

This is tape number SHS309. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Let us turn in our Bibles to Acts 1, as we continue on the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Last week we saw the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as teaching and instructing us in the things of God and in the Word of God. Tonight we would like to look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as He empowers us to be witnesses.

In Acts 1:4, Jesus was with His disciples and He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem until they had received this baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now the disciples asked Jesus a question that was irrelevant to what He was talking about. It was an important question—one that Jesus was very concerned about. But their question was not relevant to what He was talking about—their receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They said, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Now this is what they were expecting the Lord to do. They did not expect Him to be crucified. They were expecting Him to restore the kingdom to Israel, so that Israel might rule over the world with their righteous King according to the promises concerning their Messiah. And Jesus had been talking with them for forty days, concerning the kingdom. But now He is talking to them about another subject, and that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting how often we can get diverted from the main topic by an interesting question on a subject that we really love. And so, often we get so far afield of the original issue, that we forget what the actual issue was. Jesus dismisses their question without really any explanation and He comes back to the subject at hand: their receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And in verse 8 He declares,

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

So the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to give them power to be witnesses unto Jesus throughout the entire world. It is interesting as we follow the story in the Book of Acts that, first of all, they did bring witness of Jesus to Jerusalem—so much so, that they were accused of “filling the city with this Man’s doctrine.” When persecution arose in Jerusalem, the church was scattered abroad throughout all of Judea. And they went everywhere preaching the Word. And so they began to spread the message into Judea. And we find in the record in Acts that Peter went down to Lydda and met with certain disciples there. While he was there the disciples in Joppa called him over to minister to one who had died in Joppa. And so, there were these pockets of believers throughout Judea.

Then we read that Philip went unto Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And then as we get into Acts 13, we find the Holy Spirit saying, “Separate unto Me, Paul and Barnabas for the ministry where I have called them.” And they fasted and prayed and then laid hands on them and the Spirit sent them forth. And they began the task of carrying the gospel unto the uttermost parts of the earth. And for the most part, the rest of the Book of Acts has to do with Paul’s missionary journeys, as he is carrying the gospel to the world. Now this was all done through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that they were enabled to take the gospel to all the world.

So, many people associate witnessing with just the verbalizing of your faith, or your testimony, to someone else—talking to them about the Bible, about Jesus Christ, about salvation, about God's gift of eternal life. And we think of witnessing only as verbalizing to others concerning their need of Jesus Christ. But witnessing is far more than just giving a person an invitation or telling someone about Jesus Christ. A more powerful witness than simply telling someone about Jesus Christ is a believer living the life of Jesus Christ before them.

I was up at the high school camp yesterday, enjoying a wonderful day with those beautiful young people. It was a thrill to see the work of God's Spirit in their lives as we ministered to them yesterday. A young girl came up to me just as I was leaving last night and she said, "Pastor Chuck, I want to witness to my brother and I do not know how to witness to my brother." I told her, just live the Christian life before him. Let him see what Jesus has done in your life. And that is the strongest witness that you can possibly give to him.

When we talk about being a witness for Jesus Christ, we are talking about the life that bears witness for Jesus Christ. Often times, what we say is thoroughly discredited by what we are and by what we do. You see, you can be witnessing to someone verbally and you can be telling them how wonderful the work of Jesus Christ is in your life. "He gives you such glorious peace and you need to know this peace of Jesus Christ." But that witness can be discredited if, while you are working beside them, any time any little irritant comes along and you blow up, and you get mad, and yell at everything and everybody, and then you say, "but Jesus gives you such glorious peace." Or if you are talking about the joy of the Lord and you are always going around grouchy and grumpy and snapping at everybody—what you say will be meaningless to them because of what you are. So, it is extremely important that our life bear witness of the peace of Jesus Christ and the love of Jesus Christ. And then they will see, as it is worked out in our lives.

It is interesting that people get a lot of weird ideas concerning the Scripture and think that they have received some revelation from God. And many times they feel that they need to share this revelation with the church. We get requests quite often from people who want to come and share some revelation of scriptural truth to the body of Christ here. They want to share some twist on an interpretation that they got in some kind of a dream. I think it was more inspired by the In-n-Out burger with onions than it was by the Spirit. Often I will say to them, give us the opportunity to observe how this truth has affected your walk and your life. Let us see how it has brought you closer to Jesus. Let us see the peace and the joy that it has brought into your life. And when we see the fruit of this truth in your life, then we will be coming to you and asking you to share with us just what is it that makes you different.

It is important that our lives agree with our testimony. And that is what a real witness is. It is when your life is in agreement with your testimony and they can see it worked out in your life. They can see the example of it in your life. That is why Paul said to Timothy, "Be thou an example unto the believer." And when Paul talked to the elders of Ephesus, he said, "I was with you teaching you and showing you. My life was the demonstration of the truth that I was sharing with you."

In the Book of Revelation, it speaks of Jesus as the faithful and true witness. He was a faithful and true witness of the Father. So that if you want to know what God is all about, and if you want to know what God is like, you can look at Jesus and discover exactly how God thinks—how God feels and what God is like. He was a faithful and true witness of God. So much so that when Philip said to Him,

Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Show us the Father?' (John 14:8-9)

Jesus could declare that because He was a faithful and true witness. You can know what God is like by looking at Jesus.

The name Christian was coined in Antioch by the world. As they observed the lives of the believers in Jesus Christ, they called them Christians, which meant Christ-like. It is wonderful when the world gives you that title. It is not something that you have to go out and declare. Well, I am a Christian, are you? Are you Christ-like? It is glorious when that title is given to you by others after having observed your life. They say, "Oh, he is a real Christian. He is really like Christ."

If a person would say to you, "Oh, but I would love to see Jesus Christ," You should be able to say, "Well, if you have seen me..." You see, that would be a faithful and true witness. Jesus was able to say that of the Father. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." He was a faithful and true witness of the Father.

Now He wants you to be a witness of Him. He wants your life to be so like His, that it is a witness of Him. And people will know what He is like as they observe you. And if you want to take a test of self-examination, just read 1 Corinthians 13, removing the word charity and inserting your own name, and you will find out how true a witness you are. You see, you can take out the word charity and insert the name Jesus and you do no violence to the text at all. It flows. It fits. But unfortunately, when we insert our name it does a lot of violence to the text. But that is an indictment against us. It means that we have not yet yielded fully to the work of the Holy Spirit, who God has sent to help us, to give us the power to be witnesses.

Several years ago someone wrote a book on the imitation of Jesus. And the book suggested that before you responded or reacted to the various circumstances, adverse and others, that you first ask the question: What would Jesus do? And then seek to do what Jesus would do in those circumstances. Well, I can assure you that if you want to become totally frustrated, just try it. Just try in your own ability to imitate Jesus Christ. Try to respond and to react as He did and as He has commanded us to do. Jesus: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; who said to us in Matthew 5, "Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who despitefully use you, and so shall you be the children of the Father." And if you just try to live like Jesus, try to act like Jesus, you will find that it is an impossible task in your own ability or self control.

Paul the Apostle tried to imitate Christ. And he writes in Romans 7 about his experience. He said in verse 15,

For that which I do, I allow not: [In other words, I am doing things that I really don't want to do.] For what I would, that do I not. [I am doing the things I do not want to do. I am not doing the things I do want to do.] But what I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good

thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:15-18)

This was Paul's struggle. The will is there—"that which I want to do, I do not do. That which I do not want to do I am doing. It is because of the sin that dwells in me, this sinful nature."

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. (Romans 7:20-22)

I listen to the law of God. I hear what Jesus says and I say, "Yes! That is right. Yes, I want to do that. Yes, that is the way I want to respond." That is the way I want to react. That is the kind of a person I desire to be—kind and loving and forgiving and generous and compassionate, merciful. That is the kind of person I want to be. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law that is working in me, that wars against the law of my mind and brings me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my body. Paul cried,

Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:24)

I am living in an unredeemed body that is still in rebellion against God—a body that does not want to serve or be subservient to the Spirit. I am living in a body that wants to usurp authority and control over my mind and over my life with body appetites that are demanding fulfillment. And my spirit yearns after God, to be like Jesus. But when I try, I find that this other nature, the nature of my flesh, is there battling against the desires of my spirit.

In Matthew 26:41, Jesus said to Peter, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And all of us have experienced that. It is not my mind that really is in rebellion against God. In my heart I desire to please God. I want to serve God, but there is the battle that goes on between the flesh and the spirit. And these two are contrary, so that Paul, in writing to the Galatians says, "We do not always do what we would." In fact Paul says even stronger, "so that you cannot do the things that you would." It is because of this battle between the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh.

Thus it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that I can have and experience victory over my flesh and over the desires of my flesh. The writer of that hymn, "Have Thine Own Way Lord," really struck the right chord. I think it is the third stanza where he wrote,

Have Thine own way, Lord. Have Thine own way. Hold o'er
my being absolute sway. Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me. (Adelaide Pollard)

It is only as I am filled with the Spirit and as I am yielding to the Holy Spirit that I can then, through the power of the Spirit, be a true witness.

Jesus said,

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me. (Acts 1:8)

But I cannot be a witness apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. The word *power* in the Greek is *dynamis*, from which we receive our English word, *dynamic*. And so, you will receive the dynamics—and how we need the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in order that we might be true and faithful witnesses of Jesus.

Now in the life of Peter, we see a classic example of a man who has the right desires, but lacks the power of the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot do that which he wanted and desired so desperately to do. Jesus, the night He was betrayed, as He was eating supper with the disciples, He said to them, “All of you are going to be offended tonight because of Me.” And Peter said, “Lord, though they all are offended, I would never be offended.” And Jesus said, “Peter, before the rooster crows you will have denied Me three times.” Peter said, “I would never deny You! If they would kill me I would not deny You. If they were torturing me, I would never deny You!” And Peter was expressing the desire of his heart: to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ. That was the heart of Peter, not to deny Jesus, but to be a faithful witness.

And yet, we find Peter standing outside of the house of the high priest where Jesus has been brought before the religious tribunal, this august body of religious leaders, and they are trying Him in this mock trial. And as Peter is standing outside with the soldiers, warming himself by their fire, a young maiden comes up to Peter and says, “Aren’t you also one of His disciples?” Peter says, “No. I do not know Him.” A little later she comes back and she says, “I am sure I have seen you with Him.” He says, “No, no. You do not know what you are talking about. I do not know Him.” And finally the soldiers say to Him, “You must be one of His disciples. You have a Galilean accent.” And Peter begins to swear, denying that he ever knew Jesus. And the rooster begins to crow.

Peter was sincere. When he said, “Lord, if they would kill me I would never deny You,” he was talking from his heart. He was expressing the desires of his spirit and his heart, of being faithful to Jesus. His spirit indeed was willing, but his flesh was weak.

Now it is a few weeks later. The scene is the same. The religious council of Jerusalem has gathered together. But this time Peter is not outside, he is a defendant standing before them. And the prosecuting attorney asks him a very leading question. “Tell us, by what power or by what name did you make this lame man walk?” And then we read,

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, ‘Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all of the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ (Acts 4:8-12)

And Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter...” What a changed man! What is the difference? He has received what Jesus promised. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses unto Me.” And here we see Peter giving a very

powerful and dynamic witness of Jesus Christ to these men who, only a few weeks earlier, were standing outside of that august body where he was cowed into a denial of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is given to you as a gift of God to empower you to live as a witness for Jesus Christ and to share that witness verbally with others. But as we said, what you say can never be greater than what you are. What you are oftentimes speaks much louder than what you say.

A little bit further in Acts 4, we again see the boldness it takes to witness. Peter was threatened not to speak any more of this man in the name of Jesus. They commanded him not to speak or teach, but Peter and John answered and said,

Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. (Acts 4:19-23)

They reported their whole experience before the chief priests and the elders. And when the people heard what was going on, the persecution that was beginning, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord. And they prayed,

And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spake the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31)

They were filled with the Holy Spirit, which gave them power to speak the word and to witness with boldness. Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be witnesses unto Me.” We need that power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the weakness of our flesh.

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the promise. And Lord, we are aware of the warfare that goes on within us. We are aware of the weakness of our flesh. But Lord, we are also aware of the yearning of our heart and of our spirit to be, Lord, a witness for You. Lord, we recognize that we cannot do it in ourselves. We have tried, Lord, and like Peter we have ended up frustrated. We find this other law at work that when we would do good, evil is present. The law of the flesh is warring against the spirit. Lord, we need the dynamic of Your Holy Spirit. And so we come tonight, Lord, and we ask You to have mercy upon us and our weaknesses. And we ask, Lord, that You would fill us with Your Holy Spirit, that we might have that power to be the kind of witness that will bring glory and honor unto Your name. We

desire to be faithful witnesses of what You are and bearing that witness before others. Help us, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.