

Filled With the Spirit's Power

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit's power to impact our lives and the world around us.

Scripture: John 3:1

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit's power, emphasizing the need to seek the Spirit's power from God rather than relying on our own abilities or seeking approval from others. He highlights the story of Nicodemus meeting Jesus in the dark, showing how fear of man can hinder our spiritual growth. Bieber stresses the necessity of persistent and desperate asking for the Spirit, and aligning our plans with God's will instead of relying on human strategies.

Transcript

As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Luke 3:15-16 The religious leaders of Jerusalem were in a position very much like ours.... - They knew their scriptures, - They were teachers ... theologians, - They were acquainted with all the burning issues of the day and had an answer for every problem in society.

People addressed them by their proper titles. They sat up in the chancel and had the better seats at banquets. Yet these religious leaders knew that they were not making an impact ... just as we know that we're not making the impact we need to make. They knew that the generals and the wealthy merchants, and the big shots in Herod's court were laughing at them behind their backs. The masses were restive and unruly and would stop talking when these religious men walked by ... not out of respect, but out of contempt.

Here comes Jesus out of the Galilean hills and everybody's electrified. The religious leaders want to ignore Jesus... "He's just one more crazy prophet He's a crowd manipulator...He's up to something." But those Jerusalem heavies who take the trouble to even watch from a distance are shaken by Jesus. This man has power. Power! Power that's frightening because there's nothing shady about it. Nicodemus is so troubled he sneaks off to Jesus in the dark for a private interview. "Rabbi, we know that you must be a teacher from God.

No one can do what you're doing or speak like you speak unless God is with him." Notice Jesus does not answer, "What do you mean, 'Unless God is with me? I am God!'" because Jesus is not doing what he's doing out of his divinity. God the Son though he is, has emptied himself of his divine prerogatives and is now truly human. Whatever Jesus does ... whatever Jesus says ... comes from the Spirit of the Father. - Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One. - Jesus is filled with the Spirit's power.

And Nicodemus, though he's a teacher and theologian, will not be able to grasp who Jesus is or what he's doing or how he does it, until Nicodemus has his eyes opened, his mind opened, and his heart opened by the same Spirit that anoints Jesus. "Until you are born of the Spirit ... until you are filled with the same Spirit that fills me... you can't even see the Kingdom of God, much less enter it." This was the beginning of a pilgrimage which ultimately brought Nicodemus, this religious man, this professional religious man, to the place where he could see and think and act and speak in the dimension of the Kingdom of God.

As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Many of us have been struggling for a long time to find out what that means ... how this prophecy found in each of the four gospels can be fulfilled in our lives and Because we have seen, not just in the New Testament, but in the flesh and blood lives of certain people we have met, a power which we lack.

Not a shady power, but one which is clear as the light ... which has the integrity of the Holy Spirit of God running through it. John answered them all,, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The apostolic church came into existence when this prophecy was fulfilled. And to this day there are people who carry in the earthen vessels of this flesh a heavenly treasure of grace which rises up through every death they die, pours out of them like a river of life, as they keep laying aside their garments, wrapping themselves in the towel of servanthood and wash feet.

I'm talking about a power which sets them free from themselves and anoints them with the mind of Christ, and gives them prophetic eyes, a prophetic heart, a prophetic tongue. Not charismatic emotional thrills...not hooting and hollering and jumping up and down, but an authentic anointing which enables them; - to bring good news to the poor, - release to the captives, - sight to the blind, - freedom to the oppressed, hope to the hopeless, with heaven's power. I'm talking about a power which lasts more than a month-and-a-half...which endures year-after-year through dry seasons and wet seasons, Red Sea crossings and wilderness journeys.

It's the power which drove the apostle Paul through years and years of labor,, trouble, persecution, injustice, slander, and bitter opposition, and kept him fresh and clearheaded and effective. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit's power. And this awesome power of the Holy Spirit which was so real to our Lord and became so real to his apostles is not far from any one of us. It's closer to us than our own breath. It's available at any time if we want it badly enough.

"...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Here are four considerations which will help us receive this baptism and keep receiving it and living it. 1. We will be filled with the Spirit's Power when we despair of our own power. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord of hosts. And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To

you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.

If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" Luke 4:5-8 Christendom is still paralyzed by this temptation ...hypnotized by the wrong kind of power. We think, "If we had more money we could do more good... If we had a few more of the right kind of people in our church we could do more good... If we had a few connections in the right places we could do more good."always going after the wrong kind of power.

When we repent of this and confess, "the one thing I need is the authentic power of the Spirit of God", then and only then will the Spirit move. The Holy Spirit will not share the throne in our heart with anything else. When we get our eyes off these other hopes and put all our hope on him, then wonderful things begin to happen. If we put as much effort into finding the Spirit as we put into finding a hundred and one useless kinds of power, we'd soon be wearing Elijah's mantle. 2.

We will be filled with the Spirit's power when we repent of our peer fear... ...our fear of what our colleagues and friends might think if we start getting too "pious" in our search for the life of God. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." John 3:1,2 We know why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night...he didn't want his buddies in church headquarters to find out he was getting serious about Jesus.

This fear of man slowed down his search. The woman at the well, on the other hand, may have come to the well at noon because she figured nobody would be around to bother her ... but at least she came in the daylight. And her conversation with Jesus was open and unguarded. Nor did she worry about their opinion of her when she returned to the village and said, "Come see a man who told me all I ever did. Is not this the Messiah?" If you really want the power of the Holy Spirit, start looking out in the open, out in the daylight.

What does it matter if you lose ground in the eyes of your best friends ... it's worth it! 3, We will be filled with the Spirit's Dower when we get desperate enough to ask. And by asking, I don't mean a little whimper every three months when you get depressed ... I mean; aggressive, persistent, relentless asking. And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'?...."

Luke 11:5-7 This man didn't go to his friend at midnight and pound on his door so he could have bread to put in his window or decorate his table. He came knocking and hollering and crying for bread because someone came to him for food and he had nothing to give. "And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Luke 11.9-13 When I see how totally inadequate I am to help these people who come to me, how empty I am of wisdom, how lacking in power to bring them healing, then I start asking God for his Spirit. "Lord Jesus, you tell me to feed your sheep.... give me food

for them! Give me a living word! Give me your Spirit!"and he will.

Finally, we will be filled with the Spirit's power when we fit in with the Lord instead of trying to make him fit in with our arrogant strategies. Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1-3 Notice they didn't hold a "committee meeting," put a list of priorities on the blackboard, boil it into a statement, call it their strategy and then ask God to bless it. They worshiped God, They fasted, They waited, believing that God might very well have a plan of his own. There was a poverty of spirit, a willingness to fit in, a child-like submission to the living God. And soon a word came to them which they all agreed was straight from God. "What I'm doing here in Antioch in this wonderful mixed church of mixed cultures and nations and races, I want to do in other places set apart Barnabas and Saul for this work."

"Barnabas and Saul? What's going to happen here in Antioch if Barnabas and Saul leave? ...Lord, it's too soon, we're not ready!" There was none of that ... there was awesome, hushed... submission And, after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. And the Spirit moved through Barnabas and Saul. And the Spirit moved with increased power in that church at Antioch...it didn't fall apart. It may seem nutty and scary to us to think we might do business in this fashion, but really, what have we got to lose?

It's worth an earnest attempt to corporately fit into the mind of the Spirit of God. As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." This baptism of the Spirit is not some safe ritual which we control.

It's an invasion of divine life which will absolutely disrupt our dull predictable lives. But with the disruption will come power. We can have this baptism of the Holy Spirit when we make clear to God and to ourselves that we really want it. We will be filled with the Spirit's power, 1. When we despair of our own power and seek the Spirit from the Lord who gives the Spirit. 2. When we repent of our peer fear and seek the Spirit from the Lord who gives the Spirit. 3. When we get desperate enough to ask for the Spirit. 4.

When we fit in with the Lord instead of trying to make him fit in with our arrogant strategies. "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

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