Power for Service

God has been teaching us in our company for over 55 years that there is something higher than our own comfort or even our salvation. We are saved in order to serve. But we need power to serve God effectively.

- **To be effective is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.**

This is something more than being born of the Spirit. To be born of the Spirit is to have eternal life, to be in God's family, to have at least some spiritual perception. To be born of the Spirit is to have spiritual instincts, capacities, aspirations and desires. It is to be brought into possession of wonderful possibilities. We may know something of all this and yet not be **filled** with the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit gives a power that is supernatural. This power can be demonstrated in our lives in various ways. One example is a **restful endurance** – bearing trials with meekness and gentleness and facing opposition with **calmness and courage** as well as **withstanding temptation** with decision and fortitude.

Then there is **spiritual wisdom** – giving the right answer when tested and questioned as we see in the case of Stephen***, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke."*** (Acts 6:10)

Then there is power for **victorious conflict**. The Bible tells us clearly that we will be in conflict to the end of our days, but it also teaches us that, ***"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal."*** (2 Cor. 10:4) We are involved in a spiritual warfare. The weapons the Holy Spirit gives us are ***"Mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."*** (2 Cor. 10:4)

There are carnal weapons that we sometimes use as the children of God. But these must be laid aside if we would "fight a good warfare". There are fortresses of evil that have to be attacked and human reasoning must be overthrown, ***"For the weapons of our warfare … have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ…."*** (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

The victory is not merely an external one, but a moral one. "Every thought" is to be brought under the control of the Lord Jesus. Why? The greatest human energy is powerless against the satanic powers. Only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit can know what it is to overcome the forces of these powers of darkness.

This filling of the Spirit is **a covenant blessing**. It is a privilege that belongs to all believers. God has no favourites except in the sense that **all** believers are His favourites. ***"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are far off, everyone who the Lord our God calls to Himself."*** (Acts 2:39) So not to receive and appreciate this great privilege means we will fall short of all the blessing God wants to give us.

The influence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives is given to us not only for preaching the Gospel, but also for the proper completion of all that we do. You can see this in Acts 7:1-3 where the apostle saw that they needed help in serving at tables – a rather menial and ordinary task.

What sort of people are those "gifted" to do this? People ***"of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom"***. Among them they chose Stephen ***"a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip …."*** who preached and explained the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8:26-40) They both had great future ministries.

This teaches us that the only way we can fulfil our ordinary duties of life well and properly is to be **born of the Spirit** and also **filled with the Spirit**.

- **To receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit preparation is needed.**

The Lord Jesus said that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. [See Jn. 14:16-17). He didn't say **will not** receive, but **cannot** receive Him. This is because, ***"The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God"***. (1 Cor. 2:14)

Yet we know that those among whom we live and who we are seeking to reach may be convicted and indeed converted by the Holy Spirit. Then they become partakers of spiritual life. The Holy Spirit is in them. But there is often another stage that may be gradually realised.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus knew the Holy Spirit demonstrated in all His power. ***"But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you."*** (Mt. 12:28) The disciples saw and knew the Holy Spirit through our Lord's miraculous deeds. Others – the crowds, the Pharisees etc. – saw the phenomena, but they didn't recognise the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In fact they attributed the miracles to the working of Satan – probably the occult!

So what can we do as preparation to receive the Holy Spirit in greater measure in our lives? I think that first of all we need to desire Him. He is called the paraclete – one called alongside to be our support and our guide. So call Him to come. He comes in answer to our call.

Receiving the Holy Spirit, especially in a critical situation, is an act of faith. Gal. 3:2 puts it like this, ***"Did you receive the Holy Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?"*** In all acts of faith our spiritual ideas must not be fixed on **actions**, but on the "object" of faith – the Holy Spirit. It is faith that recognises the reality of the Holy Spirit being in us and His great "job description" (a very inadequate phrase). The Lord Jesus said, ***"He shall glorify me."*** (Jn. 16:14)

But it is also an act of submission. We need to receive the Holy Spirit as our Sovereign Lord. He comes to us to rule. Our hearts are His palace. To receive the Holy Spirit is to give him the Royal right to His throne in our lives!

What does this imply? That the old ruler, self, is superseded and dethroned. When the Lord is enthroned in the place of self, we have the beginning of a new reign because now we are under the rule of a new sovereign. But please notice that this is **an act of worship**. To receive Him is not accepting a truth or a doctrine, for this would be the act of our minds only. Nor is it necessary to receive a sensation or feeling for that would be simply an act of the emotions.

It is to receive a Person – a Royal, Divine, Almighty Being who claims our complete allegiance, our worship and our unwavering trust. This is the act of our whole being. We may receive a view of the truth with our **minds** only and the rest of our being may remain unaffected. We may experience a feeling in our **emotions** only without having any intelligent idea of what we have received. But when we receive the Holy Spirit in the full recognition of who He is – a Royal and Divine Person – the Holy and Almighty God, then every part of us – our spirit, mind and body – is made aware and our intelligence, our emotions and our wills are all united in giving Him a warm/hot reception.

But questions are frequently asked, 'What about our emotions?' Will I feel His actual incoming? Will I be conscious that He has actually taken possession of my whole being? If I have no feeling, no witness that I am filled with the Holy Spirit, what am I to do?'

Perhaps the best thing we can do to help people who are anxious about this is to take them back to the time when they came to the Lord Jesus seeking pardon for the sin and salvation. The one major thing they had to do was to receive the Lord Jesus and His gift of eternal life. As a simple act of faith they accepted this gift. It was an act that had nothing to do with needing feelings to make it real and effectual. The very simplicity of that act, distinct from feeling, was a matter of difficulty to some people. It is sometimes hard for us to trust God based entirely on His Word. But when this difficulty is overcome everything becomes plain. We receive forgiveness and we know we are at peace with God. This is when we come into real blessing.

Now the question is not, "How may I know I am forgiven?" But "How may I know when I am filled with the Holy Spirit?" The simple answer is to take God at His Word. Feeling or no feeling a person who believes in the Lord Jesus has eternal life. And in the case of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness it is precisely the same thing. When we know that the last thing we have been withholding is now yielded, no hindrances are being retained, we have let go of everything without reserve and we throw open our whole being for the Holy Spirit to take complete possession, then it is not only our privilege, but our duty to believe that the Holy Spirit, the One who is called alongside us, does come to us to be all that the Father and Son have purposed that He should be to us.

Now we must go out and 'do the next thing' in the conviction, if not in the consciousness, of the Holy Spirit doing what His purpose and His work is to do.

"Be filled with the Spirit" is a divine command. This command is in complete agreement with God's purpose that the Holy Spirit should make us His temple. So with faith in the words of the Lord Jesus, we have complete assurance that daily we will be empowered for service/ministry.

So we step out in simple trust (perhaps without feeling) and God graciously gives us tokens of His pleasure to confirm and strengthen the faith already being exercised. Then in our hearts and minds there is an experiential reality of the truth of what Jesus said to His disciples, ***"On that day you will realise that I am in My Father and you are in Me and I am in you."*** (Jn. 14:20) I think "that day" is referring to the Day of Pentecost.

So what is the secret of power and effectiveness in our ministry? ***"Be filled with the Holy Spirit"***, then no grace needed in the work of the Lord will be lacking. We shall, ***"Bear fruit in every good work"***. (Col. 1:10)

As we work we will show ***"the fruit of the Spirit"***. It is possible to be zealously active but without "love, joy and peace". Long-suffering and gentleness may be sadly conspicuous by their absence even though we are zealously active in the Lord's service.

Now, in <u>this</u> day, the need is not for an increasing multiplicity of "good works". The need is for those who are filled with the Holy Spirit so they can do the work of the Lord and not a work of human devising. The goal is a work accompanied by the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote to the Colossians, ***"We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way; <u>bearing fruit</u> in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might."*** (Col. 1:10)