

# LESSON 297

## THE SPIRIT'S POWER

Related Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-11

**KEY VERSE:** "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

Lesson Scripture: Acts 3:1-8; 4:31-37

### Introduction:

When the Holy Spirit manifests His presence and power in and among the children of God, He is not limited to what we call miraculous signs or wonders. His primary purpose is not to excite wonder and admiration by means of miracles, but simply to make believers in Jesus more like Jesus. There is something to be said for the idea that when vile and unworthy sinners learn to live from day to day the life of the holy Son of God, this is a more marvelous manifestation of divine grace and power than any miracle of physical healing.

Certainly God can work any kind of miracle He wishes to, any time and any place. But it is a viciously depraved, corrupt, and faithless creature that refuses to recognize the gracious goodness and power of the Creator in everyday life while hypocritically clamoring for his own selfish choice of miracles—as if God were obligated to prove Himself to the sinner on the sinner's terms! As Jesus said, it is "an evil and adulterous generation" that "seeketh after a sign."

Yet in special times and circumstances God has been pleased to make use of manifest miracles to get a hearing for His word. So it was in the earthly ministry of Jesus and during the first few years of the ministry of His church. This lesson on the Spirit's power in the first church may be outlined as follows:

1. Spiritual Piety, Acts 3:1
2. Spiritual Poverty, 3:2, 3
3. Spiritual Philanthropy, 3:4, 5
4. Spiritual Phenomenon, 3:6-8
5. Spiritual Prayer, Acts 4:31
6. Spiritual Partners, 4:32
7. Spiritual Power, 4:33
8. Spiritual Possessors, 4:34
9. Spiritual Provision, 4:35
10. Spiritual Paragon, 4:36, 37

### Notes on the Printed Text:

#### Spiritual Piety, Acts 3:1.

For some time, as noted in Luke 24:53 and Acts 2:46, the first church continued to use the facilities of the Jewish temple for daily services. Now, when God's people are led by the Holy Spirit, they are faithful, among other things, in church attendance. Peter and John knew that a prayer meeting was scheduled for "the ninth hour," and so that is where they were going.

#### Spiritual Poverty, Acts 3:2, 3.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," said Jesus (Mat. 5:3), referring no doubt to a proper humility; but this lame man's poverty was of a different kind. Not only was he a beggar, dependent on alms for his living; but such was his helpless condition that he had to be carried about by others, and was laid daily where he could arouse the pity and receive the alms of worshipers as they entered the temple. We can imagine that his natural poverty may have been used of God in bringing him to a sense of spiritual poverty in which he would be ready to receive a greater blessing than he dared ask for.

#### Spiritual Philanthropy, Acts 3:4, 5.

Genuine Christians ought to be the world's most generous philanthropists. Surely we have received most freely; we ought also freely to give, as God enables. Peter and John were concerned for the afflicted man, and because of this evident concern he was "expecting to receive something of them."

#### Spiritual Phenomenon, Acts 3:6-8.

Entirely apart from any miracles of physical healing, we have something far better than silver and gold to offer to a lost world. God's gift of eternal salvation in His Son is the greatest gift of all. And it was to call the attention of thousands of souls to this gospel of Christ that He worked a phenomenal "miracle of healing" (Acts 4:22) on this occasion. The conversion of "about five thousand" men (Acts 4:4) was a much greater and more lasting spiritual phenomenon than the phenomenon of healing.

#### Spiritual Prayer, Acts 4:31.

"When they had prayed" as recorded in the preceding verses 24-30, "the place was shaken." They had asked for "signs and wonders," and this was a sign that natural minds could recognize. But for the spiritually minded there was a better sign of God's answering spiritual prayer: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

#### Spiritual Partners, Acts 4:32.

Boldness in testimony was one evidence that the members of this first church were filled with the Holy Spirit; agreement in heart and soul with an unselfish spirit was another. This was not communism in the modern sense; it was rather a recognition that if God's people belong to Him so do their possessions, and it was in this sense that "they had all things common."

#### Spiritual Power, Acts 4:33.

Note the exercise of great spiritual power in the ministry of the apostles. What did they do with this "great power"? The Bible tells us: they testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As a result "great grace was upon them all." This is power worth having.

#### Spiritual Possessors, Acts 4:34.

Mutual sacrifice for the relief of the destitute was not mandatory but voluntary. It was not a situation where government confiscated the wealth of a minority to buy the votes of a majority; the "possessors of lands or houses" who liquidated their real estate to supply the church treasury were led to do so by the Spirit of God, not forced to do so by social pressure or political coercion.

**Spiritual Provision, Acts 4:35.**

As the oldest and most trusted members of the church, the apostles were first given the responsibility for distribution to "every man according as he had need." These words have been seized upon by modern socialists as a statement of their ideal; but we may note that under conditions as nearly ideal as possible in this world, the burden eventually became too heavy even for the apostles. (Acts 6:1-4.)

**Spiritual Paragon, Acts 4:36, 37.**

In a spiritually minded church the paragons the people praise are not the greedy and aggressive self-promoters, but the humble souls who simply live for the Savior in a spirit of self-sacrifice. Barnabas was such a soul, later described as "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith" (Acts 11:24). Here he is introduced to us as an outstanding example of a man who sacrificed his personal wealth to help meet the financial needs of his church.

**Key Verse:**

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

Christ's promise was fulfilled. We may note three truths in this text: First, the church's power is in the abiding presence of the Spirit of God. Second, the primary and permanent purpose of this power is not the working of miracles, but a faithful testimony for Jesus Christ. Third, this testimony, beginning at home, is to extend to "the uttermost part of the earth."