

The Gifts of the Spirit Are Not Reserved for Charismatics

I often ask, "How many can say like Jeremiah, 'His word was in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not' (20:9)?"

If we are honest, we realize that the power of the Holy Spirit is clearly missing in the lives of many Christians.

I came across an encouraging book a few years ago entitled, *They Found The Secret*. It contains brief biographies of Christian leaders such as D.L. Moody, John Bunyan, Amy Carmichael, Charles Finney, Adoniram Judson, Oswald Chambers, Hudson Taylor, Andrew Murray and more who received a mighty filling of the Spirit after conversion ... sometimes years later. In many cases, it wasn't until they finally surrendered their entire life to God that they experienced such intensity that could only be born of the Spirit.

In the words of Oswald Chambers before the Spirit came upon him, "God used me during those years ... but I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence." Then he writes a few years later, "If the four previous years had been hell on earth, these five years have truly been heaven on earth. Glory be to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the love of God."

D.L. Moody referred to his experience this way after realizing that his ministry was motivated by fleshly ambitions: "There came a great hunger in my soul. I did not know what it was and I began to cry out to God as never before. Sometime later as I was walking in New York God answered my prayer. I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name ... I can only say that God revealed Himself

to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand.”

Early in Billy Graham’s ministry a Welsh evangelist told Mr. Graham how God completely turned his life around by the power of the Holy Spirit. Billy realized that he needed this same power and prayed a prayer of total dedication. The story concluded that Billy Graham was a new man from that day forward ... there was now power when he preached. Granted, not everyone is called to this magnitude of ministry, but we are all called to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

There are countless other examples as well. The New Testament first introduced this outpouring on the lives of believers (sometimes at conversion). Take the time this week to read the books of Acts. It’s clear that this overflowing, exchanged, radiant, powerful, dynamic, victorious life is the way God designed it. And it’s not just charismatics who embrace the work of the Spirit, Puritans such as John Owen and Thomas Goodwin write of “unspeakable raptures of the mind” and “light beyond the light of ordinary faith” when describing the work of the Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is also consistent with the biographies of George Whitefield, David Brainerd, John Wesley, and 20th-century preachers such as A.W. Tozer, Adrian Rogers and many more. Calvinistic and Reformed pastors such as John Piper and the late D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones also embrace the baptism of the Spirit. The New Testament bears this out as well: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me ...” (Acts 1:8).

D.L. Moody was deeply saddened by Bible teachers in his day, asking, “Why don’t they see that this is just the one thing that they themselves need? They are good teachers, they are wonderful teachers ... but why will they not see that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is just the one touch that they themselves need?” This statement could be made today as well.

There are probably a few good answers to Moody's question, "Why don't they see their need for the Spirit's power?" Perhaps the most common answer is pride, followed by a reluctance to change traditionally held denominational views. Many do not want to admit that there may be something lacking. Understandably, it is difficult to endorse what we've never experienced. Pride can keep scores of Christians from experiencing the life-changing power of God. I believe that we have all of the Holy Spirit, but does He have all of us?

As an illustration: Last summer, our 3-year-old son turned the water on in our backyard, but it barely trickled out of the hose. Perplexed, he asked, "Why isn't the water hose working?" I explained that we need to remove all the kinks. As we began unwinding, he could barely hold the hose as the water gushed out.

In the same way, if we truly want to experience the power of God, the kinks of pride, stubbornness, judgmentalism, complacency, doubt and fear must go. It is then, and only then, that the "rivers of living water" as Jesus described, can flow more freely. And, like Jeremiah, we can finally say that His word is in our heart like a burning fire, deep within; we can no longer hold it back.

Watch the *Desperate Need to Experience God*.

Shane Idleman is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Lancaster, California, just North of Los Angeles. He recently released his 7th book, *Desperate for More of God* at . Shane's sermons, articles, books, and radio program can all be found at . Follow him on Facebook at: .