

Experiencing Holy Spirit Power

by Michael Durham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts 1:8. It delves into the need for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit for empowerment in service, highlighting historical examples like D.L. Moody and Christmas Evans. The sermon challenges believers to seek God's power through prayer, obedience, and a desperate dependence on Him, stressing the necessity of being filled with the Spirit for effective ministry and spiritual growth.

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Ephesians 5:18, Luke 11:13, John 14:26, Romans 8:26, Galatians 5:22, 1 Corinthians 2:4, James 4:8, Zechariah 4:6, Psalm 51:10

Topics: "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit", "Dependence on God"

Description

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Transcript

As we speak, thank you so much for that. Indeed, it's another joy to bring to you the Word of God again. The text, we pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us this afternoon.

It's from the book of Acts, chapter 1, verse 8. Very simple text. The text you know quite well, Acts chapter 1, verse 8. I want to speak this afternoon on the theme, experiencing Holy Spirit power. Experiencing Holy Spirit power, Acts chapter 1, verse 8. But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. There is a baptism, an infilling of the Spirit that influences the believer and gives power for service. That's what this text is about.

It is the giving of power that we want to spend this session on. And I realize that that puts me on certain side in some people's minds. There is this imaginary divide even amongst men of light faith.

But such kind of terminology is not necessary today. What we are reading about here in Acts chapter 1 is not for us today. But it was only intended for those to whom Jesus spoke, his apostles.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Jesus said that the result of the Holy Spirit's coming upon you would be power. And this power transformed these men.

Not only them, but the other assembled with them, totaling 120. They all received an endowment from on high. Endowment and empowering or another term, outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

When you study this theme of outpouring or the Holy Spirit coming upon men in the book of Acts, you will find a repeated phrase. And it is this, when the Holy Spirit came upon, upon them. This is not about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that comes at the new birth.

Every generation the Spirit comes and indwells. That is an inner work of the God inside. But this is the Spirit of God coming upon you.

And you see that phrase repeated throughout the book of Acts. And it's the power of the Holy Spirit that makes the difference. His power and not ours.

The late Dr. A.W. Tozer put it this way one time. If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would continue and nobody would know the difference. But if the Spirit of God was withdrawn from the early church, 95% of what they did would cease and everybody would know the difference.

Isn't that a sad commentary in our times? And our church is on us. We seem to be in an ever increasing rut. Where we do the same things but we do not see fresh new powerful results.

The only resource that God has provided his church is this resource himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. And the only power that a New Testament church can live by is the power of the Spirit. And the only fuel that a Christian can operate on is the fuel of the Spirit.

Now there are some who say that this text, as I said a moment ago, is not applicable to us today. They tell us it's only for the apostles. That we should not expect the power of the Holy Spirit as they experienced it.

Now we're not talking about the phenomenon that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit. And what do I mean by phenomenon? I mean the sensational things that occurred like the rushing sound of wind or cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each of them. Or even the speaking of tongue.

Don't get hung up on the phenomenon that surrounded these outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Or even as we heard in these great awakenings. There were things that happened that may not happen every time God pours out his Spirit.

He does not want you to focus on that. Sadly that becomes the focus, isn't it not? We get concerned about are the gifts of the Spirit still functioning today? And we miss the very person who is the greatest gift. The Holy Spirit himself.

See how clever our enemy is to get us concerned about these details of phenomena. What will attend? What will happen? Friends, that's not the focus and shouldn't be of our hearts. Our focus today is on God.

Knowing that we are desperately dependent. We're poor in spirit and without God showing up nothing happens. Nothing happens.

Now what about this? That this was not for us today? This is only for those to whom Jesus addressed. Well let me make a few comments. Let me direct your attention and look at the apostles as audience.

Certainly they were the audience to whom Jesus was speaking. I don't dispute that the immediate audience is the apostles and it was their mandate to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be the first witnesses of Jesus Christ. Often in the Bible the text of Scripture may have more than one audience though.

There is the immediate audience who actually experienced the event but there can be another intended audience such as those to whom the first audience will go and tell what they heard. And our text I think is one of those passages that has a much larger intended audience than those who saw it first hand. Christ was here stressing, listen carefully, the evangelistic mission of his church.

It was to start in Jerusalem, spread to Judea, spread to Samaria, and then where? Including Portland, Maine. Including Denton, Texas. Including the four corners of this globe.

This is God's evangelistic program. This is his agenda. And as you read the book of Acts, you find that this is exactly the outline of the book of Acts.

Why is it after chapter 10, excuse me, after chapter 10 you really see very little of the ministry of Peter. You see him prop up again in chapter 15 but after that you don't hear any more about the apostle Peter. It's all about Paul the apostle and those who traveled with him.

Why is that? Because it's now focused on the last stage of the evangelistic mission of God to the uttermost parts of the earth. First it was Jerusalem. Then it spread to Judea.

Then we have chapter 8, Samaria. And who do we have as the central figure, as the evangelist to the Samaritans? It's Philip. Not Peter, it's Philip.

But then now we're moving to the missions, taking the gospel to the world and it's no longer Peter or James or John, it's the apostle Paul. And that's the basic outline. And so as we look at Acts chapter 1-8, we see that global evangelism is the ultimate goal here of our Lord.

In other words, I want to ask you this question. If Jesus intended his first disciples to be the only ones to take the gospel to the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, then it's obvious that when the last disciple died, the great commission died with him. But there's not a fervent evangelical that would admit to this.

Even though the disciples took the gospel amazingly to many different parts of the world in their day, the gospel was not taken to the ultimate uttermost parts of the earth. There were places yet undiscovered where people groups existed that never heard the gospel until even recent centuries, recent decades, in fact. So the text must have a larger audience than the men standing there listening to Jesus that day.

The same men who would say that Acts 1-8 is not for us today would never admit that Matthew 28, 19 and 20, known as the great commission is not for us today. They would never say that. So we know that as long as there are people who have not heard the gospel, it is our responsibility to cross seas and deserts and mountains to take the message of Christ to the lost.

It's for us to walk across our lawns and across the street to take the gospel message to those who are yet to be saved. And we're not to do it in the power of our own might. We're to do it in the power of the spirit.

Therefore the audience must include the whole entire church of Jesus Christ. Surely our Lord will not have us go in the power of the flesh. So let's look at the promise of this text.

And let's look at its definition. What does it mean to receive the power of the Holy Spirit? What does that mean? What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to come upon you and grant you power? Well, it can mean two things in the New Testament. First, it can mean the influence of the Holy Spirit to walk in godliness.

Or number two, it can mean extraordinary empowerment for a particular act of service. Number one, let me repeat it. It can mean the influence of the Holy Spirit so that you can walk godly and have fellowship with Christ.

And number two, it can be this empowerment by God to do something He's called you to do. Either one. And it's the second one that I think we are seeing here in Acts chapter 1 verse 8. It's this impartation of boldness.

Another word would be the anointing. The anointing of God that glorifies God beyond the normal walk of our faithfulness that we should be displaying. It's the kind of power that Jesus is referring to here in our text.

Now here's where the confusion gets a foothold when discussing this subject. Often the New Testament writers use the same word field to mean different kinds of empowerment. In fact, the Greek word *plerero*, field, can mean many different things.

At least four different meanings. From like filling up a cup to Mary's days were accomplished that she should bring forth her firstborn son. The word accomplish is this word *plerero*.

It means to complete. And then of course you have Ephesians 5.18 that we looked at at the last session. Do not be drunk with wine where it is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.

There it means to be influenced, to be governed, to be led. And that is here, that would be what we were discussing in the first definition. The influence of God to live godly, to produce fruitfulness, to have fellowship with God.

But the word can also mean the power of the Spirit to come upon a man or a woman as he did on the day of Pentecost, where the Spirit is poured out upon him or her, giving them the power to do what God calls them to do. Instantaneous strengthening. Did you hear the word instantaneous? It's a momentary granting of power and strengthening for a special need or crisis such as Paul with the evil sorcerer Elimus.

In your Bibles you might want to turn and follow along and see this, Acts chapter 13 beginning with verse 8. Acts 13.8. Elimus the sorcerer, for so his name is translated, was stood, that is Paul, seeking to turn the procounsel away from the faith. Then Saul, who is also called Paul, and notice these words, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, O fool of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now indeed the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the Son for a time. And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Now this is a very simple question that doesn't take great intelligence to answer. Why do you think it is that Luke would insert that phrase, filled with the Holy Spirit, before Paul cursed and caused this man to go blind? We know Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit. We know that from Acts chapter 9 when Ananias is sent

to him to receive his sight, for Paul had been blinded by the glory and mercy of Jesus Christ, and for three days he either ate nor drank, and God even gave him a vision of Ananias coming to him.

And Ananias came, laid hands on him, and he received his sight, and the Spirit of the living God filled him again. We know he must be filled. It was the Spirit of God that began this chapter in Acts 13 saying, Separate me unto me, Saul and Barnabas, for the work whereinto I have spoken to you, to include these few words, because he wants you to see something.

He's not wasting his time nor ink. He's making a point that at that moment something transpired. Something was occurring.

Something extraordinary was happening to the Apostle Paul. At that moment he was receiving an enduement of power, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to perform the miracle that you see and read in Acts chapter 7. You might want to turn there and follow along. Acts chapter 7, near the end, as Stephen is being stoned, the first martyr of the Christian church.

What does the Bible say as they are plummeting him with the stones and rocks? Well, look at verse 54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth, but he being full gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God and said, Look, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Why, again I ask, why would Luke insert that word full of the Holy Ghost at that moment? Sure he's full of the Holy Ghost.

That's why he's before the Sanhedrin. This man has irresistible power. He's doing miracles.

He's a child this day. But Luke, again, is wanting you to take note, to see something here. That God infuses his people with strength and power to do extraordinary things.

That these enduements, these outpourings of the Holy Spirit are not perpetual, unceasing, but come when the need arises. There is this need for baptism, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit to do that which God calls us to do. That's what he wants you to see.

And then there's another way in which the writers Luke and Paul used this word filled. As it did on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was poured out on the church universal, filling it with his presence, producing love and joy in God, making it a bold witness for Christ.

And I agree with Brother Mack. That was a historic event. You're not going to relive the day of Pentecost, no more than you can relive the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And yet the moment a person believes upon Christ, the effects of the cross become his or hers. The effectual results are now in that present moment felt and experienced. The same is true with the resurrection.

We've been crucified with Christ, we've been raised with Christ. And as we are immersed by the Spirit into the body of Christ, we participate in the results of this historic day of Pentecost. The church has been anointed by God as his instrument throughout the world to be the life and the salt of this world.

And so this is the power that we need. And I want to use this baptism, this anointing, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit to deal with the second definition or the second way it's used as instantaneous strength and

empowerment for service at that moment. Now I don't want you to be confused.

Now listen carefully. In every instance, it's always the same power of God. God doesn't have three different kinds of power.

It's still the same power of God. They're all called by the same name in the New Testament, full of the Spirit. The difference is this.

Listen. Function or the purpose of the power. That's where the difference is.

It's still the same power of God. It's just these different ways of using the word field show us different functioning or purposes of the power. And I have to use an illustration that I didn't come up with but I read many years ago from John Piper and I think it hits the nail on the proverbial head.

It helps to clear any confusion. He says, in most homes, most homes are connected to a water main. And this supplies the house with adequate water for normal life.

Bathing, showering, cooking, drinking. But suppose a fire breaks out. The firemen tap a hydrant, a fire hydrant nearby and they secure a much greater flow of water to meet the emergency.

It's the same water. It's just coming in greater function or power. And so to be filled with the spirit, Ephesians 5:18, to be influenced, controlled in order to live godly in Christ Jesus, demonstrate the fruit of the spirit, have fellowship with God is a supply continuously available to you as you submit and believe God for it.

It's there always for you and I to experience. And it's a command. Don't be drunk with wine wearing his excess, but be ye filled.

It's literally in the present tense, which means keep being filled. That's a command. You have the responsibility to be filled with the spirit.

Don't sit on your hands and wait for God to sack you. No, no, this is a presence of God that is continually available to you as you believe God and have fellowship with him and constant abiding. That's like the regular supply of water, but there comes moments in the Christian life something unusual.

Some ministry opportunity comes and now you need power. You need a gushing. You need something different, a function much different than just living a godly life.

You need God's empowerment and doom to help you, strengthen you to do that, and managing power for special service. And there's no doubt in my mind that the sacred record bears the truth that God from time to time pours out his spirit in fullness to empower a believer or a group of believers for service. There's no doubt that the secular record of history bears this truth.

Also, crucial breakthroughs of these extraordinary periodic outpourings of the Holy Spirit. We've been hearing about them now for two days. Well, the Mac's presentations have been just exactly that.

He has shown you where in the history of man God has punctuated time and he's demonstrated in extraordinary ways marvelous things. What are these things? Awakenings or revivals or even reformations. But they are not the usual.

They are the extraordinary. And I would like to take just a few moments. I don't want him to have all the fun.

I'd like to share a couple of examples of what I'm talking about only on an individual basis, not on a corporate basis. I want to share with you, first of all, in the summer of 1871, two women of Dwight L. Moody's began to pray for D. L. Moody. Now, I don't know if you know who I'm talking about.

D. L. Moody was probably the most famous preacher of his time, maybe second only to his contemporary Charles Spurgeon. And they began to pray for their pastor, quote, that the Lord would give him the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. Now, Moody would see these two women sitting and he said, we're praying you receive the Holy Spirit.

Indignant, Moody would answer, I have the Holy Spirit. Thank you very much. He was quite, quite offended by it at first.

But eventually he succumbed and began to pray with them every Friday afternoon because he began to increasingly feel that his ministry was becoming like a sounding brass with little power. And so he burned down Moody's church down to the ground. Moody went to New York to raise funds to rebuild his church.

And day after day, he became more and more burdened for his own soul and his need for God's power. He'd walk the streets praying for God's blessing, this endowment of power. And then suddenly, yes, suddenly, just like we heard today, suddenly something happened to him.

I want to read you in his own words. May I do so? Let me quote it to you. One day in the city of New York, oh, what a day.

I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it. It's almost too sacred an experience to name.

I can only say that God revealed himself to me. And I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand. Stop, in other words.

I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different. I did not present any new truths.

And yet hundreds were converted. I would not be placed back where I was before that blessed experience. If you should give me all the world, it would be small dust in the balance.

Something happened to me that day that remained with him most of his life until he died and went to be with the Lord. There was an anointing, there was an unction, there was an endowment, an extraordinary amount of spirit work. He was seeing a few people saved almost weekly.

Now he was seeing hundreds and the crowds began to grow larger and larger and he became an itinerant minister soon thereafter. Now the second person you probably have never heard of was just as anointed and just as a powerful preacher. His name was Christmas Evans.

He was a Welshman. He was born in the late 18th century. Actually he was born 1766 on Christmas Day from which he got his name Christmas, Christmas Evans.

He's called the John Bunyan of Wales. Before he was ordained in 1790 by the Baptist, Evans preached for three years with little to no success. Ordinary man, ordinary sermons, ordinary results.

He often was plagued with doubts about his own salvation. He wondered not only was he called but was he even saved? Two years later at the age of 26 Christmas Evans began to preach on the island of Anglesea off the coast of Wales. While there he soon became engulfed in a doctrinal controversy concerning God.

You have to be careful with controversies. You may be defending the truth but you better be careful and guard your soul because they can suck the life out of your soul if you're not careful. He began to seek God for a rekindling of his heart and here's what he wrote about what happened.

Are you listening? I know it's afternoon. We've all eaten. It's a little warm in here.

Amen. I do. I certainly did.

Here's what he said and I quote. I was weary of a cold heart towards Christ. Can I stop and ask you how weary are you of your cold heart towards Christ? This is a preacher.

This is a man of God and he's being honest with himself and with his audience. I knew my heart was cold towards Christ, his atonement and the work of his spirit. I was weary of a cold heart in the pulpit.

I was weary of a cold heart in secret prayer and in study especially when I remember that for 15 years before my heart had been burning within me as if I were on the way toward Emmaus with Jesus. My friend, can you also like Christmas Eve when your heart was more in flame for Jesus than it is right now? Aren't you weary? The difference will be if you are or not weary. If you're not weary yet, you'll continue until I pray you become so weary that it becomes a loathsome thing and you become so desperate that you will once again go back to the basics.

You'll go right back to God in poverty of spirit and at last a day ever to be remembered by me. After I had commenced praying in the name of Jesus, I soon felt as if the shackles were falling off and as if the mountains of snow and ice were melting within me. My tears flowed copiously and I was constrained to cry aloud and pray for the gracious visits of God for the joy of his salvation that he would again at that angle say that were under my care.

The struggle lasted for three hours. Can you imagine being alone? A struggle with God like Jacob of old wrestling with God saying I'll not turn you loose until you bless me. There he was in this kind of desperation, the kind we need today.

Oh may God visit again us again with a spirit of desperation. The struggle lasted for three hours. It would come over me again and again like a tidal driven by a strong wind until my physical power was greatly weakened by weeping.

Thus I gave myself up wholly to Christ. Body, soul, talents, labors, all my life, every day and every hour that remained to me and all my cares I entrusted to the hands of Christ. In the first service I held after this event, I felt as if I had been removed from the cold and sterile region of spiritual ice into the pleasant lands of the promises of God.

When I returned home, the first thing that I attracted my notice was that the spirit was working in the believers in Anglesey inducing in them a spirit of prayer especially in two of the deacons who were particularly praying that God would visit us in mercy and would render the word of his grace effective among us in the conversion of sinners. Do you know what happened? After this fresh anointing or baptism

of the spirit, heavens began to experience the power of God and a great revival and an awakening came upon the whole island and eventually all over Wales because of this fresh endowment. Now it's easy, please pay attention, this is too important to miss.

It's easy when you hear these accounts and testimonies like Moody and Evans to think in the context of stupendous, sensational, remarkable crises and experiences with God and I want to warn you God doesn't always do it this way. Some he leads through pressure and very traumatic crises until he comes in glory and power. Others he doesn't do it that way.

The way Christ does it is not of any concern today. It shouldn't be at least. The fact that he does it should be our concern.

We place ourselves at his availability and say Lord I'm an empty vessel, come and fill it and to desperately depend that he will do what he said he would do. We because we love the material, we love the natural, we get hung up on how God does it. Again the phenomenon.

We want to be like D.L. Moody oh God stay your hand, I can't take anymore of this. Men have experienced this in baptism, this empowerment as liquid love flowing over them wave after wave and we think that's the way we've got to experience it. Or the crisis they went through.

The point is are you desperately depending upon God to empower you as he promised by the Holy Spirit? Do you really believe that without God aiding you, you cannot do it? Do you believe Jesus? Do you believe him? When he said to you without me, that's what the issue is. Not how he fulfills his promise but that you grip God and God grips you in an embrace that fulfills his promise by faith. So there are varying degrees of this promise fulfilled.

Different measures or degrees of the Holy Spirit's power upon a man or a woman. For example when you examine Acts chapter 6 when the apostles called for the church to choose among them seven men full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost as the old King James says. The Holy Spirit.

You should not interpret those words to mean that there were only seven men in the church who were filled with the Holy Spirit. Most if not all the members of that church were filled with the Holy Spirit. Obviously what the apostles were asking for were amounts or measures of the fullness of the Spirit thus proving there are different degrees of this empowerment.

Does that make sense? If it doesn't I can repeat it word for word. There are different degrees of this empowerment. Not all are going to have the same degree.

I get asked all the time how can I have the anointing of the Holy Spirit? It is not a methodology that I can write and put in a book and make a bunch of money selling because I guarantee you if it was it would happen. We want the formula. There is no formula.

There is simply an utter poverty of Spirit that you must be convinced of and a faith in God that believes he is faithful to keep his promises. When those two come together in his sufficiency God will do what he has promised. But there are different degrees.

Let me assure you God doesn't anoint us all the same. The extraordinary power for service depends on the service that he calls you to. If God baptizes you or endures you or pours out the Spirit upon you you are all not going to start preaching like Paul Washer.

God has a calling specifically for your life and the degree of that calling is the degree of the power necessary and needed. But brother, sister, listen we all need the power and we have a promise and a provider thereof who will keep that promise. So the point that we must come to is this that without the giving and you're going to be unfruitful laugh to yourselves which is simply powerless.

And this is demonstrated plainly by the apostles themselves the very men Jesus said in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 look at those eleven men before the day of Pentecost what do you see? You see some smelly fishermen who seem to be very poor at their trade because every time they've been fishing they catch nothing. These were poor people you know who Benedict Arnold was don't you? He was a trader during the American Revolution. These were traders they worked, sold themselves to Rome and they could not only charge the people the tax in Rome but make a surcharge and pocket it for themselves so they took advantage of their own people.

One was forever linked one way or another they were all failures. How many of you feel like your whole life has been nothing more than your Christian life but one failure after another? And when Jesus needed them they failed him and deserted him. They were proud men who were always fighting each other for supremacy even the night hours before the arrest after he has washed their feet in the streets of the kingdom.

I can tell you this as far as students they were lousy students because the teacher had to repeat the lessons over and over and over and they still failed. This is the kind of men we're talking about. These men would have been buried in unmarked graves forgotten for all time.

There's nothing we can do about it. They had half the power of God on our lives as they did. What was the difference? It was this baptism this endowment of power this outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Oh yes we need this. Our lives will be useless unless we are experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not by my power but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts.

Beloved we have some serious thinking and soul searching to do today. First why do we think we can receive the Spirit's power without prayer? If the apostles had to ask and wait for the Holy Spirit why do we assume he will automatically be with us in power? That's why we must be doing what our brother has exhorted us to do. We must be a faithful and a devout church.

I'm not advocating sitting in our hands praying for God to do all the work and leave us free to pursue our own priorities. Absolutely not. Neither am I suggesting that God will empower you and give you this kind of grace if you're not willing to obey him.

You see, those who are willing to be serious about obeying the commandments of God are the ones he empowers. If you're not gonna obey God, why should he empower you? We want a dynamic church. At the same time, we wanna keep our schedules and other pursuits intact.

We wanna keep our Monday night events, Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday. We wanna do all that we normally do, but we still want the power of God. That's working nothing but mischief, friend.

What I'm trying to say with the greatest sense of gravity is that you can invent and implement change and innovation, but if you do so without first receiving the power of the Spirit, all you have done is create another lifeless method. And we've got enough of that. But if we seek to be obedient to Christ, making disciples, opening our hearts to the power and the influence of the Spirit, then we will experience his life.

God will be in what we do because God will be in us and upon us. And so what's the conclusion of the matter? We need God. When are we going to be honest with ourselves and say, is this what he died for? Is this what he died for and bled his life out? What I'm experiencing now, is this what he gave his life for? Again, I'm not here to bring guilt into it.

I'm not here to bow your heart down with unnecessary conviction. I want you to examine your hearts. As a church here today, I thank God that the last time I was here, almost two and a half years ago, I thank God I see new faces, new people.

I see growth. I see joy in the Lord. The beloved, the power, excuse me, the calling of God that he's given this church to do, to be a little light in a very dark city is going to require much more than you have to do here.

Bigger than you, more than you. When will we believe that? When will we believe that it takes supernatural power to supernaturally save people? When are we going to believe that apart from him, we can do absolutely nothing? When are you going to believe that all your natural gifts and abilities, no matter how amazing they are, and even though, yes, they've come from God, in the natural realm, they will do nothing? When will you believe that you too need to be endued from power on high? When will you surrender to the fact that these hands, oh, these hands could do nothing to save us, and these hands can do nothing to save anyone else? But once these hands are empowered by God, once God comes upon us in power, Lord, he will shape the world. He will shape Portland.

I believe it. For when one soul is saved, hell is shaken to its core. A captive is set free, rescued, and redeemed.

That's not a small thing to hell, and it's not a small thing to God either. He rejoices, and the angels watch and hear his rejoicing over one poor sinner saved. But it's he that's saved, isn't he, by his own doubt? Oh, my friend, what is your calling? What has God called you to do? I know of what I'm talking about.

As a pastor, you preach two, three, four times. I preach, on average, three times, many times, four or five times a week, different meetings. And I have to confess to you with shame, it was so easy to get into the rut of sermon manufacturing.

One sermon was over, you forget about it, it's in the rear view mirror, and now your focus is on the next one, to get something ready for the people to whom you'll speak. And that becomes such a vicious cycle that the hour of preaching becomes just a routine. I've preached too many sermons like that, I'm ashamed of them, I've had to repent over them.

Now, when I stand, I don't care if it's just four people. Wasn't been too long ago, that's all I had was just four people. And it wasn't long after that I spoke to 400 people.

It doesn't matter how many, I've come to know, heaven, heaven, or hell is the issue. Eternity is in the balance for someone to whom I'm speaking. This recalls for something more than the routine.

It calls for more than something Michael Durham can give. There are times when I'm preaching, I would, I would, I would. I've been tempted more than I can make you disbelieve to get out of the pulpit and go grab that person by the shoulders and say, can't you hear what I'm saying to you? But I can shake them, I can confront them.

It's like speaking to a corpse because the soul is dead. It doesn't need just me, it needs God through me to awaken, to resurrect. They need the voice of God, Lazarus, come forth and come for he.

Oh, to be a people filled with God. I don't want to leave you with any impressions of sensationalism. When a church is full of the Holy Spirit and God is in doing that church, that church will be attacked fiercely by hell.

Because that's the one thing hell is afraid of, a church of spirit-filled people. He's not threatened by most of our churches today. He's got them exactly where he has them.

He's probably a member of the church himself. He's deluded the entire congregation and they're following him thinking they're following God, an angel of life, he's convinced them he is. No, no.

The only thing that causes him to tremble is when people take this word serious and ye shall receive power after a holy ghost comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses. This is God's evangelistic program. I remember all those years in those early days and years of pastoring, trying to find any method that would grow my church.

And brother, I tell you, we had lots of ideas and methods we put into practice. Until one day God came to me and humbled me and began to strip me and show me I had no clue what I was doing. I'd gotten too big for my own britches, if you please.

I'd become independent of God and didn't even know I had. Until that day when he confronted me for almost a year, almost a year to the day, I went through the most severest spiritual depression and I'm not a man given to depression. I'm an eternal optimist, but for almost a year, I got so bad I thought I may not even be saved.

That's how dark it was. As God was stripping, tearing away Michael's reliance upon the natural, upon himself. No, my friends, when you get serious with your own emptiness, you will be resisted.

It will not be easy, but I'd rather to go through that. I would never, I would not take a zillion dollars for that year. For the sweetest years of my life, the year that God stripped and humbled and broke, it was the best thing for me.

God has loved me so much. He would not give me success because he knew he would destroy me. That's how much God loves his people.

I'd rather go through that year again in order to have the fellowship of God. You hear what I'm saying? We can congratulate ourselves that we are a church and God seems to be blessing and we've got our theology down and we know our doctrine and we're more biblical than most churches around and we've got some life and we can just settle for that. God spare you, spare Redeemer grace fellowship from a spirit that settles.

May God quicken and enliven you today that he has more for you, that there's a greater dimension, a greater measure of his power and his influence in your lives individually and corporately. I wanna conclude by quoting one of Leonard Ravenhill's teachers, Samuel Chadwick, Methodist, a man of God that certainly had his impact on Ravenhill. Here's what he said, would you listen? The church always fails at the point of self-confidence.

When the church is right on the same lines as a circus, there may be crowds, but there's no Shekinah. That's why prayer is the test of faith and the secret of power. The spirit of God prevails in the prayer life of the soul.

Miracles are the direct work of his power and without miracles, the church cannot live. The carnal can argue, but it's the spirit of God that convicts. Education can civilize, but it's being born of the spirit that saves.

The energy of the flesh can run bazaars, organize amusements, raise millions, but it's the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a temple of the living God. The root trouble of the present distress is that the church has more faith in the world and in the flesh than in the Holy Ghost and things will get no better till we get back to his realized presence and power. The breath of the four winds would turn death into life and dry bones into mighty armies, but it only comes by prayer.

May I add one more thing, prayer that is born out of humility and brokenness before God. So, as I conclude, I bid you to continue to pray for the experience of the Holy Spirit's power. Let this be our labor to be empty of ourselves in order that we may be filled with God.

May God help us, amen and amen, let's pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/xl6EFk5zKfA.mp4>

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