

# A Powerful Church

by Seth Rees

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*The Pentecostal Church is a powerful church because it is empowered by the Holy Ghost, who is God Himself.*

**Scripture:** Mark 9:23, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:31, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 4:20, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 1:5

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Strength"

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## Description

Seth Rees preaches about the indispensable need for power in achieving success, emphasizing that Pentecostal power, likened to dynamite, is essential for the people of God to overcome failure. He highlights the duty and privilege of believers to be strong in the Lord, stressing that weakness is not just a misfortune but a crime in the eyes of heaven. Rees challenges Christians to rely on the power of the Holy Ghost for victory over sin and to transform fear into courage through faith.

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## Transcript

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." There can be no success without power. Power is the very condition of success. It is the all-important need of the people of God, for by its presence failure is placed beyond the range of possibility. The word translated in our Authorized Version as "power" is the word from which the term "dynamite" is taken. Indeed, no violence whatsoever is done to the text if we read: "Ye shall receive dynamite after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." "Behold I have given you dynamite above all the dynamite of the enemy." Thus we see that Pentecostal power is, in the spiritual world, what dynamite is in the material. Consider its explosive, overturning effects in the ministry of the Apostles. "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also. "To the carnally minded, the world appears right side up though in reality it is upside down, and in need of there versive dynamite of the Holy Ghost.

This power is promised to us, and with it success is sure. Not only is its possession a privilege, but a positive duty. We are as certainly commanded to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might as we are commanded not to steal. It would, therefore, be just as proper for you, a Christian, to get up in class or testimony meeting, and talk about your tendency to steal, to lust, or to lie, as to talk about your "weakness," "shortcomings," "crooked paths," or "feeble remarks." Weakness is a spreading malady. Strength is a spreading energy. I can not afford to be weak, for it is not merely a misfortune to fail -- it is a crime in the sight of high heaven.

If a man may be as strong financially as his financial backing, why may we not be as strong spiritually as our spiritual backing? We ought never to think of failing until the resources of heaven are completely exhausted. We should make no arrangements for defeat until we are certain that heaven is bankrupt. If we are cabled to the throne we may expect to fall only when the white throne itself crumbles, totters and goes down. Glory! Most of Christians are looking out for a soft place to fall. They make preparations to tumble. They are like the sister who said she could "never give up the blessed old doctrine of falling from grace." They believe so thoroughly in backsliding that they indulge in it frequently.

No one says that it is impossible to backslide; but certainly it is not necessary to sin. We are not preaching impeccability, but we are magnifying the grace of God in its ability and power to save from sin and make the human heart victorious. "All things are possible with God" and "All things are possible to him that believeth." Faith is the alchemy which changes fear to courage, "crooked paths" to king's highways, and "feeble efforts" to glorious "exploits." If we fear a fear it will come upon us. He who indulges in talk about "crooked paths" will have plenty of "crooked paths" to talk about. He who refers to his public communications as "feeble remarks" in general describes the true nature of what he says; if he thinks they are "feeble," they are "feeble," so great is the importance of faith. If a man has a message from God and delivers it "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" he will have no occasion to speak of his ministry as an "effort" or "endeavor." Mere endeavorers do nothing but endeavor, and are satisfied with simply endeavoring. They do not talk of success. Victory is not expected. They anticipate but little, and are never disappointed.

Let us repeat: The Pentecostal Church is a powerful church. This power is not the power of numbers. Israel was often weakest as a matter of fact when she numbered the most; while Gideon's three hundred were more mighty than his thirty-two thousand. Many a church of six hundred members is filled with pygmies, dwarfs, and stunted babies. "New-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the Word" they have not, neither would they know what to do with them if they had them, for they have not had a convert in five years. These stunted weaklings are "whiney," finicky, hard to please; they must be petted and coddled and put up in scented cotton, requiring the nursing of two hard-working pastors continually.

Many a church-society with a large membership is struggling along, scarcely maintaining an existence, using almost every questionable means to eke out the money necessary to keep the thing going, while some little Holiness mission with no earthly backing whatsoever is having hundreds of souls saved. We know a small Holiness mission in New York City which average done hundred and thirty-five converts a month. Thus we see God is not so particular about quantity as he is about quality. Israel always made a mistake when she began to consider numbers and enumerate the people. God was all she needed. The tendency of all ages is to count noses and trust in a crowd. The effort today is to make a greater showing. Ministers make a grave mistake in bending every energy to increase the membership; we need to stop and clean up what we have. We may carry the report of large numbers to Conference or our annual gatherings, but when the judgment day has cut our bloated statistics down to the real count we may be unable to recognize our congregations. We would rather have a dozen men and women separated from the world and filled with condensed lightning from the upper skies than to have a huge convocation of timeserving ecclesiastics. The writer knows men who have been fished out of the slums, saved, wholly sanctified, healed, and charged with chain-lightning until he would rather have them sit near the pulpit and pray while he preaches than to be backed by a whole bench of bishops.

Again, the power of the ideal Pentecostal Church is not that of intellect or brains. We are told that knowledge is power, and yet many who stuff their heads and starve their hearts grow weaker every day.

This power of which we speak is not the product of seminaries, colleges and universities. It does not come by metaphysical research or philosophical reflection. The ancient Greeks were cultured and oftentimes refined, but utterly destitute of this power. The musty records of the Chinese show a keen appreciation of scientific methods and brains fertile in the production of philosophies, yet the Celestials, even in the palmy days of Confucius, knew nothing of this power. Corinth, noted for her rhetoricians, famed for her learning, a sort of modern Oxford, Edinburgh or Boston, was notorious for vice and crime. Many of the brainiest congregations incultured, hyper-refined New England have not spiritual power enough to withstand the most consumptive, the sallowest, the silliest, the puniest devil that hell ever turned out. Some of Boston's "four hundred" want nothing better than the childish, effete religion of the heathen Burmese. Even though it is dubbed "Christian Science," that does not conceal its real character, for it is neither Christian nor scientific. We place no premium on ignorance. Thank God, we have a few scholarly, representative men who know the power of spirituality and who are sufficiently wise as to refrain from depending on their learning, eloquence or erudition, but put their confidence in the Holy Ghost himself. But, alas! many a poor preacher who is a D. D., LL. D., Ph.D., should add N. G.

Moreover, this power is not the power of wealth. It does not consist in flocks and herds, in broad acres of verdant land, in heaps of gold and silver, in stocks and bonds, nor in any form of material substance. The members of the Pentecostal Church had but little, and they sold what they did have and flung it cheerfully into the treasury of the Lord. In the world, congregations are often measured by their financial standing. Not so above. God is not after money. He is no beggar. "The cattle on a thousand hills are his." In the hollow of his hand he holds the wealth of the universe. He hath need of nothing in the economic line.

In the early church money was a secondary matter, if it was a matter at all. To be poor did not disconcert the preachers of primitive days. "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter, as, in company with John, he met the cripple at the temple gate. In these days we hear of little else in the meetings of committees, boards of stewards, Ladies' Aid Societies, etc., but the threadbare cry of "Money! money! How shall we raise it?" "Where will we get the money?" is the first question when anything is to be undertaken in the church. Socials, entertainments, fairs, bazaars, festivals, broom-drills, kissing-parties, Mother Goose parties, poverty suppers, clam bakes, bean suppers, oyster stews (with few oysters), and every other devilish clap-trap that hell can invent are resorted to for the purpose of raising money to carry on God's holy work! What a shame that we are so poor that we must gull sinners out of their money by selling them ten cents worth of oysters for twenty-five cents! Our God is not a beggar.

When Christ commissioned his preachers, nothing was said about money except that a prohibition was made to the taking of much of it on their journeys. As the church has grown wealthy she has always lost her power to convict and convert sinners. Some monks were busily engaged in counting over huge piles of shining gold when Thomas Aquinas entered the room. "The time is no more when the church is compelled to say, 'Silver and gold have I none,' " remarked one of the counters. After a moment of grave thought the "Doctor Angelicus" replied, "True, and the time is no more when she can say, 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' " It is the general rule that the more expensive the church edifice, the less spirituality in the society; the higher the church steeple, the lower the real piety.

We make a great mistake in catering to moneyed men. The writer has often been surprised and pained to see a man in "poor raiment" come into the congregation, look in vain for a seat, and finally forced to be content with an inconvenient one by the door. But let the man in "fine raiment" and "gold ring" appear, and instantly a half-dozen people are on their feet motioning the visitor forward, pew-doors fly open as if by magic; all that the "moneyed man" may have a seat. The strength of the church does not consist of brains,

or numbers, or culture, or rhetoric, or schools. It does not reside in dignities, titles, scepters, thrones, stocks or bonds. The strength of the ideal Pentecostal Church is the Holy Ghost himself. He and no other is the power of this great army of the Lord. He is not a mere influence; he is not the breath of God, he is not an emanation from Deity ; he is not the abstract power of God. He is God himself, the third Person in the trinity. He comes into the church by coming into the individual members, and thus by his omnipotent energy he purifies, electrifies and endues her with power.

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