

Using Power Righteously (Part One)

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When thinking about the lessons engraved into the festivals of God, we can rattle off: Passover is about the forgiveness of sin, the Days of Unleavened Bread about overcoming and coming out of our sinful behaviors, Trumpets is about the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead, Atonement is in regard to sin being totally covered and the entire world at one with God, Tabernacles marks the Millennium, and the Last Great Day the second resurrection and the Lake of Fire.

But what about Pentecost? We have had a lot explained about it today and there is a bit more to come. Most of what I am going to give is basic to the day, but maybe we can help you along and strengthen you and your faith regarding it.

Now, is it not about God sending forth His Holy Spirit for the benefit of His children? Well, of course it is. Is it not also about the establishment of the church? Yes, it is, both of those are included in it. But the intent is far deeper, broader, and far more personal than that brief statement. It is the more specific and personal purpose for which the Holy Spirit is given that I believe is what we, in thanksgiving, should be focusing on in regard to this day, because it marks that we are God's hand-picked beneficiaries of the most awesome grace of all and we have it because it has been given. We already have it and it is awesome to our future.

This is because the knowledge regarding Pentecost represents the missing link between God and man. Pentecost is about God giving man the resources to righteously use all the other gifts and powers that He has given to prepare us for His Kingdom that we might be in it eternally. The command to observe Pentecost is given by God to remind us indeed to keep us fully, sharply aware and yet humble, because we do not have His Holy Spirit by nature. We were not born with it. Nobody is. We have it only because He personally chose to give it to us. That sets us apart from billions upon

billions of people—and we already have it. We can lose it, but we already have it. And God gave it to us, expecting us to make use of it.

Turn with me to Psalm 78. I am going into this for a purpose, because of a proclivity that we Israelitish people have, and I want us to be reminded of this proclivity.

Psalm 78:1-11 [This has a superscript on it: A Contemplation of Asaph] Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. [Are you doing this?] For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them.

The children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. [That is why the children did not know them and that is why they never got passed on because the parents did not do their job.] The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law [and here comes the important part of this opening of this sermon], and forgot His works and His wonders that He showed them.

That is Israel's forgetful proclivity. How quickly we forget God, even though we are surrounded by evidence of Him in every direction we look. If we would just stop to think about it, we would see the things that He made for our benefit and then gave them to us freely, hoping that we would use them

in the right way. But we forgot about the use that He instructed us to make of the things that He made. And we showed our children things that they did not forget. That is, how to be destructive.

Drop down to verse 40. This theme goes through this entire psalm, all 72 verses off and on.

Psalm 78:40-42 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: the day when He redeemed them from the enemy, . . .

And they paid for their forgetfulness and their children possibly even paid more because they did not even have it to begin with if the parents did not teach them anything. And so they went into life, into adulthood, like the snowflakes today are going into it. I should not say adulthood, it is more like older age because they are not really adults in their behaviors. We Israelitish people have a long, long history of forgetfulness. We have this proclivity because, in our pride, we do not make the efforts necessary to remember what is vitally important to our spiritual lives and future.

This nation (I have given five or six sermons that it is not, and never was, a Christian nation), but I will tell you what, it got started off pretty good compared to what it is today and we did not even keep that going. How quickly we turned our backs on the good that we did have. And if God was involved in any way in the establishment of this nation, and I am sure that He was because it was part of His purpose. He may have had something to do with the Constitution of the United States and other laws that are attached to it so that we would have a way of life that would produce the kind of productivity that He wanted this nation to have at the time of the end when Jesus Christ returns. But how quickly we forgot.

Now, why is it so important that God has determined to set apart one entire festival, one specific day each and every year devoted to it? In doing so, it places Pentecost into the same upper echelon as Passover and the forgiveness of sin, Trumpets and Christ's return, and Atonement and the entire world being at one with God. Pentecost is something of extra-special importance to our spiritual lives personally. That puts it in the category with Passover. No

salvation without Passover, no salvation without Pentecost and what it teaches us and what it supplies us.

Pentecost and the Holy Spirit is in a unique category. But why? I am going to give you the answer to that. It is a simple, clear answer. It is back in the New Testament in Ephesians the first chapter, the 13th and 14th verses why it is so important to us. (Incidentally, I learned some statistics about the Bible this week when I was looking up things regarding music—the longest book, the shortest book, the longest sentence, and on and on. Believe it or not, we are right in the middle of the longest sentence in the Bible here in Ephesians 1).

Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him [we are talking about Jesus Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Why is Pentecost so important? It is because whatever it supplies, whatever it empowers, whatever it enables us, is with us because of its presence in us. We cannot do without it and complete God's purpose. It is the guarantee of salvation. Without the Holy Spirit, even if we were forgiven, we would not have the tool necessary to accomplish the works of a saved person. And that is why it is the guarantee; it is what we are enabled to do with it that makes it possible for us to be saved. Even though we were forgiven, we have to have tools to work with.

Let us go to another scripture often repeated, well known, in Romans 8, verse 7. We all know what this is. Let us go to verse 6.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

There is no spiritual mindedness without the Holy Spirit. To be carnally minded is death. If God leaves us the way we are born—with a carnal mind—there is no salvation. The Holy Spirit enable us to do the works needful for showing God that we should be given eternal life.

Romans 8:7-8 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God [it is antagonistic toward God, it will never submit to God]; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. So then those who are in the flesh [those who are carnal] cannot please God.

Now, we will make a statement here that you will find as we continue on through is true. We cannot, without the addition of another factor, be saved. Another factor that we do not have by nature, something has to be given in order for us to go on from here.

Let us go to the book of John in chapter 3. I am turning to this because before we go any further, I want to give you a simple and clear and true definition of the term Spirit's root and its source. Remember what I said about Romans 8:6-8. We need the addition of something. We also know that that addition is the Holy Spirit of God that enables us. Now, what about Spirit? What is it? We at least want to have a simple definition of it, clear, right, and true. And so in John the third chapter, in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus,

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The word Spirit in both Hebrew and Greek is derived from, that is, rooted within, the term "breath" and/or "wind," a puff of air, wind. Thus Spirit in a context such as this one here in John 3 is an invisible and immaterial force or power by which other things can be caused to be moved and/or influenced. That is what wind is. It is invisible. You cannot see it, but it has the power to influence what it strikes against and thus moves.

Now let us first notice a way in which the term Spirit is used biblically and also along the way pick up some truth regarding why this gift is so vital. We are going to go back to Job the 32nd chapter and look at what is said about it right there. There is quite a bit said or revealed about it right there.

Job 32:4-9 Because they were years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to Job. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was aroused. So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, "I am young in years, and you are very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, 'Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice."

Elihu was a man younger than Job and his three protagonists, watching and listening as each poured forth his arguments in support of his perspective as to why Job was in this painful circumstance. It is Elihu who uses the term spirit. Now, he uses it in the sense of something indwelling and quite possibly without giving any particular hint right at first anyway, it has always been resident there since birth in all of mankind.

Now, Elihu gives no indication as to the spirit possessing a life independent of the person. Mark that down in your mind. But he does say it imparts power. In this case specifically, understanding. Understanding is power. When you know what is going on, you have power in situations. The impression is that this spirit is also a gift.

To be helpful here, Elihu uses the term man in a very general sense, in verse 8, "there is a spirit in man." He does not say in *a* man. He uses man in a general sense indicating *all* men, something that all men have. He does not say when it is given. He does not say the circumstance right here, if we just go by here. It is something that mankind has from birth. Now we are making an assumption there, but it seems to be right along with the context here. So he is not specifically indicating one person.

Now, we begin to see a difference here between the spirit in man and God's Holy Spirit because God's Holy Spirit is given personally and at various times, according to the clock that God has set for that particular person. So, we are dealing with a generality here, but it is nonetheless spirit and it has some powers that are similar to God's Holy Spirit. Nowhere near as great,

that is true, but one of those powers, as we see, is understanding. And there are many more powers that actually come as a result of that gift to mankind.

So Elihu appears to be saying that this spirit is in every human being as being created for all human beings. There is no indication the spirit is given independently long after a person's birth. And thus the Bible uses the term spirit to indicate an invisible, immaterial force, influence, or power. That is clearly seen here in one paragraph section in Job the 32nd chapter.

One might also use the term as a descriptor for spirit, that the spirit imparts attitude, leaning, or inclination to describe its qualities, depending upon the context one uses spirit in.

I am going to stretch your mind a little bit here. Maybe you have thought about this, but what I am going to say I do not have any real proof for but it seems like there is enough here that we can make something of this. We are going to go to the book of Ecclesiastes. Remember as we were going through Ecclesiastes, it says one of the things that we can get from that is that everything matters. I read this section in the sermonette this morning, but I am going to make a different application here.

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. [now, here comes a very interesting question] Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to earth?

Now hold that thought for just a bit.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was [when a man dies], and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Flip back to Ecclesiastes 3 again. Now, the Hebrew word *ruach*, is the word that is translated as wind, breath, or spirit, depending upon the context. All three apply as a proper definition for *ruach*. The thing that determines how *ruach* is going to be translated is the context in which it is. Now, the overall

subject in this context involves death. It asked this question again in verse 19: is a man truly a creation of God that is by nature superior to animals? That is the overall question in the context. Solomon seems to be arguing that since both die, then really a man has no advantage over an animal. The story is not done yet, but that is as far as he goes here. So, is a man truly a creation of God that is by nature superior to an animal?

In verse 19 the word *ruach* is clearly translated as breath, and the translators understood that, and I agree that is the proper translation at that point. It clearly reaches the conclusion that in this case, man's physical life is of and by itself has no superiority over an animal. Now in verse 20, this conclusion is confirmed. However, in verse 21 it throws us an interesting curve and it does this by asking yet another question, even though the subject is still death. In this case, the translators translated *ruach* as S. P. I. R. I. T.

That changes things greatly and it what is what we learned from Job 32. It is spirit that enables a human to display human characteristics, one of which is understanding. But if you remember Mr. Armstrong's articles on the spirit in man, he stretched that out, and I agree with him, that the spirit in man is what makes a man, a man, a human being, and it empowers the man to do all these physical things that we are enabled to do because we have a spirit. Now my question is: Does each animal creation also have a spirit that enables them to display and make use of the characteristics God created within them?

When you put this whole thing together, Solomon is saying an animal is an animal and a man is an animal, as far as simply life and death go, even though the man has a spirit and he is empowered to be human. He has human-like qualities. Now we see here that there is a very strong possibility that animals have a spirit. It does not enable them to act human, it enables them to act the way God created them to act. In other words, an elephant does not act like an alligator, it does not have the physical equipment and it does not have the spirit to determine what it is going to act and react like. Are you beginning to understand what I am getting at here?

Now, all this leads eventually to the Holy Spirit, because even as the human spirit enables a man to act like a human, God's Holy Spirit enables a human to act like God. That is why we need it. We need something *added* to what we are in order to make righteous use of the gifts that God has created within

us. Now we just use them humanly and we see what happens. We destroy everything! We forget all that is good and right. We need something to take us beyond the humankind into the Godkind and this is why God's Holy Spirit is the missing link between man and God. Man must have something added to him, and as we are beginning to see, God gives that spirit *personally*. There is a very good example of that in John the third chapter in Jesus dealing with Nicodemus. Nicodemus came out of that experience beginning to act like a converted person. He was beginning to get it as a result.

Now, we have to see more regarding the spirit in man and what it imparts to a man and the responsibilities that it has for us to have it. And also at the same time, along with that, to see that it requires us to have another spirit.

It is clear and I think it will become clearer as I go on here, from what we are able to observe from God's creation, there is indeed something unique about mankind that sets it apart from other physically living creations. We saw there, Solomon decided that in terms of death, that man was not an improvement over an animal. But there is something unique about men and because it is not used properly, it does not produce the right things.

We are going to go back to Genesis the first chapter.

Genesis 1:26-31 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yield seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for

food"; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

We are going to jump into chapter 2 where God is handing out gifts and instruction at the same time.

Genesis 2:7-8 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

Genesis 2:15-25 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. And so Adam gave names to all the cattle, to the birds of the air, to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

And God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

I began this section of the sermon saying that we can observe from God's creation; and that is why I read all of those verses. There is something unique about mankind that sets it apart physically from all other living creations.

What did we see there that sets man apart? The spirit in man has much to do with this.

1. Mankind is created in God's image and likeness. No animal, even if it does have a spirit, is given this description.

2. Whereas God is sovereign over all creation and mankind, like God, is given a broad measure of dominion, that is, authority and governance over the earth and other created living creatures. But mankind is commanded to subdue it.

Subdue modifies the term dominion. Subdue does not mean destroy or conquer. It means control or manage, indicating that without management and control earth will, by nature, degenerate and go wild, as we say, and our responsibility is to supervise it. No animal is equipped to do this. And this makes mankind radically different from animals.

After a while, this will begin to add up and of course it tells us why we need the Holy Spirit. Do you see what God is doing here to mankind? And the spirit in man is not adequate to carry it out.

3. God verbally communicated with mankind, giving instructive knowledge, including the knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil. All these things are in the verses that I read. Thus also indicating that not only is mankind gifted with communication skills far, far above that of animals, it also indicates mankind is also gifted with *memory*. I began this sermon showing that mankind, the Israelites, cannot remember! Even with direct confrontation with God, hearing His voice, being aware that He was not very far away from them, they *forgot* before they ever left the wilderness.

Do we need another spirit? Something that will enable mankind to take advantage of the wonderful gifts that God has given us?

God has given us an ability to communicate with one another. Animals cannot do that in the way that we can. God has given mankind memory, but we forget.

4. God gifted mankind with marriage and family, and therefore from this arises an emotional content and level within mankind animals do not possess and affecting the intensity of his desires that animals are not gifted with. All in the spirit in man, enabling men and women to be human.

I am going to go over this I do not know how many times. He is getting it across to us that it is not adequate. We have all the history of mankind to show what we have done with the gifts that God has given to us. Even though we have a spirit, we destroy everything we touch, We need help. And this is why this other spirit is so needful for us and why we should really appreciate it. Because it empowers us to make use of what God gave Adam and Eve at the very beginning, and we continue to have but do not use it properly.

So God gave mankind marriage and family and from this arises an emotional content—love with feeling. You know, it is possible to have love just by keeping the commandments, but it is so much better to have love with the right feelings at the same time, is it not? The Holy Spirit enables that.

Now this package of gifts that God gives to Adam and Eve right in the first couple of chapters adds to the conclusion that mankind is held responsible for what he chooses to do to a far higher level than other physical creations, thus, we are subject to punishment. He gave none of these responsibilities to any animal creation. They have no dominion over anything. They do not have marriage, they produce litters, but no real children. It goes on and on.

In light of these advantages, what I am going to say is very important knowledge to possess and use because it gives us understanding we need in order to judge life properly and to make the best use of these God given gifts.

Let us begin with this. Here is a bottom line responsibility that must be met by mankind, whether they are converted or unconverted. So let us go back to the book of Romans. If you think that God does not hold mankind seriously responsible, even though he is unconverted, then I am going to disprove this

in a moment. Now, you know that this is true because we have gone over these verses a number of times in the last number of months.

Romans 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men [There it is in general, men. Not just converted men, not just converted women, it is just mankind.], who suppress the truth in unrighteousness because what may be known of God is manifest in them [or to them], for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Unconverted people are without excuse before God. God is the perfect judge. He does not judge unfairly and He holds unconverted people guilty. Now, where does that leave us? How much more responsibility do we have piled upon us that God holds us responsible, who not only have the spirit in man, but He has also mercifully given us His Holy Spirit too. How much more responsible are we? Are we frittering away our time and the powers that He has given us within His Holy Spirit that He personally chose to give to us? He is so patient with us! He has every right to just blow us into kingdom come. But He does not. He patiently works with us.

Let us move on to chapter 2, beginning in verse 5. Now what is given here is primarily written against Jews, because of how much better in terms of understanding and knowledge that they have of God than the Gentiles in the Roman congregation. So here comes a people who have had a great deal of understanding which they are capable of because of the spirit in man. But he says,

Romans 2:5-24 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds" [unless they are converted. It does not say that, does it? He does hold us more responsible though]:

eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. [That is frightening for those of us who have the Holy Spirit. He judges everybody fairly.]

For as many as have sinned without law [or apart from law] will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when the Gentiles who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Indeed [he says] you are called a Jew, and you rest in the law [Let us change that a little bit. "Indeed you are called a Christian and rest on the law], and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law [that could just as easily be addressed to a Christian]? For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you

are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

That is quite a powerful section of Scripture.

Let us go back in the book of Luke, chapter 12, and finish this little section here, showing us how much we should appreciate God's Holy Spirit that He has personally given to us, so that we have the wherewithal in order to keep His commands and to be faithful to Him. This helps to straighten things out so that we understand that God judges fairly always.

Luke 12:46-48 [Jesus speaking] "The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few [still beaten, but with few]. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

These sections of Scripture are showing beyond a shadow of doubt, using broad generalities, that God holds mankind to a much higher level of responsibility than animals and that He has been equipped, that is, mankind, to live up to this standard. And if mankind does not live up to this level that he has been prepared for, he is guilty of gross negligence of responsibility to God the Creator, regardless of whether or not they are converted.

Paul is saying that God holds mankind guilty because He, that is, God, judges that He has given mankind enough evidence of His existence that it is sufficient to have exposed them to enough knowledge to make a vast difference towards living more righteously, if they use the powers of that human spirit. Now, since God judges righteously, this reveals mankind is simply ignoring or deliberately suppressing truths easily available and analyzed to right understanding. And therefore mankind is not merely unconverted, but is in active carnal rebellion against God's rule.

God has the goods on us. And He is giving us the opportunity to change. And He is merciful beyond belief because He could demand our lives at any time. And this is why salvation is always of grace. We are not perfect now and we will not be perfect whenever He ultimately saves us. It will always be by grace.

Now, here then is a major key regarding gifting. What we must understand is that when God gives responsibilities within His purpose, He also gives the powers to sufficiently meet the responsibilities to perform them. Please make sure you understand this and that you thank God that He is God.

Let me go back to Genesis 1 again. God gave Adam and Eve the powers to live in that world without destroying it. Do you understand that? He did not create them to be sinners. He created them to be righteous and to live within the framework of the organization that He set down. Adam and Eve *deliberately* sinned against Him! Satan was not responsible, they were! God held *them* guilty. Of course Satan was guilty of what he did too. But he did hold them guilty for their sins! He held Satan guilty for what he did, which proves again, God did not create man to sin and He is perfectly within righteous judgment to blow us all away. But He did not.

Let us proceed along here.

But with this understanding that when God gives an assignment, in our case, we are to submit to Him in obedience, just like Adam and Eve were created to submit to Him in obedience. They did not live up to it. God was not responsible that they sinned. They were responsible for sinning.

That same rule applies to you and me. Now we are in the church. Is God going to follow the same pattern with us in the church as He did with Adam and Eve? Is God calling us to do what we are to do in our converted life? And has He empowered us with the powers to do what He requires of us? Yes, He does! Just as He did with Adam and Eve, He has done with us; only instead of giving us the spirit in man—we already had it—He has given us His Spirit, and so we are empowered to be able to submit to Him.

That is where we stand. In a sense, brethren, do you understand, we have no excuse for not submitting to Him. Because, like He did with Adam and Eve,

He empowered them to live in that world, they refused to do it. How many times has God entered into an agreement with the Israelitish people, made a covenant with them, and then they refused to do what He required of them, even though He empowered them to enable them to live up to what they agreed to do? So we have no justification before God except as a result of His mercy.

Let us go to Ephesians the second chapter and we will just give you a quick example of the way God does. Chapter 2 opens up in the way He does about people in the world. But we will go down to verse 4.

Ephesians 2:4-8 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead [as good as dead] in trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Jesus Christ. [verse 8 is the one that I really want here] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

Let me make it real simple. What he is saying here in verse 8 is that God called us, and then as a result of the calling He gave us the faith we need to begin operating. I mean, what better deal can you get? That is what He has done. He gave us the faith to begin our life in Christ. It does not end there; but He starts off the calling with a gift, the very gift that we need to please Him—faith. That is mankind's problem. Mankind does not believe Him. Did Jesus not say to Nicodemus, "Without the Spirit of God, you can't see, you don't get it, you don't grasp it—the Kingdom of God." God begins the calling by opening our minds to begin to grasp it, to understanding. Our calling begins with the gift to enable us to move on.

So we are called and many choices may be difficult within the responsibilities that God gives to us. But He does not, we know from what is written earlier in the Bible, require us to do the impossible. We are not created for failure even though our gifting may be limited compared to others. Some brethren are gifted more greatly than others are. But the powers already given are awesome to consider and to be thankful for.

This is something that I saw on television twice in the past six weeks. I have been watching a TV program in which a young person (the first time it was a teenaged boy, the second time it occurred, it was a girl). Now in both cases, the boy and the girl were exhorted by a respected adult within the storyline to pass on something that is not true. But it was given as an encouragement to both the boy and to the girl. What were they being exhorted about? It is: now that they live in the United States, they could become whatever they wanted to be if they just worked hard enough and consistently enough toward their desire.

However, taking a desire to encourage diligence that far is simply not true. Do you know why? Because an exhortation like that leaves God and His operations completely out of the picture. God may have something entirely different in mind for this young person than what the adults giving the encouragement is encouraging the person to do. It does not take into consideration God's sovereign plans for a person's development. They are not even considered within the framework of such an exhortation.

Now, I am going to give you a biblical example given actually in the book of I Corinthians to help us to understand that God has to be considered at all times. I do not mean that is something that we need to really worry about, but He just needs to be taken into consideration. And the reason He needs to be given consideration is because He is a creator. He has his own ideas. He has His own aims. He has his own purposes that He is working out and we fit within those things. Now in regard to the church, this is something that you are familiar with.

I Corinthians 12:11-12 [Paul is talking about gifts. In verse 4 it talks about there are diversity of gifts, but the same spirit.] But one and the same Spirit works all these things [all those gifts that are mentioned by the apostle there], distributing to each one individually as [God] wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

The church is organized is what Paul is saying. The body is one and God is the one who is organizing the body. And we have to be open to the prods, the

pulls, the pushes, the inspirations, the guidance, of Almighty God in our lives if we are going to accomplish what He wants us to accomplish.

I Corinthians 12:18 [Again, talking about the church.] But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

What are we looking at here? We are, in a sense, looking at a gifting process. God gives mankind the powers to make right uses of the gifts available even as He did with Adam and Eve at the original creation. Now when the power is given by God at creation—of course with our birth—when combined with the spirit in man to make use of them, brethren, is awesome to consider.

I will go on with this.

Think briefly just what He gave at the beginning to Adam and Eve. Think briefly of the communicative power of language. How about being able to envision, to imagine, and then create beautiful artistic works including music or drawing of some kind, painting of some kind. How about the writing of books, of scientific researches unveiling mysteries of the things that God has created for our enjoyment and uses. I am going into the end of this because I want you to begin to think of what God's Spirit can add to what He has already given us. But we have to start somewhere with what we have already been given.

Do you get it now? We can use our powers so that we can have automobiles, airplanes, ships, television, medicines, telephones, telescopes, microscopes for exploring either the heavens or the worlds of viruses and bacteria. Those things came out of the mind of man. How much cooperation there was from God I do not know. How much cooperation there was from Satan I do not know. Because they can work on us to do things and sometimes they are not all that good. But I want you to see that if mankind, using the spirit in man, is able to produce the kind of things that have already been produced, how much more is to come when God adds His Spirit to a human being? It is awesome to consider. These things that I am thinking of we may never see them in this life, but they are there already. What has God in store for you and me when we consider what mankind, using the gifts that God has already given us in the spirit in man, has already accomplished.

I believe that there is no such thing as an end of God's wonders to be explored beyond the resurrection. And I know that I get excited about beholding more that He is going to expose to His resurrected children. In fact, there is already so much, let us say, I have been made aware of, it leaves my head spinning of what man has already been able to do.

You know, we can imagine and build buildings that rise over 100 stories in the air and formulate and produce the steel for their skeletons. On the other hand, we can build submarines that will support life thousands of feet underwater, or envision penetrating deep space. Observing mankind's behaviors as a whole, though, we cannot get along with each other, can we?

Now, what does this point out to you and to me? Well, I know what it says to me. All these wonderful things mankind thinks of inventing and doing are no good unless we can get along together. And so what God is working on now by means of His Spirit is that we quit sinning. That we take *Him* seriously, that we take *His* purpose seriously, and use His Spirit—the powers in that Spirit—to resist sinning, to make ourselves do; set our mind, set our will; to do something that is right and good. To forget, forgive, to be kind, to be zealous in prayer, to be thinking about the needs of one another, and praying about those things. That is why He gave us His Spirit now—to do spiritual things.

The wonderful things that are going to come out of us whenever Jesus Christ returns, we will never get to do them unless we pass the first test now and those tests all have to do with spiritual things, with attitude, with overcoming and growing, and so forth.

So let me just go to one more verse here and we will connect this, just make a statement regarding Luke 24, verse 49. It is just before Christ went back to heaven.

Luke 24:49 [He says to the disciples] "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Acts 1:8 [Jesus is again speaking] "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

I believe there can be no doubt from the context in which Jesus' references to power is made that the power of which He speaks is the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit *added* to the powers already given mankind by means of the indwelling of the spirit in man. The apostles already had the spirit in man. They did not have the Holy Spirit yet because it had not yet come. In Luke 24 He said to remain there *until* you are given the power.

The use of the term power in both contexts, Acts 1 and Luke 24, is not referring to personal power at all, but rather power for carrying out the purpose or assignment Jesus was giving the original apostles. Now He reveals His means here very clear. He assigns the job and then He gives the tools to do it. Now, what were the apostles to do? They were to carry in their hearts in their minds, in their memories, the experiences and the words that Jesus spoke to them: the teachings, the spiritual truths, and experiences He shared with them during the course of the previous three and a half years. In other words, they were already equipped for duty, but they needed the experience of what was going to happen on Pentecost to provide the impetus to the schooling already received.

Now that gives us a major step in understanding what happens in our calling and it is not complete yet, but it has already happened. We already have the spirit in man and God is already preparing us to carry out responsibilities as part of what He is forming in mankind. That is, those who have been called to step into the World Tomorrow when Jesus Christ returns.

But between now and then we have got to make use of God's Holy Spirit, combined with what He has already given us in the spirit of man, in order to glorify Him before men. The apostles did it and we are going to do it as well. That is, if we are serious, if we pay attention, and we do the things that God puts in His Word that we must do overcome and grow, study and pray. Those things are needful for us to prepare us for what is coming.

