

LESSON 5 The Holy Spirit Gives Power

Can believers today experience the power of the Holy Spirit as the early disciples did? Yes. I do not think we have any better preachers today than the preachers in the New Testament. And they needed this power. We are of no use without the power of the Holy Spirit. Christianity without the Holy Ghost is a lifeless shell. Only God, the Holy Ghost, can produce the spark that quickens—the flame that kindles.

The Bible is full of promise and exhortation for us to approach God with full confidence of faith to receive this promise. Our Savior goes on record that He bought this gift for us. It is an integral part of the full gospel. It is meant to be. C. M. Ward notes, “The gift is . . . for you to use now!” (1966, 10, 12).

The Plan

- A. Power for Many Purposes
- B. The Promise of Power
- C. The Promise Fulfilled at Pentecost
- D. The Normal Experience after Conversion
- E. Signs of the Holy Spirit's Power

The Goals

1. Explain the purpose for the power, which the Holy Spirit gives.
2. Identify the description of the Holy Spirit given in the Bible.
3. Discuss how the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled.
4. State the biblical pattern for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
5. Indicate signs and results of the Holy Spirit's power.

A. POWER FOR MANY PURPOSES

Goal 1. Explain the purpose for the power, which the Holy Spirit gives.

Learn How to Use Power

Think of how many ways electricity is used: With it people light their cities, cook, heat their homes, and operate all kinds of machinery. Because people have learned how to use electric power they can do what used to seem impossible—even go to the moon.

The Holy Spirit wants to fill your life with a power greater than electricity—power to do what is impossible—but you must learn to use it. Used in the right way this power will bring glory to God and blessing to your life. Power of any kind used in the wrong way will always bring trouble.

Three mistakes to avoid:

1. *Some people use the Holy Spirit's power as a toy.* This was the problem of the Corinthian church. They so enjoyed talking in other tongues by the Spirit's power that they were just having a good time in their services. There was such disorder that outsiders thought they were crazy. Paul let them know that all things should be done decently and in order. They should learn to channel the power of the Holy Spirit so that souls would be saved, not turned away from Christ.
2. *Some people call attention to themselves instead of giving glory to God.* If the Holy Spirit gives a man faith for healing the sick, it is not so that he can flaunt the gift. Such pride brings many problems.
3. *Some people just do not use the power that the Holy Spirit has for them.* This is the most common mistake of all. Some have seen the misuse or imitations of the Spirit's power and are afraid of anything supernatural. The Thessalonian church had this problem. Paul told them to test the spirits to see if they were of God and not to accept any false prophecies or imitations of God's work. But they were not to throw away the real thing along with the imitations.

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.
(1 Thessalonians 5:19–22)

This Is the Pattern for You

The power of the Holy Spirit in the early Christians made their lives good in a civilization noted for its crime and corruption. An inner joy and peace made them sing and praise God when they were beaten and thrown into jail for Christ's sake. Full of God's love, they forgave and prayed for those who tortured them. This is power used rightly!

They had a powerful message and lived it out with conviction. Anyone without Christ was lost, but Jesus would

save those who believed on Him. They spoke with wisdom, logic, and courage beyond their own abilities—power that convinced their hearers of the truth and convinced them of sin.

They had a powerful faith. They knew that God was with them and would work through them as He had promised. So in Jesus' name they commanded paralytics to walk and they did. They prayed and things happened. Sick people were healed; prison doors opened; and multitudes of sinners turned to God.

This power in the early Christians made them witnesses, just as Jesus had said. They had the boldness and urgent desire to tell all their neighbors about Jesus. They had a mission to fulfill. Courage, love, great vision, and total commitment to Christ drove them on from town to town and country to country. They were determined to give the good news of salvation to every man, woman, and child in their world.

This is the pattern of power in the early church. Their power then was the power of the Holy Spirit who filled them and worked through them. What they did was the natural outflow of Spirit-filled lives. The Bible details their experience because it is the pattern for Christians today.

Application

1 Draw a circle around each of the results of the Spirit's power in the early Christians.

fear	faith	message	worry
courage	popularity	healings	
vision	money	conversions	love



B. THE PROMISE OF POWER

Goal 2. Identify the description of the Holy Spirit given in the Bible.

John the Baptist promised that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. This was a general promise made to all those who were being converted and baptized by him in water.

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Matthew 3:11)

Jesus had a great work for Christians to do all down through the ages. He knew they could never do it in their own strength. So He told His followers to wait until they received the power of the Holy Spirit and then they would be His witnesses. Jesus’ command and promise were for all His followers.

“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.”
(Luke 24:49)

“Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . . 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.” (Acts 1:4–5, 8)

Application

2 Read Acts 1:1–14. Memorize verses 4–5 and 8.

3 In Luke 24:49, the Holy Spirit is described as a

- a)** blessing requested by the disciples.
- b)** reward for holy living.
- c)** gift promised by the Father.
- d)** sin reserved for special leaders.

4 Why do you think that the Bible calls the baptism in the Holy Spirit a “gift”?

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C. THE PROMISE FULFILLED AT PENTECOST

Goal 3. Discuss how the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled.

What did Jesus’ followers do to receive the promised Holy Spirit? For 10 days 120 of them waited—praying and expecting something to happen. And it did! On the Day of Pentecost they received what we call the Pentecostal experience or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14 records that the believers “all joined together constantly in prayer.” Read Acts 1 and 2.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. (Acts 2:1–5)

Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native

language? . . . we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” (vv. 7–8, 11–13)

Before this, Peter had been afraid of ridicule. What a change after he received the power of the Holy Spirit! He stood up and preached a powerful message. He explained that what they saw was the fulfillment of God’s promise. God had poured out His Spirit.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: . . . “These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.’ . . . Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:14–17, 41)

From then on Acts is the record of how the Holy Spirit worked through the Christians: He helped them witness, spread the gospel, and win souls to Christ.

Application

5 Which book shows how the Holy Spirit worked through the first Christians?

6 Read Acts chapter 2.



D. THE NORMAL EXPERIENCE AFTER CONVERSION

Goal 4. State the biblical pattern for receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The apostles expected all believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit after their conversion. Peter made that plain.

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38–39)

If new converts did not receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit right away from their conversion, someone prayed for them so that they would receive it.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14–17)

After Saul was converted, the Lord sent Ananias to pray for him. Acts 9:17 records, “‘Jesus, . . . has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’”

Cornelius and his family heard the gospel, believed, and were saved as they accepted the truth. Before Peter finished preaching they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The experience of the believers in Ephesus was different. Like many Christians today, they had not even heard that God wanted to fill them with the Holy Spirit. Paul asked them:

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:2, 6)

Judging from the pattern in the early church, God wants to fill all of His children with the Holy Spirit and power. Who received then? Rich and poor. Men, women, and children. Illiterate and well educated. Religious leaders and persons recently delivered from sin. Persons of many nations. Peter said in the house of Cornelius, a Roman soldier,

“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism . . . They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” (Acts 10:34, 47)

Application

7 Based on the description in the Bible, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is

- a)** the normal experience after conversion.
 - b)** for those who have been Christians a long time.
 - c)** mainly for educated men and church leaders.
 - d)** God’s gift to all His children.
 - e)** necessary before a person is baptized in water.
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E. SIGNS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT’S POWER

Goal 5. Indicate signs and results of the Holy Spirit’s power.

Speaking in Other Languages

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, He gave several signs of His power. People heard a sound as of a strong wind. They saw tongues of fire, and they spoke in languages they had never learned. In the book of Acts one of these signs—speaking

in tongues—was repeated when others received the Holy Spirit. This was how Cornelius and his family had received the Holy Spirit. The same sign was repeated at Ephesus. Compare the experiences.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:4)

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” (Acts 10:44–47)

When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:6)

Speaking in other languages by the power of the Holy Spirit is the supernatural sign that God has chosen to show that the Holy Spirit has filled a person. Both Jesus and Paul referred to speaking in tongues as a miracle or proof.

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues.” (Mark 16:17)

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers. (1 Corinthians 14:22)

Christians throughout the world are continually experiencing this wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. Usually the language is not known to anyone present. However, many times the Spirit has spoken through a person in a language unknown

to the speaker but understood by someone in the audience, just as at Pentecost.

Others Signs of Power

You have read about many other signs of power that follow, as we keep filled with the Holy Spirit: the clean life, love of God, courage, and complete dedication to Christ. Signs of power are seen in powerful faith, powerful prayer, powerful witnessing, and powerful preaching. The results—conversions, healings, baptisms in the Holy Spirit, and church growth—follow.

The Bible records Paul’s prayer for the believers in Ephesus. You can claim this prayer for yourself.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. (Ephesians 3:16)

As God makes you strong through His Spirit, you will be able to refuse evil, endure suffering, serve, and witness for your Lord.

Application

8 You have studied several signs of the Holy Spirit’s power. How many can you name? Write them in the space following.

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Check Your Answers

- 5** The book of Acts
- 1** You should have circled the following words: faith, message, courage, healings, vision, conversions, and love.
- 7** Two completions are correct:
a) the normal experience after conversion.
d) God's gift to all His children.
- 3** **c)** gift promised by the Father.
- 8** I hope you were able to name at least three, such as speaking in other languages, dedication to God, conversions, and healings.
- 4** Your answer. The Holy Spirit is called a gift to help us know that we do not have to do anything to earn the Holy Spirit. God has already promised to send Him. Our part is to receive!