

Power of the Gospel Living in the Holy Spirit



Introduction:

Last winter when I got the flu, in an effort to keep me out of the hospital for the third straight year, Bruce said I needed Pedialyte – to recharge my electrolytes. So I got some. But if I put the package in a glass of water nothing happened. I had the product but it’s power wasn’t released until I opened the package and mixed the powder into the glass of water. “All Christians have the Holy Spirit. But notice how you can have the Holy Spirit and not his filling... How much of you does the Holy Spirit have? Unfortunately, as the late Dr. A. W. Tozer, author and pastor, said, "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would notice.” (Alan Redpath, *Christianity Today*, Vol. 29, no. 18.)

Today is Pentecost and I believe everyone here today believes in the Holy Spirit. But many of us think of the Holy Spirit like we do our pituitary gland. You know it's there, you're glad you've got it, and you don't want to lose it, but you're not exactly sure what it does. Adapted from Steve Brown, [Hidden Agendas](#) (New Growth Press, 2016), page 81

I submit, beloved, that the Holy Spirit is the key to the power of the gospel is lived out in our lives. Living in the Spirit describes the power and presence of the Spirit in our lives.

This Pentecost is the perfect time to conclude our spring Power of the Gospel series and begin our new Living Toward a vision series on Shalom. Why? Because it is only through the Spirit that Christians can experience God’s well-being and the abundant life Jesus promised – His Shalom. In fact, it is only through the Spirit that Christians can have freedom from the bondages Satan creates so they can live a supernatural life. Christianity is NOT a religion of rules and a self-help plan to make you a better person, or help you achieve Nirvana or some idyllic state by your own efforts. Christianity’s essence is a relationship with God through Christ where the Spirit’s goal is to make us like Christ in our character and behavior.

Because this is God’s intent, Jesus told his followers;

⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world. ” Luke 24:49, Acts 1: 8-9

And so it happened – the Spirit came down during the Festival of Pentecost. Jim Cymbala says,

What God did on the Day of Pentecost was dramatic and powerful. One of the Biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit is wind, and the wind in the upper room that day wasn’t just a little breeze; it was “violent” according to Acts 2:2. In many of us, we need just such a strong wind to blowout the rubbish that has accumulated,...a typhoon-like visitation of the Spirit of God. We need a major renovation of our spiritual lives, not just a rearrangement of the furniture.” (Cymbala, *Ibid.*, p. 44).

Releasing the Power

John Piper provides the following helpful illustration of the Holy Spirit before and after Pentecost:

“Picture a huge dam for hydroelectric power under construction, like the Aswan High Dam on the Nile, 375 feet high and 11,000 feet across. Egypt's President Nasser announced the plan for construction in 1953. The dam was completed in 1970 and in 1971 there was a grand dedication ceremony and the 12 turbines with their ten billion kilowatt-hour capacity were unleashed with enough power to light every city in Egypt. During the long period of construction the Nile River wasn't completely stopped. Even as the reservoir was filling, part of the river was allowed to flow past. The country folk downstream depended on it. They drank it, they washed in it, it watered their crops and turned their mill-wheels. They sailed on it in the moonlight and wrote songs about it. It was their life. But on the day when the reservoir poured through the turbines a power was unleashed that spread far beyond the few folk down river and brought possibilities they had only dreamed of.

Well, Pentecost is like the dedicatory opening of the Aswan High Dam. Before Pentecost the river of God's Spirit blessed the people of Israel and was their very life. But after Pentecost the power of the Spirit spread out to light the whole world. None of the benefits enjoyed in the pre-Pentecostal days were taken away. But ten billion kilowatts were added to enable the church to take the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to every tongue and tribe and nation.” John Piper, “Was the Holy Spirit not on Earth before Pentecost,” Gospel Coalition Blogs (5-24-15);

Living in the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is the power of the gospel, beloved. It's like releasing water through the turbines of a huge hydroelectric dam.

Four results of living in the power of the Spirit

But how does it work practically? Today I want to highlight four ways living in the power and presence of the Spirit will change our lives:

First, living in the Spirit means we get to **mount up OVER our problems like an eagle** rises on wings over the storms. Thirty-three Bible verses use this analogy! Ken Boa in his IVCF book *Life in the Presence of God* says:

“Eagles are true flying birds, meaning they get off the ground by flapping, but they soar by thermals.

Eagles begin flight training around four months old. But even before that, at about two months, they stand up in the nest and spread their wings when they feel gusts of wind. They're training to know the thermals! Thermals are the columns of air formed as heat rises from the ground. Because heat rises, these air columns push up and up, displacing the cold air around them. By staying in the warmth of the thermal, the birds continue to soar. Eagles become experts in this.

In this magnificent aerodynamic action, gravity isn't deactivated—it's still at work—but the higher principle overcomes gravity. Eagles drop down when they step off a branch. Then, they start flapping like crazy. Once they're in the air, though, their wings don't have to work very hard, and while soaring, they use a small fraction of the effort required to rise. They're almost at rest and can just enjoy the pleasure of flight.

When we first begin following Christ (or practicing a spiritual discipline), we're like eagles spreading our wings. Once we start flapping, though, we lift up. Maybe after a few tries we're back down on the ground. But through repeated practice, we finally soar. Also, in Greek, the Holy Spirit is called *pneuma*, which means "current of air." Think about what this means for us! We flap and flap, but eventually we catch the current of air, and we soar. This is how the Holy Spirit works with our training. He's not only our coach; he's the power behind everything we do.” Kenneth Boa, *Life in the Presence of God* (InterVarsity Press 2017), pages 129-130

A second mark of the power and presence of the Spirit in our lives is **to endure suffering with God's miraculous endurance and hope**. Chinese Christian leader Brother Zhong tells this story:

I was attending a training course for my house church network's council members and youth leaders.

The Public Security Bureau (PSB) raided us the first day. All the leaders were arrested.

The prison authorities shaved our heads and interrogated us. We were warned that the hardened inmates would beat us. So with much trepidation, another brother and I entered our cell.

We were greeted by the sight of 16 other inmates, lined up in two rows and thumping their fists. My heart beat rapidly as I sent prayers up to God.

The leader of the gang asked, "Why are you here?"

"Because we are Christians," I replied.

"You don't beat people up?"

"No," I assured him.

"Do you sing?"

"Yes," I answered.

The leader ordered me to sing a song. I wept as I sang. The Holy Spirit moved in our midst, and by the time I finished singing, every prisoner was also in tears. To my shock, the gang leader then asked to hear the gospel.

After that, my cellmates hungered to hear the gospel every day. One Sunday, we held a worship service. The prison guard demanded to know who was behind it. He threatened to punish everyone if no one spoke up. I stood up and confessed.

I was forced to remove my clothes and stand at an inclined angle to the wall. The gang leader couldn't bear it anymore. He asked to be punished with me. All the others volunteered to do the same. The infuriated guard stormed out. I was moved by my cellmates' act. One of them, who had been there for three years, became a believer that day. "China—Where God Is Behind Bars," *Today's Christian* (September/October 2004)
The Holy Spirit is the One who made all that happen.

Third, the Spirit's motivation is always the same thing: **to charge the Word with heaven's electric power.** This is when God brings a scripture passage strongly or recurrently to our minds and we realize this is God's word directly to us. This is what happened to me this week and leads me to the 4th reason we desperately need the Spirit: **to demolish the strongholds that are in our lives.**

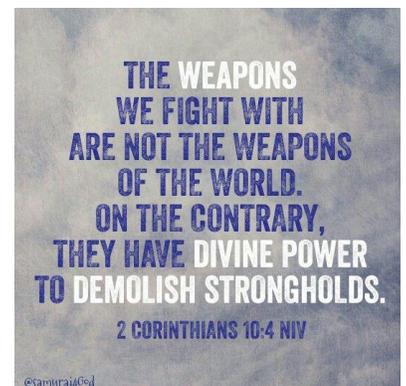
Demolishing Strongholds

This week the truths of 2 Cor. 10:4-5 kept echoing through my mind and I believe this is a word for each of us this Pentecost:

The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity. [The Message](#) (MSG)

I memorized this decades ago in the NIV and that is what I kept reciting before the Lord this week:

The context of these verses in the Corinthian church was the discrediting of the gospel and of Paul himself as an apostle. There were people who were undermining the truths of the gospel and thus became enemies of God, in Paul's mind. One commentator says: "Paul's purpose is to destroy the defenses of self-confidence and self-exaltation that have been erected by the self-commendations of those who oppose the progress of the gospel (cf. 10:12, 17-18, 11:4)." (Scott Hafemann, *NIV Application Commentary, 2 Cor.*, P.395)



There are similar enemies of the gospel who today are trying to strip the gospel of its miraculous truths and we need to fight against them as well. But this Pentecost I want to relate these truths to winning the battle in our minds where Satan and His lying demons are trying to destroy our witness and peace as believers. Paul says that there are strongholds that can be demolished by the weapons of the Christian's warfare. These weapons are the Word of God and the Power of the Holy Spirit. I believe those strongholds are the negative thought patterns that keep recycling in our mind destructively. For example, "I am not good enough," "I am not strong enough," "I am not healthy enough," and other variations of similar debilitating thoughts. As they recycle unchecked or countered by us, they become strongholds in our minds and keep us from the freedom Christ makes available

through the Spirit. So we become shackled by these negative thought patterns. Can you think of something like that in your own life?

I submit today that the power of the gospel lies in the Holy Spirit and God's word which can demolish strongholds in believer's lives. There is no other religion that has this power from the Holy Spirit. And so I want to challenge us this week to do what I am doing and apply this Scripture 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 to an area in each of our lives where we are hearing in our minds a recurrent tape that is negative and NOT God's word to us. Let's take a minute and think about one thing that is keeping us bound in that negative thought pattern. And let's start to memorize 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (quote). Let's say it out loud together.

⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

And all week anytime a negative stronghold thought comes to mind, quote this scripture and claim God's victory over that stronghold. God can demolish any stronghold. That's the power of the gospel and that is what allows the transformation of Jesus in our whole being. It's been said "Your opponent may be larger in appearance, but if you have the Holy Spirit – God's deposit within you – the advantage is yours." Similarly, "God will carry you through the storm."

This is the mighty power of heaven contained in the Word and the Spirit – the two weapons of our warfare that enable us to demolish strongholds. . That is why we memorize Scripture. When 2 Cor. 10 came to me and the Holy Spirit applied it to my physical strength and endurance, I kept repeating it back to the Lord and said, "God this is Your word and this is Your truth. So I am claiming this truth in my situation right now. By the Holy Spirit, give me the power to live it out." And God promises to do this: Philippians 2:13- *God works in us to will and to do his good pleasure.* To live in the Spirit's power and presence, practically, therefore, you may need to keep repeating the verse back to the Lord every time that negative thought comes. This is what Jesus did in His temptation encounter with Satan.

This is also what it means in Romans 12 when it says: *Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, [new tapes for old tapes] that you may prove the will of God which is good, acceptable and perfect.* The power of the Holy Spirit is what makes the transformation of our minds and character possible.

These four areas show the power of the gospel which we can experience as we rely totally on the Holy Spirit:

1. for our supernatural ability to mount up over life's hard circumstances and rest in God in them,
2. for our ability to triumph and see God's fruit even in the midst of trials
3. for our willingness to hear God's Word with its full electric, transforming power in our lives and
4. for God's power to demolish the strongholds that keep us bound and unable to live victorious lives.

May God fill us with His Spirit so we can live in the power and the presence of the God each day. Let us pray.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 6 9 19 Pentecost.

Song of Response: Amazing Grace – my chains are gone.

Hallelujah!!

