

Learning to Hear God's Voice

Millions have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit since the Day of Pentecost, when tongues of fire rested on those in the Upper Room and the disciples began to speak in a heavenly prayer language that made onlookers think they were drunk in the morning. In his sermon in Acts 2, Peter said they were witnessing what Joel prophesied: the Spirit of God was being poured out on all flesh, and the sons and daughters of Israel were prophesying. But there was more to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit than just what people saw and heard. A power caused 3,000 to believe that day and begin a movement that spread worldwide and continues today.

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The Roman Empire tried to crush that odd Jewish sect as it had quashed many others before it. But they were unsuccessful. The Roman Empire is gone, replaced by the Christian church, which exorcised the paganism of the Romans and the Greeks before them. Today, Christianity is the dominant religion in both Italy and Greece. While the Spirit's power seemed to ebb and flow and even go underground for generations, the Holy Spirit has been at work throughout history and has made Himself evident in our generation.

God wants nothing more than to pour out His Spirit on our sons and daughters, no matter how much it seems evil is increasing around us. Today's world is not that unlike the pagan world of biblical times. Babies were sacrificed to Molech in places such as Caesarea Philippi, a region Jesus often visited and the site where He asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

Sexual perversion and temple prostitution were common in the known world, even in pious Israel. And if contending with pagans weren't bad enough, the religious people of the day persecuted the early believers. It reminds me of Christian denominations today that not only deny the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit but hound out of their midst anyone who dares to believe or teach about them.

And today, with the advance of the Left and a one-world government, it seems we are racing toward the end of time. It's enough to discourage even the strongest believer. But it's not about us. We had no choice but to be born at this time. We don't control world events. All we can do is trust in God, believe His Word and experience the amazing power of His Spirit, which not only will help us stand up to and get through all this evil but also will help us experience joy and peace in the midst of trials, as the apostle Paul did.

Just before his execution, Paul wrote these timeless words: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and I have kept the faith. From now on a crown of righteousness is laid up for me," (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Paul encourages us that this crown of righteousness is not just for him "but also to all who have loved His appearing." That is you and me.

Mark Batterson tells his readers in *The Circle Maker* that it's "imperative...you come to terms with this simple yet life-changing truth: God is for you. If you don't believe that, then you'll pray small timid prayers; if you do believe it, then you'll pray big audacious prayers. And one way or another...it will change the trajectory of your life." My prayer life has been greatly affected by Batterson, who is himself a powerful Spirit-led leader.

Books about prayer like Batterson's are important because experiencing the Holy Spirit begins with prayer. It's how we

commune with Him and enter His presence. But knowing the Holy Spirit involves more than just prayer. Even non-Christian religions incorporate some form of prayer. I want to encourage you not only to experience the Holy Spirit's power in your prayer life but to exercise it by increasing your faith to see miracles, cast out evil spirits and live in the glory of God. The Holy Spirit empowers us not only to pray but also to see results!

But there's more. The Holy Spirit prompts an awareness of deep worship and empowers us to understand how the gifts of the Spirit can operate not only in the church but also in our lives. The Holy Spirit shows us how we can become free of the things that bind us and overcome spiritual strongholds, offenses and unforgiveness.

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