

Marriage of the Word and the Spirit

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. **–Colossians 3:16**
Be filled with the Spirit. **–Ephesians 5:18**

If the Word and the Spirit come together in the church—both in emphasis and in experience—it will be the happiest event in many years. I believe this is God’s heart. Yet it is my observation that most of today’s church, speaking generally, emphasizes one or the other.

It can be argued that the two are always inseparable—for this is absolutely true. It is by the Spirit that we receive the Word; it is the Word that tells us about the Spirit. They cannot be separated.

But that is not the total picture. Jesus said to His disciples, “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you,” yet He later breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 15:3; 20:22). This shows that there was more that they needed, even though they had the Word.

Jesus said to the Father, “I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them” (John 17:8), and yet He later told them to stay in Jerusalem until they had been “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Jesus Himself was the Word made flesh, but He too received the Spirit (Luke 3:22; John 1:33ff).

When we say that the Word and the Spirit are inseparable, we need to state what we mean. It is possible that one may have the full and undiluted Word but have the Spirit in less measure. That was the disciples’ experience prior to Pentecost.

Those who emphasize the Word are not without the Spirit, and those who emphasize the Spirit are not devoid of the Word. It is the degree to which one emphasizes the Word over the Spirit or the Spirit over the Word in one's own ministry that is the issue. What is wrong with either emphasis? Nothing. Each is exactly right. But neither is complete. It is not one or the other that is needed; it is both.

What is needed, in my opinion, is a remarriage of the Word and the Spirit—the simultaneous combination of both the Word and the Spirit in today's servant of Christ and the church. If the Word and the Spirit come together in your anointing and mine, then, as my dear friend Lyndon Bowring said, "Those who come to see [signs and wonders] will hear [the Word], and those who come to hear will see." That is tomorrow's anointing, my friend, and when it comes, the world will be awakened.

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