

# (Power From on High) 8. Power From on High

by A.B. Simpson

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*The power of the Holy Ghost is a Person, not abstract power, and it produces holy character, truth, love, supernatural gifts, providential working, guidance, government of the church, and conviction over the hearts of men.*

**Scripture:** John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Peter 4:11

**Topics:** "Power of the Holy Spirit", "Witnessing and Evangelism"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the necessity of receiving power from the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission, highlighting that human beings are inherently weak and in need of divine strength. He explains that this power is not merely an abstract force but the presence of the Holy Spirit, which enables believers to witness effectively and live transformed lives. Simpson illustrates how the early church exemplified this power through their character, love, and commitment to spreading the gospel, demonstrating that true power comes from obedience to God's will. He also discusses the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church, providing supernatural gifts, and empowering believers to endure suffering for Christ's sake. Ultimately, he calls for a renewed baptism of the Holy Spirit to empower the church for effective service in these challenging times.

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## Transcript

"Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming 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.

The greatest need of human nature is power. Man is weaker than all other creatures. The tiger's cub is able to take care of itself, but the human being spends one-third of an ordinary lifetime before he reaches maturity.

He is the prey of all the elements around him, and morally he is much weaker still. In his heart are elements of evil that drag him downward, and around him a thousand influences that lead him astray.

There is unspeakable pathos in the cry of a poor, sinning woman who once said in a hospital, as we were pleading with her to do right: "I am not strong enough to be good;" there is infinite comfort in that blessed assurance of the Holy Scriptures, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

The gospel is a message of strength. "It is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." It is the special ministry of the Holy Ghost to give power from on high. How much is signified in this mighty promise? How far have we come short of His fullness? How far may we claim its fulfillment?

We cannot find a better answer than in the book of Acts. This verse is the keynote and the table of contents. Every word in this verse points forward to a whole section of the book which follows.

The first chapter of Acts tell us the story of the power. The next chapters tell us of the witnessing which followed. Then we have the church in Jerusalem. Then we have the gospel in all Judea. Then we have the story of Samaria. And finally, the closing chapters are wholly devoted to the preaching of the gospel unto the uttermost part of the earth.

We shall not attempt now to trace the unfolding of this order through the book of Acts, but shall simply endeavor to illustrate the meaning of this word "power" by the facts and incidents of the story of the apostolic church, as given in the book of Acts, which is really the story of the acts of the Holy Ghost more than the acts of the apostles.

## I. THIS IS THE POWER OF A PERSON.

The right translation is, ye shall receive not power, but the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you. It is not your power, but His power. It is not abstract power under your control, but it is a Person, whose presence with you is necessary to your possessing and retaining the power.

He has the power and you have Him. In the science of electricity, it has been found that the best form in which this motive power can be used to run our street cars, is not through storage batteries, but through overhead wires. The power is not stored up in the car, but in the dynamo and the wire, and the car just draws it from above by constant contact, and the moment it lets go its touch the power is gone. The power is not in the car, but in the wire.

And so the power of the Holy Ghost is power from above. It is not our power, but His, and received from Him moment by moment.

In order to receive this power and retain it, there are certain conditions which are necessary. One of them is that we shall obey Him and follow His directions. We can only have His power in the line of His will. The car can only draw the power from the wire in so far as it follows the track. It can have the power to run along the highway, but it cannot have it to run into the neighboring farms and follow the capricious will of the driver. The Holy Ghost is given to them that obey Him, and obedience to the Holy Ghost is a much larger thing than many dream.

It is not merely to keep from doing wrong in some little contracted sphere; but it is to understand and follow the whole will and purpose of God in the use of this divine endowment. We cannot have it to please ourselves. We cannot have it to please ourselves even in the mode of our Christian work. We can only enjoy the fullness of the Spirit, in so far as we use this fullness for the work to which He has called us.

This verse is the measure and the limit of the Spirit's power. He is given that we shall be witnesses unto Christ, both "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We can only know the fullness of the Spirit's power as we use it to give the gospel to the whole world. Only in the line of the world's evangelization and the fulfillment of our great trust can the church of God ever

realize the utmost meaning of the promise of Pentecost.

## II. IT IS THE POWER OF HOLY CHARACTER.

It is not primarily power for service, but it is power to receive the life of Christ; power to be, rather than to say and to do. Our service and testimony will be the outcome of our life and experience. Our works and words must spring from our inmost being, or they will have little power or efficacy. "We must ourselves be true, if we the truth would teach."

The change produced by the baptism of the Holy Ghost upon the first disciples was more remarkable in their own lives than even in their service and testimony.

Peter, the irresolute disciple -- always running ahead of his Master, boasting in his self-confidence of what he would do or would not do, and then running away at the threat of a servant girl, transformed into the fearless hero, who stood before the murderers of His Lord and charged them with their crime, and then with lowly spirit and humble heart, going forth to walk in his Master's steps, and at last to die upon his Master's cross with downward head, is a greater miracle in his personal life than even in the wondrous power of his public testimony.

The spirit of unselfish love, that led to the entire consecration of all their means to the service of Christ and the help of one another, was an example that could not fail to impress the skeptical and selfish world. The "great grace" that was upon them all was more wonderful than "the great power" with which they bore witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The heroic fortitude with which they endured unparalleled sufferings, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus," was an exhibition of power that no man can gainsay, and carried a weight of conviction that nothing can counterpoise.

This is the power which the church needs today to convince an unbelieving world; the power that will make us, not inspired apostles, but "living epistles, known and read of all men." Nothing is so strong as the influence of a consistent, supernatural, and holy character. Many a skeptic, whom all the books in the universe would never have convinced, has been converted by the sweet example of his Christian wife.

Many a missionary among the heathen has found that the failure of his temper and spirit has done more in a moment to counteract all his teaching than years could undo. "He that keepeth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." And the power that can surpass the angry word, and stand in sweetness in the hour of provocation in the humble kitchen and laundry, has often become an object lesson to the proud and cultured mistress, until her heart has hungered for the blessing which has made her lowly servant's life a ministry of power, and her humble heart a heaven of love.

## III. IT IS THE POWER OF TRUTH.

The Holy Ghost works through the Holy Scriptures, and so the baptism of Pentecost was clearly identified with the power of the Word.

The very first thing that Peter did after the Holy Spirit came was to quote the Scriptures, and explain the manifestation from God's own inspired Word, and it was a Scriptural sermon which was used in the extraordinary conversions of that day.

If you will carefully notice the different messages of the apostles, you will find that in every instance they made large use of the Bible, and some of their messages are simply statements of Scripture and quotations from the Old Testament.

The Holy Ghost has given the Holy Scriptures and will never dishonor His own message. The more we know of Him, the more will we honor His Word. The Bible must ever be the foundation of spiritual power, and the instrument of spiritual service; but it must ever be in the power of the Spirit. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

The late Dr. Gordon tells of a Sabbath he spent abroad, on which day he went in the morning to hear a distinguished preacher who was celebrated for his Biblical knowledge. He came home delighted with the clear and brilliant expositions of the truth that he had heard, but chilled with the icy coldness of the message. It was true, clear, Scriptural truth, but as cold as an iceberg.

He went in the afternoon to hear another preacher distinguished for his fervor, and he came back delighted with the earnestness and unction of the preacher but it was a fire of shavings, and there was not truth enough in it to make it lasting.

He went again at night, and heard a third preacher, and he came away not only instructed, but thrilled, because this sermon had been not only an exposition of Scriptural truth, but it had also been alive with the power of God and full of the fire of the Holy Ghost. It was not a fire of shavings, but of substantial fuel, and it left not only a memory of truth, but a glow of warmth that filled his heart with joy and love. This is the power of the Holy Ghost, speaking the truth in love; the Bible ablaze with holy fire; the Word of God dissolved in unction and love, until it can be observed in every fibre of our being, and become the nutriment of our life.

#### IV. IT IS THE POWER OF LOVE.

The baptism of Pentecost was a baptism of love. It brought a love to God that annihilated the power of self. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." Their costliest treasures were yielded up to God. Their wealth, their homes, were held at the service of the church of Christ.

It was love to one another, and they were so absolutely bound together that they formed a corporate body. There was no schism or possible place for the paralysis or mutilation of the whole body of Christ. Today the church of Christ has broken to pieces. Here and there we find a sound member, but the whole body is mutilated and severed, so that it is not possible for the Spirit to flow with undivided and unhindered fullness through the whole; consequently we do not have the gifts of the Spirit in the same measure as in the day of Pentecost. The body is carrying about with it diseased and lacerated members, and it takes the strength of those that are whole to carry those that are broken.

What we need today is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and then the union will come because of the unity, and we shall not need our platforms and our convocations to bring the body together, but bone to his bone, member to member and heart to heart we shall stand in "unity of the Spirit," and the Church of Jesus will be "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

The baptism of the Holy Ghost will always bring a spirit of love. It will fill the heart with devotion and devotedness to God, with tender consideration for one another, with loving regard for our brethren, with

intense longing for the salvation of souls, and with sweetness and charity toward all men.

#### V. IT IS THE POWER OF SUPERNATURAL GIFTS AND DIVINE HEALING.

The name of Jesus, through the power of the Holy Ghost, was efficacious to restore the paralytic at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and even to raise the dead at the prayer of Peter.

At every great crisis in the apostolic ministry, we find a special manifestation of supernatural power. It was given to emphasize their testimony in Jerusalem. It was specially marked at the opening of the gospel in Samaria. It was still more wonderfully manifested as Peter preached through all Judea. And at every new point in Paul's missionary journey we find "God bearing witness by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."

You will notice, however, that the healing of the sick and the working of supernatural power were not primary ends, but rather testimonies to something more important, even the reality and power of the name of Jesus, and the message of mercy through the gospel.

And so, while we must still recognize the supernatural ministry of the Spirit, which never was intended to be interrupted, and ought to be expected yet more wonderfully in these last days before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us never make the mistake of regarding it as an end, or allowing it to take the place of the higher truths that relate to our spiritual life. At the same time, let us not ignore it. The church is one through all the ages. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever"; the Holy Spirit in unchanged, and the constitution of the church is identical with the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians and the plan which God gave at Pentecost.

We cannot leave out any part of the Gospel without weakening all the rest; and if there ever was an age when the world needed the witness of God's supernatural working, it is this day of unbelief and Satanic power. Therefore, we may expect, as the end approaches, that the Holy Ghost will work in the healing of sickness, in the casting out of demons, in remarkable answers to prayer, in special and wonderful providences, and in such forms as may please His sovereign will, to prove to an unbelieving world that the power of Jesus' name is still unchanged, and that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him, Amen, forever."

Let us not fear to claim His power for our physical as well as our spiritual need, and we shall find that, "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us."

#### VI. IT IS THE POWER OF PROVIDENTIAL WORKING.

There is nothing more remarkable than the manner in which God's providence worked in line with the first disciples, showing that He who dwelt within them was the same God that controls the universe and all the affairs of human life.

How wonderful the providence that brought representatives from the whole world to meet at Pentecost, and then to receive the power and go forth to their homes in every nation, as witnesses for Jesus!

How marvelous the providence that brought Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia together down there at the cross roads of the desert, and then sent the prince on to his home in Africa converted, enlightened, and filled with the Holy Ghost, to be a witness for Jesus to his whole nation, and perhaps bring all North Africa

to God!

How remarkable the providence that sent Peter to the housetop, and then brought to him the vision that illuminated his mind, enlarged his ideas, and prepared him for his greater commission for the Gentile churches; then, when he was ready, sent, on the very niche of time, the messengers of Cornelius to knock at his door and take him up to Caesarea to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and witness the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost!

How wonderful the providence of God that opened the church at Antioch and prepared a new center for Gentile Christianity, in the larger spirit of the cosmopolitan congregation, and then gathered there men like Paul and Barnabas to be the leaders of a wider movement for all the world!

How marvelous the providence that saved Peter from the cruel hand of Herod, opening his prison doors on the very night preceding his intended execution, and smiting Herod down with a hideous disease in the hour of his presumptuous purpose to destroy the Church of God!

How extraordinary the providences that followed Paul through his wondrous life, opening his way from land to land, and making storm and tempest, and even the very viper that sprang upon him, to work for the cause of Christ!

And still the same God rules in the same realm of Providence. Still the Holy Ghost within us can control the circumstances around us. Still the march of events will keep time to the leadings of the Spirit. And the man that walks in the Holy Ghost shall have a charmed life and be immortal till his work is done, and he will find that winds and waves and fierce and cruel men, and even Satan's very emissaries shall be forced to become auxiliaries to His purpose, and work with Him for the furtherance of the Gospel.

And so God has shown in the lives of men like Arnot, in Africa; Paton, in the New Hebrides; George Muller, in Bristol, and many a humble missionary of the cross who has dared to trust the mighty promise of the ascending Master, the permanent value of His words, "All power is given Me in heaven and in earth, and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age."

## VII. IT IS THE POWER FOR GUIDANCE.

The Holy Spirit gives power for guidance. He directed them. He led their steps. He sent Philip to Samaria, and down to the desert to meet the eunuch. He sent Peter to the housetop and then to the home of Cornelius. He restrained Paul and Silas from preaching in Bithynia and Ephesus, and then He sent them to Macedonia, to give the gospel to Europe.

Step by step He was the Guide of all their ways, and He is still our Counselor and Guide; and if we will trust Him and acknowledge Him in all our ways, He will direct our steps and lead us into all the fullness of our Father's will.

## VIII. IT IS THE POWER FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH.

There is nothing more wonderful than the oversight of the Holy Ghost in the church of the apostolic age. He was its recognized Leader and Head. He directed its councils, and was acknowledged as its President. He controlled its disciples, kept out unworthy members, and preserved it from the touch of the world.

How solemn and awful His dealing with Ananias and Sapphira! How suggestive the solemn statement "of the rest, durst none join themselves unto them"! Oh, if the Holy Ghost is in the Church, the world will not have to be kept out; it will be only too glad to stay out.

Alas, that day should have come when learning, genius, influence and worldly power should be recognized in the house of God, and the world should be sought by sinful compromises and unholy attractions, and the church should be baffled and hindered by the "mixed multitude" that she has no power to keep away. God is trying to show His ministers and people that He is adequate for all the needs of His work, and any pastor and church that will fully recognize Him, shall always be prospered and blessed, spiritually, financially, numerically, influentially, and every way.

Oh, that God would show His Church her true power and glory, and that she might again be the woman "clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet!"

#### IX. IT IS THE POWER OF CONVICTION OVER THE HEARTS OF MEN.

The power of the Holy Ghost is not always a conscious power on our part. It is marked chiefly by effectiveness in reaching the hearts of others. On the day of Pentecost, it was the power to convict the consciences of men, and to influence and control their actions. "They were pricked to the heart, and they said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

It is not always the highest excitement that indicates the strongest power. The great question is, "What is the effect upon the hearts and lives of men?" When Demosthenes used to speak in Athens, the people forgot all about Demosthenes, and said, "Let us go and find Philip." It put the "go" into them. And so when the Holy Ghost is present in power He leads to results.

The speaker may be very calm, and have little consciousness of the power, but in the audience are men and women who are brought face to face with God; and the truth is "manifested to every man's conscience in the sight of God," and a Voice within says, "Thou art the man." The will is led to decide and choose for God, and men turn from sin and yield themselves in entire surrender. This is the power we want -- the power that "will convict men of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;" not the power of great machinery, of thrilling eloquence, melting pathos, and marvelous preaching and singing but the power that quietly moves upon the hearts of men, in their workshops and in their homes, until they are constrained to give themselves to God.

#### X. IT IS THE POWER TO SUFFER.

Perhaps there is no more remarkable manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost, in the early church, than the sweetness and grandeur with which they endured all things for Jesus' sake. Beaten with stripes and humiliated before the council, they came together, not to condole with each other or show their bleeding wounds, but to rejoice "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus."

Hunted out of Iconium by a mob of respectable women, pelted with stones and hooted from the community, the "disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Theirs was a gladness that did not recognize their sufferings, but lifted them above persecution, and counted it but part of their coronation.

And so the power of the Holy Ghost will give us the heroism of endurance and enable us, like our Master, for the joy set before us to endure the cross, despising the shame. It will bring about a spirit of self-denial and holy sacrifice; it will make it easy for us to let go things and give up things "and endure all things for

the elect's sake," and to say with the great apostle, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

#### XI. IT IS THE POWER FOR SERVICE.

Finally this was the power for unwearied, earnest and effective work. It was a power that could enable Paul, in a single lifetime, while supporting himself by his own manual labor, unsupported by any missionary society or church, and without the facilities of our railroads, steamboats, telegraphs and means of communication, to girdle the globe and preach the gospel everywhere, and say in words of superlative triumph, "So that from Jerusalem, round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."

O, beloved, we are living in an earnest age, and surely the Holy Ghost ought to produce earnest men today. God give to us this power for work that will multiply our lives until they measure up to the extraordinary opportunities, and to the marvelous intensities of these last days on which the ends of the world are come.

Oh, for a race of Pauls! Oh, for an army of Gideons! Oh, for a band of heroes! Oh, for the baptism of the Holy Ghost in all the meaning of Pentecost and in all the highest thought of Christ Himself!

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