

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

April 14-18, 2008



April 14, 2008      **In The Power of the Spirit**

*“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.”<sup>1</sup>*

One of the remarkable things about Christianity is that the founding leaders of this world-transforming movement were, of themselves, nobodies. A group of fishermen and others of similar social status persuaded myriads of people to follow an allegedly dead Jewish carpenter. In a few generations they turned the world upside down.

In part this was due to having spent two to three years under the tutelage of Jesus. By word, example and practice, he taught them how to proclaim the good news that “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”.

Their encounters with the risen Christ also enabled them to be great witnesses. Their certain knowledge that Jesus had been raised from death made for a compelling testimony. They spoke from absolute conviction and maintained that witness even in the face of persecution and death.

But in spite of those preparations, Jesus told them not to start the work of building the Kingdom until the power of the Spirit came upon them. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit's power was given for the express purpose of witnessing: sharing the good news by word and deed in ways that would effect spiritual transformation.

Education and personal experience of Christ are of great importance. But the Kingdom can only be built effectively as God empowers us with the Spirit so that we may witness for him.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:8 (TNIV)

April 15, 2008      **Boldness and Courage**

*“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>*

One of the first hallmarks of the empowering work of the Holy Spirit was the ability to share the good news of Christ with courage and boldness. This started on the day of Pentecost as they went into the streets of Jerusalem to proclaim the good news. Later, though facing active persecution from the authorities, they prayed for spiritual power “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”<sup>2</sup>

The Holy Spirit also empowered them regarding what to say.<sup>3</sup> He brought to mind the teachings of Jesus and enabled them to apply the good news to different audiences in different ways.

Whether it is before a group or with one other person, sharing the gospel can be a daunting prospect. God wants to give us the Spirit to infuse us with boldness and courage. This does not mean being brash or overbearing, but being willing to speak up. It may come in the form of a statement, a brief testimony, a timely question or an extended discourse. The key is to speak up.

We also have the assurance that, at the right time, the Spirit will inspire us as to what to say. He may also inspire us to stop talking and listen carefully! The bottom line is that the power of the Spirit is available to ‘prompt’ us from behind the scenes to boldly speak for Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4:13

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:31

<sup>3</sup> John 14:26; Luke 12:11-12

April 16, 2008

## Signs and Wonders

*"...Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs."<sup>1</sup>*

*"The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people."<sup>2</sup>*

Throughout the Book of Acts we find repeated references to the miracles performed by the early Christians through the power of the Spirit. On Pentecost they were enabled to proclaim the gospel in languages they had not learned so that the many pilgrims in the city could understand the good news. Healings, exorcisms and other works of power were frequent, public events. The same Holy Spirit that had empowered Christ to perform signs and wonders has been poured out upon the Church to do things that supernaturally reinforce the truth of the gospel message.

These miracles were commonly labeled 'signs and wonders'. As good signage, they pointed people dramatically to Jesus. And because they are extraordinary events, they cause 'wonder' or the sort of numinous awe that is the basic response to the presence of God – awe that hopefully will lead to faith and worship.

Signs and wonders are important 'power-tools' given by the Spirit of God. But they are not primarily for the blessing of believers. In Acts they take place primarily in the public square and are specifically sought to counter skepticism and unbelief.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than waiting to experience signs and wonders within the context of the church, perhaps God prefers to give them as we go out in faith, as tools for active outreach and mission.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:22 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Acts 5:12 (TNIV)

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 4:29-30

April 17, 2008

## **'Miracles' of Love**

*“And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.*

*For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.”<sup>1</sup>*

Ed Dickson, a missionary in Eastern Europe, writes enthusiastically about life-changing operations being done for handicapped orphans. Operations that could not be done because money was lacking are now able to take place through the generous giving of Christians. Ed labels these operations 'miracles'.

Strictly speaking, they are not 'miracles' in the sense of being events that suspend the normal 'laws' of nature by the power of God. But they are 'signs' and 'wonders'. They point to the life-changing power of Christ that transforms selfishness to generosity. They often provoke 'awe' in the hearts of those who witness the love of God in action.

Jesus said, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*<sup>2</sup> And the Book of Acts emphasizes that acts of loving generosity are an evidence of the power of the Spirit at work among us.

Miraculous healings and other supernatural signs are made available in God's timing. He has absolute control over the where and when of such miracles. But God has given us great discretion to perform 'miracles' of love on an ongoing basis. These evidences of the world-changing power of God open up many hearts to the truth of the good news.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:32-34 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> John 13:35 (TNIV)

April 18, 2008

## Providential Guidance

*“The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Holy Spirit also nurtures faith by putting believers in the right place at the right time to share the good news with others. In the case above, God used an angel and prophecy to direct his evangelist to the Ethiopian official whose heart was spiritually open. In other instances, the Spirit may use circumstances or an inward nudge or other means of guidance to put us in position to share Christ with an individual or group.

This sort of direction may also come in the form of a broader, more general calling. Paul and Barnabas were set aside as the Spirit led the Antioch church to commission them as missionaries to the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> Later the Spirit specifically steered them to cross over to Macedonia and preach the gospel there.<sup>3</sup> Other apostles and evangelists followed the leading of the Spirit to various areas and people groups. In similar ways, God may give us a calling and passion to share Christ’s love with a specific group of people or in a specific area. When we follow that leading of the Spirit, the result is fruitfulness for the kingdom as people are won to Christ.

Creating faith is a work of the Spirit. He does it by empowering Christians in various ways to be Christ’s ambassadors. What the Holy Spirit requires from us is openness and availability to be so empowered.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 8:29-31 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:2-3

<sup>3</sup> Acts 16:6-10