't have given in a manner consistent with his riches, or he would have given out of it, but not according to it. And what Paul is praying is this, you see, that God would not simply put his hand into the treasury of heaven and bring out a gift and pour it upon his people, period.

No, no, he says, I'm asking for something more. Oh God of glory, he says, put your hand in your treasury and bring out something that is consistent with your glory. Something that will manifest the greatness of your grace and the wonder of your power and the eternity of your resources.

Hallelujah, isn't it? This is the grace of God. And you and I, brother and sister, and if there's somebody doubting it, it's to you especially, poor doubter you may be. Listen, for you this morning, this is a word of God, that according to the riches of his glory, he is able to make grace and power available to you in your innermost being.

You can go out into a new week, and you can go back to your home, and you can go wherever you're going in the name of the Lord, in obedience to his will you may go, and you can be assured of this, he cannot fail you. Oh glorious Pentecost, oh blessed day of celebration of that which happened 2,000 years ago. Yeah, but this of a beginning of realization that the Spirit who came in all the plenitude of the fullness of the Godhead is with his people still, and is able to make us competent servants of the living God in the most decadent age that ever was.

And he can do that for you, and he can do that for me. Will you go out from this service this morning then, not so much looking at your own failures? Good to remember them sometimes to humble us, but don't remember them so often that they incapacitate you. But if God has forgiven them, and the blood of Jesus has cleansed them, and you've come to realize that God has given you provision not to go that way again, the way of failure, then this is where your eyes and mind should be focused.

Look away, this is God's gold standard, to live in the power of the Spirit, to the glory of God, and thus be able to say someday with awe, I've finished the course, I've kept the faith, what God bad me do I've done, now I'm ready. Lord, call me yonder when you will. Let us pray.

Oh heavenly Father, we bow humbly and gratefully before you now, in acknowledgement of the fact that the kind of good news that we have been announcing this morning is no figment of the imagination. Oh Lord, it would make a wonderful story even if it were not true. Thousands upon thousands would want to read something of this kind amidst the jungle of stuff that is brought out of the secular press today.

But blessed be your name, this is no mirage, this is no make-believe, this is true. So that 2,000 years later, men and women are living for you and dying for you, and men and women are discovering in their lives the freshness of Pentecost and the hope of the resurrection. And a thousand churches have been established this last week again, as on every week this year, and the one continent of Africa.

Oh Spirit of God, we worship you with the Father and with the Son today, and we pray that you will keep us from grieving you, and quenching you, and lying to you as they did in the days of Pentecost even. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh upon us and feed us with heavenly food.

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