

The Spirit and our ministries

Message 4 in 4 part series

Review:

The Spirit as ...

- God's very precious GIFT – a gift to be received/believed/acknowledged.
- Our HELPER – help to be welcomed and trusted in.
- God's INSTRUMENT/AGENT – “through/by the Spirit” to help each true believe accomplish the Father's will

The Spirit of love and unity living with us AND working through ...

- teaching and exhortations
- prayer
- faith
- obedience

The Spirit does not work independently but through “means”, eg the Scriptures, prayer, the body of Christ, and our faith.

Two fundamental truths:

1. God has given His Spirit to dwell within us – to empower us for living, for obeying His commands, eg to love one another
2. God has also given His Spirit to anoint us for HIS ministry – to empower us for His ministry. Or we could see it as God doing the ministry THROUGH us.

Today's focus: God's POWER for ministry/witness

Here is more GOOD NEWS. God commands us to go out to bear a faithful witness to His Son, to call people to repent and put their trust in Him. AND He empowers us so that our ministries bear fruit to His praise and glory.

The Spirit is God's POWER (or “ability”) for witness and ministry: a spiritual dynamic that works powerfully to accomplish God's results.

The Spirit is sometimes linked with “power”. See Luke 1:35; Acts 10:38. To have the Spirit is to have God’s divine power – a divine or supernatural ability to do that which we cannot do without God’s Spirit.

Thus the Spirit working powerfully together us as we give witness to Jesus in obedience to His command. See John 15:26,27; Luke 24:48,49; Acts 1:8; 5:32.

JESUS Himself was anointed with power and the Spirit for HIS ministries – so through the Spirit of God working freely and powerfully, Jesus accomplished great things – not just because Jesus was the perfect Son of God.

See Luke 3 & 4.

Evident also in the ministries of the early apostles. “By the Spirit” God’s holy apostles were enabled to many things for God:

- spoke the truth with divine authority – Acts 2; 4:8
- had special boldness – Acts 4:31
- had special wisdom – Acts 6:3
- had faith – Acts 6:5
- were spoken to and experienced clear leading or direction – Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2
- tasted real joy – Acts 15:32

God has made this same provision for us. God gives His Spirit in ministry. He desires that we be fruitful in His service. He longs that people know His Son in truth and are convinced that He is the truth. He longs for people to be saved.

God is gracious and is able to work through the witness to the name of Jesus even of those who don’t know Him personally. He is GREAT and without any limits in His ways to bring honour to His name and to bring His blessings upon people. He is able even to use a Christmas carol being sung in the worldly atmosphere of a shopping centre to speak to people.

But we can limit greatly the effectiveness of His working by our trying to serve Him in the flesh:

- by failing to earnestly trust in His power working through us through our lack of faith/unbelief, eg saying to ourselves: “God can’t use me! I haven’t been good enough or haven’t prayed enough for God to use me.” Or
- by being led by our feelings, eg feeling on a “high” – because God used us last time, then assuming that He will use us again, forgetting to put our trust actively in God through His Spirit to work through us.

How do we experience God’s power and help in our ministries?

How did these early servants of God experience this provision? They experienced the divine infilling or anointing of the Spirit for each situation in ministry

- by their obedience to their Master,
- by their acknowledging the Person of the Spirit in their lives & ministries,
- by active trusting in His help and empowering, and
- by surrendering to the His leading and control.

Key expression: “filled with the Spirit”; “full of the Spirit”. See verses in Luke/Acts.

Fundamental meaning: “to be under the control of, eg fear, awe, anger/rage.” cf. Eph.5:18 – giving up/surrendering the control of their lives & ministries and allowing the Spirit to take full control of

To be “full of the Spirit” = fully under the control of or divine operations of – totally surrendered to – a person whose life and ministry is characterised by this divine Presence at work in and through his/her life.

We may experience God’s divine power at work in any and every ministry situation – seemingly important or just very ordinary/everyday.

How? By active faith/believing, which means in practice repeatedly

- asking for,
- seeking after,
- longing for wholeheartedly,
- relying upon, and

- welcoming this Gift, the Helper, whenever we are in any situation of ministry.

God gives generously of His Gift according to our faith:

- expressed in our asking and seeking with our whole hearts, and more and more NOT in trusting in our natural abilities;
- expressed in our actively asking the Father for or praying to receive His help.

What will witnessing and ministering through the Spirit “look like”?

It will NOT mean instant success in ministry. Look at the life of Jesus:

- It didn't mean for Him that everyone who listened to Him would believe.
- Nor did it mean that everyone who met Him would recognise that God's Spirit and God's truth was in Him.
- Nor did it mean that all forms of suffering and opposition would just melt away.

In the spiritual realm, it will mean “life” and “fruitfulness” – God causing His power to flow through us to bring LIFE to others.

It will also mean that our ministries will be marked by godly wisdom, spiritual discernment, and a divine power to do for God what we would not be humanly able to accomplish. See Isaiah 11:2.

And this will be evident NO MATTER what kind of ministry we are involved in, eg office work as well as speaking to unbelievers about Jesus, or to believers.

Final challenge:

- How are you going away from this Retreat different to the way you came?
- How will you take the biblical truths that you have heard and live by them?
- Will you live and minister with a greater awareness of and dependence upon God's precious Gift, the Spirit?
- Will we grieve God the Spirit by refusing to acknowledge Him as God's provision both as Helper for doing the Father's will and as Power for serving our Lord Jesus?

1. Acknowledge the Spirit as God's most precious GIFT to you – His very SELF.
2. Believe in His Presence in your life. Be conscious of His presence. Rejoice in it.
3. Trust daily, continually in His enabling and empowering at all times, not in your "self".

1999 OM Romania team retreat