

The Empowering Presence of the Holy Spirit Part 4: Pursuing Spiritual Power

Text: Acts 1:4-8 *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but **wait for the gift my Father promised**, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ⁶ So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ 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.”*

I. Are we supposed to wait for empowering?

A. *There is a proper place for waiting on the Lord and there is a connection between waiting and empowering.*

B. How did the disciples wait?

i. **Acts 1:14** *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

ii. **Luke 24:49-53** *“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.”...⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”*

➤ 2:42

➤ 3:1

➤ Acts 4:24-31

C. There is a difference between waiting on the Lord for a specific experience and waiting on God in prayer because our trust is in Him and not ourselves.

Jim Cymbala: *“The church cannot be the church without the Holy Spirit abiding [in] and empowering it.”*

II. What does it mean to wait on the Lord?

A. *Waiting on the Lord* has a long history in the life of God's people:

i. **Psalm 5:1-3** *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.*

➤ **Psalm 88:13** *I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.*

➤ **Psalm 57:8** *Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.*

➤ **Psalm 119:147** *I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.*

i. **Psalm 27:13-14** *I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.*

b) **Jim Cymbala:** *“Jesus did not say to wait for any certain manifestation: the flickering flames, the rushing wind, or the speaking in tongues. He pointed them to their need of receiving spiritual power.”*

ii. **Psalm 37:7** *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*

iii. **Isaiah 30:18-19** *Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you.*

a) Luke 18:7-8

b) What is faith in this context? Faith is the that quality that expresses itself in waiting on God.

- iv. **Lamentations 3:22-26** *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

III. Some Practical Considerations

- A. We need to have a personal relationship with God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *"Many people seek fellowship because they are afraid to be alone. Because they cannot stand loneliness, they are driven to seek the company of other people...Let him who cannot be alone, beware the community...Let him who is not in community, beware of being alone.... There are three purposes for which the Christian needs a definite time when he can be alone during the day: Scripture meditation, prayer, and intercession."*

- i. We should make it a priority to start our day with time alone with God.
- a) Colossians 3:16 *"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..."*
- b) Colossians 4:2 *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*
- ii. Our fellowship grows out of a personal relationship. A personal faith. Stir this up.
- a) Octavius Winslow: *"The path of spiritual declension is a 'sloped plane', each step accelerating the rapidity of the soul's descent. It commences at the closet. The restraining of prayer; especially private devotion; is the first stage in the decay and declension of the believer in the divine life.*
"Soon will follow the fascination and power of the world; and when the world enters like a flood, Christ and prayer and eternal realities are swept before its impetuous torrent, then the gracious soul is stranded upon the bleak, rock bound coast of bitter remorse and dark despair.
(From Octavius Winslow's "Prayer Out of Soul Depths")

- B. We need to be joined together with others in waiting on God.
 - i. The personal relationship we just spoke of is to feed our fellowship.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *“Let him who is not in community, beware of being alone. ...We recognize, then, that only as we are within the fellowship can we be alone ...Only in the fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone....One who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.”*

- ii. Remember the disciples joined together constantly in prayer.
- iii. **Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

C. Pray

- i. Ephesians 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit **on all occasions** with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*
- ii. Jude 1:20-21 *“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and **pray in the Holy Spirit**. Keep yourselves in God's love **as you wait** for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”*

“When we desire to see our churches go from embers to a flame, prayer is the spiritual element that corresponds to oxygen in a fire. Without the oxygen of prayer to produce the flame of renewal, no amount of human effort can make it happen.”

William Law: *“Where the Holy Spirit is not honored as the one through whom the whole life and power of gospel salvation is to be effected, it is no wonder that Christians have no more of the reality of the gospel than the Jews had of the purity of the Law... For the New Testament without the coming of the Holy Spirit in power over self, sin, and the devil is no better a help to heaven than the Old Testament without the coming of the Messiah.”*