

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Walking in the Power of the Spirit

By Denise Bostic

In last month's teaching the focus was on walking in the fruit of the Spirit. The focus of this month's teaching will be on walking in the power of the Spirit. In order for us to be effective and powerful witnesses for Christ in the earth today it's necessary to walk in a balance of both. We can learn a lot about the power of God by studying the word but we can also learn by experience as we walk in personal fellowship with the Spirit and as his power is released through us. Some believers may know that we can have fellowship with the Father and Son but maybe never thought about having fellowship with the Holy Spirit. (*1 John 1:3*) The Bible teaches that we can though. Paul wrote in II Corinthians 13:14:

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

When we fellowship with the Holy Spirit he will lead us to walk in the *fruit* and *power* of God as well. As we listen to his voice and obey his instructions, his power will manifest not only among us but *through* us. Each time this happens we come to learn more about nature and character of God and his way of doing things.

In this article I will mostly be teaching about believers walking in the power of the Spirit when they go "into all the world" to spread the gospel. Although the power of the Spirit should most certainly be present within the Church, it's also necessary for this same power to be released through us when we're sharing Christ with those in the world so that we can be credible witnesses of him. The Lord poured out the power of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost at the inception of the Church so that they could accomplish the Great Commission given to them. Today, he still pours out his power so that his modern day Church can carry on that same work.

Through the Cross the Lord obtained the victory over sin, death and hell for all who will receive him. After his resurrection God the Father gave him all power and authority in heaven and earth. Before he ascended into heaven to sit down at the right hand of the Father, he gave power and authority to his Church to fulfill the great commission of preaching his Gospel in the earth. (*Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15*) The Lord has called us to be mighty witnesses of him. We are able to do that by walking in his resurrection power. In Acts 1:8 we read that before the Lord ascended into heaven he told his disciples this:

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

In order to be *effective* witnesses for the Lord, we need to receive and walk in the power of the Spirit. Usually words alone can't persuade people to receive Christ as their Savior. Most people want proof that God exists and that he really cares about them. God provides that proof through his power. The Spirit releases the power of God through the **disciples** of the Lord. When his power manifests this proves that God does exist and that Jesus is Lord. Now, there will be more about this later but first I would like to say something about the Great Commission that Christ has given the Church.

The Great Commission

In Mark 16:15-20 we'll find the Lord's command given to his disciples to spread the gospel to everyone throughout the world. The Lord said:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Notice that the Lord didn't stop there though. He also said this:

¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. ²⁰ Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

The Lord has instructed his disciples or followers within the Church to preach or *proclaim* the Gospel to the world. When we obey this command he will confirm his word or gospel message that we speak forth with signs. When we study the book of Acts we learn that whenever the message of Christ and the Cross is being preached that the Spirit will back that message up with his power. The Holy Spirit then will always confirm the message of the Cross when it is being preached. He does this by performing signs, wonders and miracles through those that believe.

These Signs Will Follow Them That Believe

What are these “signs” that follow or accompany the believer that Jesus spoke of? Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament defines signs as *being miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's.* [Greek 4592] Wow! That's powerful! When God sends us to people in the world, he will also provide proof that we are his servants and that the message that we speak is really from him.

That proof is given when his power is released through signs, wonders and miracles. These signs also include healing the sick and casting out devils. In Matthew 10, Mark 6 and Luke 9 we also learn that the Lord has given his disciples power and authority to cure all manner of diseases, cleanse the lepers and raise the dead as well. Through Christ believers have been given power and authority to accomplish the work of the Gospel. Walking in the authority and power of God kind of go together like a hand in a glove and are mutually dependent on one another. You see power cannot be released without the authority. Authority is meaningless if there's no power to back it up. This is why the Lord has given us both. In order to walk in the power of the Spirit we need to understand that we've been given authority in Christ. This authority is also called the believer's authority and I'll be going more in depth about this subject next month.

The Power of God Is Still For Today

Today some in the Church believe that the signs, wonders and miracles ceased flowing when the original apostles died. The power of the Spirit was not just given to the apostles though but to the rest of the ministry and to all believers as well. (*Acts 2*) Under the New Covenant all believers are now part of the royal priesthood of Christ. (*1 Peter 2:4-5*) This teaches us that the power of God was not exclusively given to the apostles of the Lord. The apostles of the Lord are no longer here but the work of the Lord must continue until he returns. (*Matthew 24:14*) The power of God is still necessary today to fulfill the Great Commission of preaching the Gospel.

Some today also may believe that walking in the power of God is *only* reserved for Church leadership. But the Bible doesn't teach this. Jesus and the men of God that wrote the New Testament scriptures make it abundantly clear that it's God's will for all believers to receive "power from on high". On the Day of Pentecost he poured out his Spirit on leaders and believers alike. (*Acts 1:8, 2:38*) The baptism with the Spirit is made available to all believers and is a subsequent experience to salvation. To learn more about the baptism with the Spirit please read *The Gifts of the Spirit Lesson 1*.

The truth is that it's not just the responsibility of Church leadership to proclaim the gospel. That command or commission has been given to the entire Church therefore it's essential that the power of the Spirit be given to all believers. Of course, in passages like Romans chapter 12 and I Corinthians chapter 12 we learn that not all have the same gifting or calling but the Spirit will move upon each individual believer as he determines. This great work which began at the beginning of the Church will continue right up until the return of the Lord. This baton of the Great Commission has now been passed on to our generation and we need to run with it. The Lord needs many laborers for this end-time harvest and if we each are obedient to do what he would have us to do then collectively as a Church we can have a greater impact for Christ and his kingdom in the world.

What Makes Churches and Believers Ineffective

Sadly, many Churches and believers today have been ineffective in doing their part of this great work. Why? Well, there can be different reasons. For one some Churches are only making converts but not disciples and I'll be teaching about the difference between the two

in just a minute. Other churches have been swallowed up by legalism and the traditions of men. The Bible clearly teaches that the traditions of men and legalism make the word of God and Christ's power ineffective in the lives of believers. We find proof of that in Matthew chapter 15 and Galatians chapter 5.

The apostle Paul prophesied that in the last days that some would have a form of godliness but deny God's power. (*II Timothy 3:1-5*) All we must do is look around us to see that this word has come to pass. There are many Church goers today that have an outward appearance of godliness but deny God's power inwardly because they have been deceived into believing that it's no longer needed today. Due to receiving false teaching, many have rejected the power of God through unbelief. Their rejection in turn has caused them to persecute those Churches or believers that do walk in the power of the Spirit. What was Paul final advice to believers concerning such people? He said, "*Have nothing to do with them.*" We need to believe and obey God rather than men. (*Acts 4:18-20*)

Lastly some Churches or believers are ineffective because they're trying to do God's spiritual work in their own human might or power. Unfortunately legalism and the traditions of men have robbed many believers of the divine truths concerning the power of Christ and his Spirit as it relates to them and the Church as a whole. Believers are taught to obey and serve God out of their own flesh rather than to hear his voice and rely on the power of the Spirit. We were never meant to carry on the divine work of the Lord in the power of our flesh though. Zechariah 4:6 declares, "**Not by might nor power but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty**". We can't do the work of spreading the gospel in our own human might or power because it will cause us to be ineffective. Jesus said the flesh profits nothing it is only the Spirit that gives life. (*John 6:63*) We can only effectively impact others for Christ when we are moving in the power of the life-giving Spirit.

Be a Disciple Not Just a Convert

We learn through another command given by Jesus in the gospel of Matthew chapter 28 and verses 18-20 that it's not God's will for people to become converts only but that they become disciples as well. In this passage of scripture Jesus declared:

¹⁸ "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Besides preaching the gospel, the Lord has also given the Church the responsibility to make these new converts into disciples as well by teaching them to obey everything that Jesus has already commanded us to do in his word. Part of being a disciple of Christ is helping him to spread his message. As wonderful as it is for us to receive salvation personally, it would be selfish to hold this good news all to ourselves. God never intended that believers sit passively in the pews. It's the entire Church's responsibility to spread the Gospel.

We all know people that need salvation in Christ. If we are open to the leading of the Spirit, he will give us opportunities to share the good news of the gospel with others. We need to

share this good news with as many as we possibly can. By obeying the Lord's ongoing command to make disciples within the Church, the number of laborers for the harvest can continually grow and as a result more people will be brought into the kingdom of God.

Although our conversion to the faith is extremely important, it's obvious according to Matthew 28:18-20 that the Lord wants believers to move beyond being converts to becoming disciples. I would like to talk a little bit about what being a disciple actually means. **You see some Christians can be a convert but not a disciple.** What's the difference? The definition of a convert is one that's been persuaded to adopt a particular religion or belief. A disciple by definition however is one who not only adopts a particular religion or belief but one who also *assists* in spreading that teaching to others. A disciple then will go above and beyond the convert by helping the Lord spread the message of his gospel.

According to the book of James it's not enough to just say that we believe we also need to put our faith into action. Faith without works is dead. (*James 2:14-26*) Although we shouldn't be doing works of the flesh, we should be doing works that are done in the power of the Spirit. (*Galatians 3:1-5*) When we do this we're really showing the Lord that we believe what he says. We all need to surrender our lives to God and obey his will. (*Romans 12:1-2*) In this way he can lead us where he wants us to go and what he wants us to do. We must remember that we have been purchased with the Lord's own blood and that our lives are no longer ours but his. (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:23*) If we believe ourselves to be his disciples or followers then we will want to help aid him in his cause.

Some modern day denominations falsely teach that the power of God is not for today. They teach that God no longer heals, does miracles, signs or wonders. They teach that the powerful gifts of the Spirit have been done away with. They teach that believers have no power but that only God and the devil do. They teach that the written word is all we'll ever need. *They believe that they can win the world to Christ through mere talk only.* All of this though goes contrary to the teachings of Christ and the doctrines of the New Testament Church as we'll soon learn.

You Are Kingdom Citizens

When we were saved, we entered into the kingdom of God. I know that this is not widely taught today or maybe even understood but this is verified by the Lord's own words. In John chapter 3 Jesus explained all this to a teacher in Israel named Nicodemus. He said that no one can enter into the Kingdom of God without being born again of the Spirit. According to the word of God, when we receive Christ, it's at this point that we are born again of the Spirit. According to the divinely inspired writings in Hebrews chapter 12 verses 22-24 our names are then written down in the Lamb's book of life in heaven. Spiritually speaking we have come to Mt. Zion, which is also called the heavenly Jerusalem. Mt. Zion is another name for the Church. All of this makes us citizens of that heavenly kingdom now.

Another thing that Jesus told Nicodemus is that a person couldn't see the Kingdom of God without being born again. The word "see" here means to perceive and comprehend. Since believers have been born of the Spirit this means that we can now perceive or comprehend all the good things of that heavenly kingdom. Believers may know that the Holy Spirit helps

us to perceive and comprehend the written word of God but do you also know that the Spirit can also help us to spiritually see, perceive or comprehend *the power* of God's kingdom as well.

Since the kingdom of God is a kingdom of power then being able to see the things of the kingdom will also enable us to walk in the power of the Spirit as well. *This is why the apostles and believers of the early Church were able to walk in so much power.* They saw (perceived or comprehended) the things of the Kingdom, received them by faith and put their faith into action. They depended on the Spirit to show them all of these things and relied on his power to release it. The Church today can walk in the power of the Spirit to that degree or even greater as we do the same. When the Lord came to earth, he came to preach the good news of the Kingdom and to release the blessings of that Kingdom. *(Matthew 4:23)* The Church has been commissioned by Christ to carry on the message of preaching the Kingdom of God and releasing its heavenly blessings here on earth. *(Matthew 24:14, Acts 20:25, 28:30-31)*

Walk in Kingdom Power

The Bible teaches us in Hebrews 13:8 that the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. By studying the pages of the Bible and also by being eyewitness of his power, we learn that God is not only a God of power but that his kingdom is a kingdom of power as well. In I Corinthians 4 starting in verse 18 we read that Paul chastised some of the Corinthians for their arrogance. He let them know that their words meant nothing if they weren't backed up by the power of God. In verse 20 Paul wrote:

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." ~ I Cor. 4:20

Many criticized Paul's apostolic ministry but he had proof that he was a true servant of Christ. What was that proof? We find the answer to this in I Corinthians 2:1-5. His message and preaching was backed up by *the demonstration of the Spirit's power*. He told the Corinthians that he didn't want their faith to rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

We learn from this passage that the Holy Spirit will demonstrate his power in order to confirm the message of the Gospel. He was sent to earth to confirm the finished work of the Cross with kingdom power. This in turn proves that Jesus is truly Lord. In the Bible it is said that God testifies that the message of the gospel of salvation that his Son brought to the earth is authentic or truly of him. How does he testify or witness to those in the earth of the validity of his message? The author of Hebrews tells us how.

⁴ God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. (Hebrews 2:4 NIV)

We can't testify or witness of Christ to the world with the written word of God alone. We need to be able to provide tangible proof as well. The signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Spirit then are God's way of helping us to testify or witness to the world that he exists and that his message is true. We learn from both of these passages that the Holy Spirit will demonstrate his power in order to confirm the message of the Gospel. He was sent to earth

to confirm and uphold the finished work of the Cross with kingdom power. This in turn proves that Jesus is truly Lord.

When we understand that God has divine purposes for releasing his power, then we can also understand the necessity for every believer to walk in that power. As God manifests his power through the Church or the saints, he is verifying the message that he sent to the world through Jesus.

Be the Sent and Not “the Went”

I want to remind those of you that are reading this today of what the Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament says concerning signs. *They are miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men **sent by him**, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's. [Greek 4592]* I emphasized the words “sent by him” for a purpose. Whatever we do in life we should endeavor to be led by the Spirit. Living a surrendered life unto the Lord means that we should let the Holy Spirit determine where or who we are to be sent to and when. Only God has the wisdom to direct our steps. Proverbs 3:5 says this:

**⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.**

We shouldn't lean to our own understanding but foster a dependence upon Christ and his Spirit through submission. We can cultivate sensitivity to his promptings and voice by spending personal time with God in prayer, study and fasting. The more time we spend with him, the more that we will come to know his nature, character and ways. As we present ourselves to him as living sacrifices and worship him we will also come to learn his perfect will for our lives. (*Romans 12:1-2*)

In Romans 8:14 Paul declared, “**Those that are led by the Spirit are sons of God.**” We show ourselves to be God's true sons when we rely on the Spirit's leading. In this way we can follow in the footsteps of our elder brother Jesus. He did nothing without the guidance of the Spirit. He set the example for us in every way by carrying out his earthly ministry in the power of the Spirit. (*Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1*)

According to the New Testament and especially the book of Acts, both leadership and believers in the early Church depended totally on the Holy Spirit to tell them where to go and what to do in their service to the Lord. They were “the sent” and not “the went”. What does this mean? Well it means that they waited on the Spirit to send them where *God* wanted them to go rather than charting their own course. They didn't rely on their own human reasoning, understanding or wisdom but on God's. They knew that to walk in the flesh equaled failure and that the only way they could be effective for the Lord was to be led by the Spirit's power.

The key to great and effective ministry is to walk in the power of the Spirit. He will tell us *when to go, where to go, whom to speak to, what to say and how*. This takes all the pressure off of our having to perform in the flesh! When we trust in God he will never let us down or disappoint us. When he sends us somewhere to minister to others he will meet us

there to release his power! The Father will give us what to say and the Lord will work with us and confirm his word by the signs, wonders and miracles of his Spirit. When we see God's power released we will not only see others blessed but we will be too.