

MOVING THE HAND OF GOD

"Without the manifest presence of the Holy Ghost any church is a failure. It may be a great machine, wheels within wheels, but it is without life and power."

P.F. BRESEE"

In the Book of Acts a one sentence description of the church in Antioch is given that serves as a compelling vision for the church today:

"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." Acts 11:21

In the Old Testament the *"hand of the Lord"* referred to God's manifest presence, power, protection, and provision (or His Glory)!

The Antioch Attraction: The Church in Antioch had the presence and power of God in their midst and the lost were attracted and radically saved.

The American Distraction: Too often the church in America has focused much of its energy and resource on the second part of this verse ("a great number of people believed") to the neglect of the first part ("The Lord's hand was with them").

Getting Real: The second part of the verse will never be a reality until the first part is realized!!! We need the *"hand of the Lord"* in our churches!

In Acts the "Lord's hand" was understood as the manifest presence of Jesus in their midst through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Facing the Facts: The Churches Neglect of the Holy Spirit

"This is the difficulty with much of the so-called religion of today. It is a human affair...We have almost everything but the Holy Ghost. We seek almost everything but Him. We believe in almost everything but Him; and, all these things are insufficient without Him."

P.F. BRESEE

"Who can deny that this is the great need in our churches today? We need something with the mark of heaven upon it. Too much of our religious life is made up of programs and human ideas, talents and strategies. While these have value, they pitifully fail to meet the need of the hour. What is missing today is something from heaven itself, something from God the Holy Spirit that fills and floods our lives."

JIM CYMBALA, "FRESH POWER"

SHINE

The Key Aspects and Evidence of the Holy Spirit in the Acts Church

1. The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation (Acts 10 and 11)

In the early church, the Holy Spirit was totally relied on to reveal, guide, and direct the mission and ministry of the church. (*John 16:13; Eph. 1:16-17; Col. 1:9*)

In *Acts 10 and 11*, the Spirit's vision to Peter broke down all the cultural, ethnic, and religious barriers to outreach and growth.

- ***Acts 10:19; 11:12***

Only the Holy Spirit can give us a captivating vision for the lost and break down every barrier to reaching out! (*Acts 13 and 16*)

In the church today, we have spent too much time, energy, and money trying to get a vision from other successful ministers and ministries rather than waiting on the Holy Spirit to give us His vision. (*Eph. 3:5, "revealed by the Spirit"*)

Jesus promised us power to be his witnesses!

Power must come before witness and part of the power that the Spirit wants to give us is the power of a barrier-breaking vision for the world!

Believers in Acts prayed and then received the vision. In our ministries we must wait in prayer on the Holy Spirit to reveal who to reach, where they live, and how to reach them!

Activity will not, attract people we must wait and pray for the Spirit's wisdom and revelation. (*1 Cor. 2:10-14*)

Jehoshaphat's cry should be the key to our vision, "*We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*" (*2 Chron. 20:12*)

2. The Spirit of Comfort and Strength (Acts 9)

Acts 9:31, "[the Church] It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord."

Two things the Holy Spirit did: *oikodomeo* and *paraklesis*

Without the Holy Spirit in our midst, we as ministers can't provide the kind of comfort and strength necessary to keep people in the church strengthened, encouraged, and outwardly focused.

- ***Jude 1:20***
- ***1 Cor. 12:7***

The church cannot do the kind of fellowship that builds up and encourages without the continual help of the Holy Spirit!

- ***1 Corinithians 13:14- "May... the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."***

3. The Demand for a Definite Experience of the Spirit (Acts 8)

In *Acts 8 and 9*, we see the insistence that every believer have a definite experience of having received the Holy Spirit! (*Acts 9:17; 8:15-16*)

Even though Jesus focused on the specific need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, too many churches seem to be like the church in Ephesus that had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. (*Acts 19:2*)

"One reason why people are not definite in their testimony is because they have nothing in their experience to be definite about."

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Mostly, our failure to focus on the need for a definite experience of the Holy Spirit is due to our failure to really wait in prayer for the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

4. Full of Faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6 and 7)

In the New Testament, the standard and expectation for every believer that served in the church was that they be full of the Holy Spirit and people of great faith.

Today we have turned our focus away from raising up Godly people to relying on good programs. This will never accomplish God's work.

"What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer."

E. M. BOUNDS, "POWER THROUGH PRAYER"

Without women and men full of faith and the Holy Spirit many churches will repeat the great sin of Israel who looked into the Promised Land and turned back.

"Every member of the church should be in his place, full of faith and the Holy Ghost. Those who have been wandering in the tribe of Gad should at once repent, get in their places in the ranks, put on power, strengthen the hands of the pastor, and get people into the house of God and pray heaven down."

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5. The Confirmation and Courage of the Spirit (Acts 4 and 5)

In Acts, the believers prayed together because they knew how desperately they needed the Holy Spirit to confirm their preaching of the gospel with signs and to give them courage and boldness to continue. (*Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:2-3*)

"The church always fails at the point of self-confidence. When a church is run on the same lines as a circus there may be crowds, but there is no Shekinah. That is why prayer is the test of faith and the secret of power. Miracles are the direct work of His power, and without miracles the church cannot live."

SAMUEL CHADWICK, "THE WAY TO PENTECOST" p. 24

PENTECOST NOTES

The Distinctiveness of the Church in Acts:

A Distinct Message: "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection and much grace was upon them." (4:33)

A Distinct Meeting: "No one else dared joined them, even though they were highly regarded by the people." (5:13)

A Distinct Ministry: "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number...Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed." (5:16)

A Distinct Motivation: "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (5:32)

The early believers were convinced that the key to the Holy Spirit was simple obedience. Obedience to what?

6. The Unity and/of the Spirit (Acts 2)

"Jesus had appeared to over 500 people after His resurrection and yet only 120 obeyed him and waited in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit!"

Why would they not obey Jesus' command to wait?

"Prayer meetings have died out because men did not believe in the Holy Ghost."

SAMUEL CHADWICK, "THE WAY TO PENTECOST", p. 18.

The church today must determine to be united in obedience to Jesus' command to wait and pray! Without this unity of obedience in prayer we will never have a corporate outpouring of the Holy Spirit that yields the results that we see in Acts.

7. The Cry of Prayer for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1)

- *Acts 1:14*

"The Church is designed to get back to the primitive simplicity of the New Testament Church in spirit and methods, to be rid of the cumbrous machinery, the worldly methods of money getting, so much of form and ceremony, and to have in their place the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire."

P. F. BRESEE

"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down..." Isaiah 64:1