

“TAPPING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Text: Acts 2:1-4

New Year Sunday

By Pastor YAU

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INTRODUCTION:

1) The missing link of the Trinity: One of the taboos among the evangelicals is the unintentional ignoring of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Most of us are very familiar with God the Father and God the Son, but how many of us are familiar with God the Holy Spirit? Most Evangelical preachers, including myself, are unconsciously ignoring or neglecting the Holy Spirit in our plans of preaching and teaching. This inhibition is caused by fear of being labeled charismatic,” which earned a bad reputation by many for being zealous but low in biblical foundation. There is a real need for study on the Holy Spirit and the power in Christian history. One of the weaknesses of being evangelical is the over emphasis of human theories and methods to do God's work at the expense of relying and drawing power from the Holy Spirit.

2) The power of the Holy Spirit: From the early records of the Bible starting in the creation story, the Bible says: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the water.” (Genesis 1:1-2) The Spirit of God was in Mary to form the baby Jesus in her. The Spirit descended on Jesus when he was baptized. Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit on his disciples when he gave them the Great Commission (Acts 1:8), and the actual coming is in the text we use today. Throughout the 2,000 years of the Christian church history, countless witnesses testified the mighty work of the Holy Spirit, bringing revivals and healing power, changing lives, and leading millions to accept Jesus Christ.

What does the Holy Spirit do to energize God's people?

THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS UNITY IN GOD'S PEOPLE: (Acts 2:5-11)

1) The Holy Spirit unified their languages: “There were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard them speaking in their own language.” (2:5-6) This is the starting point of speaking in tongues, almost monopolized by the charismatic people. The Holy Spirit rested on the disciples of Jesus, enabled them to speak in different tongues or languages, so all the people there in Jerusalem could understand the message

of the gospel. These people came to Jerusalem from different parts of the world, speaking different home-town languages, but God's Spirit enabled them to understand the message. Language and cultural differences have been problems among God's people in their churches. But if we seek the power of God's Spirit, we will be able to understand each other, work with each other and advance God's gospel ministry more effectively together.

2) The Holy Spirit unified their church: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.” (2:41) If you think that it would be better for a church to have all the same people, coming from the same background and speaking the same language, you need to read this passage again: The First Baptist Church in Jerusalem was made up of people from different lands, speaking different languages and having different cultural backgrounds. What a wonderful example to see how our own church follows the first church in history. When Jesus called his disciples to make disciples of all nations, he intended to bring people from all corners of the world into his church. It is through the working of the Holy Spirit that God brings all kinds of people into his church, even to the local churches. Yes, we are from many lands, speaking many different languages, but we are one in Jesus.

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED THEM TO WITNESS: (2:14, 28-31)

1) The Holy Spirit empowered Peter: “Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.” (2:14) Do you still remember that chicken Peter who denied three times he had anything to do with Jesus? But now empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up and presented the gospel message for the first time in Christian history. Fear is the greatest hindrance to stop us from sharing the gospel message, talking to others about Jesus. When you see an opportunity to share the gospel or invite someone to church, you need to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit, so he can grant you power and wisdom to save souls. If that wimpy Peter can do it with the power of the Holy Spirit, we all can do it the same way. Peter had never preached any message before this but God's Spirit empowered him to do great things and 3,000 were saved.

2) The Holy Spirit empowered others: “They did what your power and will had decided what should happen. Now Lord, enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” (4:28-31) Do you remember that after Jesus had died on the cross, the other disciples of Jesus stayed in the upper

room with the door closed because they feared the Jews? They were so fearful that they couldn't even recognize Jesus when he appeared to them. But now with the power of the Holy Spirit, they spoke the message boldly without fear. It isn't our own wisdom or courage; it is the power of the Lord that energizes us to witness for him. Pray and try it. You can do it. We don't have to be Peters, we only have to be vessel God can use. You don't have to know everything, but you need to be bold in witnessing.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS SOULS TO SALVATION: (2:36-41)

1) The power rests in the name of Jesus: “Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (2:36) Later on, Paul echoed the glory and majesty in the name of Jesus when he wrote to the Philippian Christians: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (2:9-11) So, I want to encourage all of you: Whenever you pray, both in private or public, please pray “in the name of Jesus Christ” because there is power in his name. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God, and his name is Jesus because “he will save his people from their sins.” (Matt 1:21)

2) The power rests in the Holy Spirit: “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles: Brothers, what shall we do?” (2:37) The Spirit of God has the power to convict people of their sins as we see it here at Pentecost. “Cut to the heart” means greatly grieved over their sins. We need to and can witness to non-believers about the salvation of Jesus Christ, but we cannot bring anyone to “cut their heart.” No one can convict them of their sins except the Holy Spirit. Jesus foretold his disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit and his work in John 16:7-8, “But if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of the guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.” This is the work of God. We are only his mouth piece and instrument to bring people to God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ENERGIZES PERSONAL GROWTH: (2:41-46)

1) Grow from believers to disciples: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (2:41-42) When Jesus commissioned his disciples to go to the uttermost part of the world, he wanted them to bring him disciples, not

merely believers. These early Christians did more than just believe and were baptized. They also started to grow from believers to disciples. This is what the Lord demands of all of us: not just to believe, but also to grow. A disciple is someone who makes a commitment to follow his teacher/mentor, to learn, to grow, to be more like his teacher/mentor. This is what all of us need to do.

2) Five ways to personal growth: The Bible in a clear and simple way points us to five practical steps to grow our Christian life:

a) Study the word of God: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” (2:42) Bible study is the first step of spiritual growth. The Bible is the bread of life to all Christians, new and seasoned.

b) Fellowship with each other: “And to fellowship.” This is about the interaction among God's people. No Christian can grow by himself as a lone ranger. God wants us to congregate, to learn, to help and care for one another.

c) Worship in God's house: “To the breaking of bread.” (2:42) This is about congregational worship and observing the communion. God's children are to worship God, to sing praises to God, to adore him and listen to him.

d) Also grow in prayer: “And in prayer.” (2: 42) This can be in personal devotional prayer time or in corporate prayer during worship service. Prayer is the life-line of spiritual air that can keep us alive and connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus wants us to be connected with him to bear fruit. (Jn 15:5)

e) Grow in faithful giving: “Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone that had need.” (2:45) Since the early days in the Bible, God commanded his people: “No one is to appear before me empty-handed.” (Ex. 23:15) The Bible has much to say about faithful giving of tithes and offering. The level of growth is reflected best by the level of our faithful giving.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ENERGIZES CHURCH GROWTH: (2:46-47)

1) Growth inside of the church: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in the homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” (2:46) This is about internal church growth, the growth in church worship and in fellowship. A growing church is achieved when the people are faithful in attending worship in the church and fellowship at homes. No church can grow when God's people are lazy in participating in worship and fellowship. Christians should have the desire to group with fellow disciples so we can grow in our spiritual relationship.

2) Growth outside of the church: “And enjoy the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (2:47) It

is a natural result when God's people are faithful in worship, in Bible study, in prayer and in sacrificial giving of love, their testimony will influence the society to draw others to see what God is working in their lives. There is no secret formula to grow a church. It is the people who grow the church. When the people are growing, the church will be growing.

APPLICATION OF TRUTH:

1) God's power in his people: “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14) The Spirit of God comes into the heart of a believer the moment he accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and he will never leave until we meet with the Lord. This Spirit of God will be the everlasting power in our life for all of our needs. Anytime you feel desperate, don't know what to do or where to go, you can always turn to him for counsel, comfort and power. The Spirit of God is in you each and every day of your life. Take a deep breath, close your eyes, pray to God inside of you, the Spirit of God.

2) God's power in the church: “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the (power of the) Holy Spirit and spoke of the word of God boldly.” (Acts 4:31) Revival begins not in a revival meeting, not in the messages of a dynamic speaker, not in a study course with man's ideas, but in the power of the Holy Spirit when God's people get together in fervent prayer. Because when God's people believe in the power of prayer, the Spirit of God will rest in them, that they will “receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them, and they will be his witnesses.” (Acts 1:8) I want to urge all of you to dedicate a small part of your daily life to focus in prayer for yourself, for your church, for the need of salvation of your family, friends, colleagues and others in your community. I also urge you to come and join others in group prayer meetings at the church. When we pray, God will answer, will shake the ground and give us power to