

## 3. "CONVINCING WISDOM"

When the Holy Spirit falls upon you in power your witness to Christ comes with convincing wisdom, irresistible words. In Acts 6:5 Luke tells us that Stephen was chosen as a deacon because he was full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Verse 8 says that he was full of grace and power and did great wonders and signs among the people. Then in verse 10 Luke tells us about Stephen's witness to Jews from Alexandria and Cilicia and Asia: "**They could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.**" It doesn't matter how educated or intelligent you are, unless the Spirit comes upon you in power when you witness to Christ, people will be able to twist what you say to make it sound unacceptable and foolish. But if the power of the Holy Spirit comes down and you are clothed with heavenly wisdom, something supernatural will happen. Your words will carry an irresistible force. "They could not resist the wisdom and Spirit with which he spoke." Note: this power does not always guarantee that hearers will be converted. These men were not converted but became all the more devious in their opposition when they couldn't resist Stephen in public. We need special power in our witness so that our wisdom will be convincing and irresistible.

## 4. CONVERTING EFFECTIVENESS

When the Holy Spirit falls upon you in power your witness to Christ comes with converting effectiveness. Not always, (as we just saw) but far more often than without the special power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:15-17 the angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son, John the Baptist "**will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and the power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.**" In Acts 11:24 it says that Barnabas "**was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And a large company was added to the Lord.**" We need the special power of the Spirit's fullness because the human heart is so hard to turn to God! Conversions are the work of God. Evangelism is a supernatural business or it is nothing of any eternal significance. We need special power if we want an expanding witness that actually converts sinners.

## What Should We Do?

And what about you and me individually? Are we satisfied with our spiritual level of power in witness for Christ? I'm not. Are you? Do you have the deep conviction and self-denying courage and irresistible wisdom and converting effectiveness that God wants you to have in your witness for Christ? Have you become content with your spiritual walk? Or are you seeking His power? "**You shall receive power!**" What should we do? What should we do as individuals? What should we do as a church?



**"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance"** (Acts 2:1-4).

## The Explosive Power of Pentecost

When Alfred Nobel discovered an explosive element that was stronger than anything the world had known at the time, he asked a friend and Greek scholar for a word that conveyed the meaning of explosive power. The Greek word was *dunamis*, and Nobel named his invention "dynamite." *Dunamis* is the same word that Jesus used when He told His disciples, "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"** (Acts 1:8). **In other words, "You shall receive explosive, dynamite power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."** Think about how this power transformed the first-century believers. Prior to Pentecost, Simon Peter couldn't stand up for his faith when strangers asked him if he was a follower of Jesus. After the power of the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, Peter stood up and boldly preached the gospel, resulting in 3,000 people being saved.

## Peter's Pentecostal Sermon



The perplexities and doubts of the people demand a response, and Peter rises as head and spokesman of the Apostles to address the

crowd. Peter's bold preaching is itself a witness to the fact of Jesus' resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit. (Contrast it to his inability to associate himself with Jesus when the Lord was put on trial.) It is easy to get lost in the miraculous signs of Pentecost and miss the meaning of this event. Peter is clear on what he believes Pentecost signifies:

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you see and hear." (Acts 2:32-33) Peter's message so profoundly touches those listening that "they [are] cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37) and wonder what they should do in response. They expected an earthly, political kingdom but instead were given a spiritual one: Christ was enthroned in heaven, and they were charged to be His witnesses.

### What did Jesus Promise?



They expected an earthly, political kingdom but instead were given a spiritual one: But what did Jesus promise? Christ was enthroned in heaven, and they were charged to be His witnesses. Jesus promised the Spirit as a permanent guide, teacher, seal of salvation, and comforter for believers (John 14:16-18). He also promised that the Holy Spirit's power would help

His followers to spread the message of the Gospel around the world: "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" (Acts 1:8). The salvation of souls is a supernatural work only made possible by the Holy Spirit's power at work in the world.

### "Power Is Essential"

The reason I say power is essential for witness is because in both Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8 Jesus says that power must come first—"You shall receive power ... and you shall be my witnesses." "You are my witnesses ... stay in the city, until you are clothed with power." Both these texts Jesus is sending them from Jerusalem in ever-expanding circles until all the nations are evangelized. In Luke 24:47 He says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached to all nations beginning from Jerusalem"—"You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth"—hence an ever expanding witness. hence, an ever-expanding witness. Jesus is not talking here of an occasional word of witness in our same circle of culture. He's talking about ever-expanding efforts to penetrate more and more of Satan's strongholds of unbelief. That's why I say special power is essential for an expanding witness to Christ.

### "The Power Must Be Special"



The reason I say special power is essential is that it takes power just to become a Christian. But it takes another dimension of power to carry out an expanding witness to Christ. Jesus is telling them to wait for is a special power - something more than the ordinary experience of power that makes a person a Christian and makes one love worship and have joy and go to prayer. What Jesus wants to teach us is mainly this: The great need of the hour is power provided by the Holy Spirit.

### "What the Power Produces"

We need this power. Our missionaries need it. And you and I need it, if we want our lives to count for eternity. And the reason we need it is that without it our witness for Christ will lack deep conviction, self-denying courage, convincing wisdom, and converting effectiveness. Let me illustrate these four things from Scripture.

#### 1. DEEP CONVICTION

When the Holy Spirit falls upon you in power your witness to Christ comes with deep conviction. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 Paul says, "Our Gospel came to you not only in Word, but also in Power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." When God clothes His witnesses with that special power from on high the effect is a deep certainty and confidence and conviction about Christ and the reality of His life and work. The power of God comes upon you, wraps you up as though in a garment of strength, and carries you with conviction and assurance through the hour of testimony. We need deep and confident conviction when we speak for Christ. This comes when the power of the Holy Spirit falls on us and clothes us with reassuring strength.

#### 2. SELF-DENYING COURAGE AND BOLDNESS

When the Holy Spirit falls upon you in power your witness to Christ comes with self-denying courage and boldness. Acts 4:31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness." And Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7-8, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a Spirit of power and love and self-control." Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord ... but take your share of suffering for the Gospel in the power of God." Where does boldness come from? It comes from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Where does courage to suffer for Christ come from? It comes from the power of God—the Spirit of power! To reach this city and to reach the world with the Gospel we must have courage and boldness that is willing to suffer for Christ. This is why martyrs have been able to sing in the flames—this is no ordinary power. And the need for it is great.