

The Church That Jesus Is Building.
The Power Of The Holy Spirit - Pastor Roger Ridley
Gretna Baptist Church, Gretna, NE, April 10, 2005

My body has literally been shaking for the past few weeks. My mind has been in an excited state so that it has been hard for me to keep my focus. My emotions have been on edge, I break into tears without warning.

No, I am not going through a mid-life crisis.

The reason is simple. God has done some marvelous things among us! It has filled me with anticipation. And I'm left wondering what God is going to do next.

Think of what it must have been like for those eleven disciples of Jesus, in those immediate days after His death, burial, and resurrection. In Acts chapter 1, it tells us that Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs for 40 days (1:3). It must have felt so surreal.

With everything that was happening, they were left in a state of anticipation. They were not sure what was going to happen, but they were convinced that this was all a build-up to something even bigger.

At the end of 40 days, following the resurrection, Jesus met with them on top of Mt. Olivet, overlooking the city of Jerusalem. The disciples could not contain themselves any longer, and so they asked Jesus, *Is now the time You are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?* (1:6) They were thinking as BIG as they could think.

As important, as the kingdom was to the people of Israel, and still will be, I want to submit to you that Jesus had something BIGGER in mind. He had in mind a vision for the whole world, where both Jew and Gentile would be brought together into one body called, The Church.

To me, it is extremely important that you and I understand that. God is adding new people to our congregation. He is doing some wonderful things among us. And, we are just about ready to construct our own church building. But there is a trap that goes along with this. Too often, this is *as big* as you and I can think. We think that a few more people, and a church building of our own is what it's all about. In fact, that's just a very, very small part of it.

Jesus wants to get our hearts and minds off the church that we are building, as important as it is to us, and on the Church that He is building.

That's what He did with the disciples in Acts 1:8. Please open your Bibles to that passage, and look at it with me...

This almost sounds like the passage we considered last time in Matthew 28. It is a re-statement of the Great Commission. You might wonder, *Why take the time to consider it*

again? Let me give you three quick reasons: (1) Because Jesus re-stated it, we should re-consider it. (2) Because, immediately following this, Jesus ascended up into heaven. This is what He left for us to do until He comes again. (3) It has a different focus. It concerns the power of the Holy Spirit.

So far, we have considered the promise that Jesus made for the building of His Church; we have listened in on His prayer for the Church; last time we considered His the plan for building the Church; and today, we are going to turn our attention to the power by which He builds His Church.

There are 4 aspects regarding the power of the Holy Spirit that you and I must understand, and always keep before us, if you and I are going to responsibly do our part in the Church that Jesus is building.

I. The Promise of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus first made a promise to His disciples. He said, “*Ye shall receive power.*”

Working for a hardware store in Chicago, while going to Moody Bible Institute, I was sent out to wire-up an outlet, in a dark closet, for an older widow. As I went to make the connection, I accidentally touched the wires together, and was *knocked back* against the wall. I RECEIVED power.

Jesus told His disciples that in just a few days they would receive power. They had no idea how *jolting* it really was going to be. It was by *this power*, that it would later be said of them, that they were turning the world upside down.

I bring this to your attention, only because, you and I do not need to *wait* for this promise. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we also receive *the promise* of the Holy Spirit, spoken of by Jesus in John 14-16, and in Acts 1. It is *a reality* in the life of every child of God. Don't waste your time *waiting* or searching for what you already have.

1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*”

This promise has been fulfilled in the life of every believer, and so what you and I should be doing is *living out* the promise!

II. The Power of the Holy Spirit.

This promise concerns *the power* of the Holy Spirit.

My wife Sheryl, last week, took my chain saw for the very first time, and went to our daughter's house to cut some trees. When she came back, she was *all pumped up*. Doing that job, with the power of that chain saw, filled her with excitement.

Jesus was about to send forth His disciples, and through them us, *to reach the world*. That

was, and continues to be, an overwhelming task. Most of us find it difficult to reach across the street, let alone, the world. But Jesus has not sent us in our own power. He has sent us, with the power of the Holy Spirit in us, and at our complete disposal.

When I started to explain to Sheryl how to use the chain saw, she started to look for my hand saw. I told her it was dull, and would make the job too difficult.

To go in our own power would make the task that Christ has given us far too difficult, and discouraging. And yet, that's exactly what we do. How foolish of us, when the power of the Holy Spirit is in us, and at our complete disposal.

The Christians that were *most effective* in accomplishing the mission of Christ, described for us in the New Testament, were said to be *full of the Holy Spirit*. Think of Stephen in Acts 6-7, who died as the first martyr, and Barnabas in Acts 11, who went and got Paul when everyone else was afraid to. These men touched a lot of lives because they were *full* of the Holy Spirit.

Can that be said of us?

It should be.

Here's a simple way to make it happen: start each day, and each task, with a simple prayer, based on Ephesians 5:18. Say *Dear Heavenly Father, I cannot face this day in my own power; or I cannot accomplish this task in my own power, I yield myself to the Holy Spirit, and ask to be filled by Him.*

That transfer of power, from us to Him, is what it takes. And the Holy Spirit is ready and willing for His power to be used in our life.

III. The Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Now, *the presence* of the Spirit in our life does a fantastic thing! According to Jesus in Acts 1:8, His presence *causes us* to be *witnesses*.

I know that many will disagree with me, but I have never believed that you and I need to take a class on how to be a witness. Being a witness is the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in our life.

A Christian, yielded to the Holy Spirit, can't help but be a witness, because that's what the presence of the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said in John 16:14, "*He shall glorify Me.*"

I remember *so well* the change that took place when I received Christ as my Savior. I was in college at the time, and people avoided me in the hallways, because I was trying to tell *all of them* about Jesus. Believe me, that wasn't natural to me. That was the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, because of the presence of the Spirit, in order for you and I not to be a witness, it is going to mean that in some way we are *quenching* the Spirit of God in us. I

Thessalonians 5:19 provides this simple remedy, it says, “*Quench not the Spirit.*”

Instead of yielding to Satan, instead of yielding to the world, instead of yielding to the flesh, all of which *quench* the Spirit of God in us, we yield to the Holy Spirit, and *His presence* will cause us to be witnesses.

IV. The Purpose of the Holy Spirit.

It’s interesting what happens at that point. *The purpose* of the Holy Spirit is to spread that witness of Christ.

Jesus said...

Did you ever think about that? Once you and I, by of the power of the Holy Spirit, because of His presence in our life, speak as a witness of Christ, it *spreads*.

I have an enlarged photograph of my wife, which is one of my treasures. It dates back to when we were first dating. It has her skipping a rock across a pond, creating a ripple effect in the water.

When you and I speak as a witness, the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to create a ripple effect. Ever-widening circles that you and I may never be aware of. As we speak with someone here, someone across the country hears about it, and our testimony of Christ touches their life.

Those first eleven disciples had no idea how big that was. In the purpose of the Spirit, their witness by the power of the Spirit is still touching lives today.

You go out and share the gospel with just one person that believes on Christ, and that person then goes to all their family and friends, and some of them become Christians, and go out and do the same thing. In the purpose of the Holy Spirit there is no end to what can happen.

When I was 20 years old, two friends, Ron and Bob, introduced me to Jesus, I have done the same for others, and only God knows how many others they have gone to. That’s the plan that Jesus has for building His Church.

Conclusion: The promise of the Holy Spirit is *a reality* for every born-again believer.

The *power* of the Holy Spirit enables us to do what we can not do in our own strength.

The presence of the Holy Spirit *causes* us to be witnesses of Jesus Christ.

And the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to take our witness and spread it across the world.

What an opportunity you and I have, because of the Holy Spirit, to be a part of something far BIGGER than we can even think.

If you have never called upon Jesus Christ to be your Savior, we encourage you to do so today...

If you are a Christian, but in some way have been quenching the Spirit of God in your life, then we encourage you today to...

And then I want to finish with this question -

Since this is the way Jesus is building His Church, because of the Spirit's promise, His power, His presence, and purpose in your life, are you the kind of witness Jesus wants you to be?