

5. Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Grace + Holy Spirit = Power

What Hinders the Flow of God's Power?

Grace is the greatest conductor of the power of the Holy Spirit in us and through us as Christians. When we receive the grace of God and fully understand what God has done for us in Christ, the result is love, humility, thankfulness, and an absence of pride. Pride, bitterness, unbelief, and doubt are insulators that prevent the Spirit from working. They produce resistance to the work of the Spirit of God, just as plastic is to copper wire. When we read of Jesus, even in His hometown, there was unbelief and resistance by some to the work of Christ:

⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." ⁵⁸And **he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith** (Matthew 13:54-58).

There are two ways of looking at the way the Lord's power was limited in the passage above. The first possibility is that it could be that Jesus refused to force His way upon the people of Nazareth, people He had grown up with, who thought they knew all about Him. In this way, Jesus *chose* not to do many miracles because of the lack of openness of heart. The second possibility is that their familiarity with Jesus led to contempt, and they were unable to receive what He had to offer them, had they been open and receptive. Who was this local carpenter, that thought that He could do miracles in their midst? Their doubt and unbelief were insulators, preventing the flow of God's power among them. Whatever way we look at it, the power of God is limited by doubt and unbelief. God's power seems to flow very easily among the poor and downtrodden. When they hear the grace of God, their response is characterized by thoughts of "this is too good to refuse." Whereas many in the West think, "There's got to be a catch here, this is too good to be true." We must be careful not to throw a blanket of doubt, and unbelief or unforgiveness, on to the grace and power of God. These things will block us from receiving what He would gladly give us.

The Self-Emptying of Christ

How can God be hindered in doing something He wants to do? If Jesus is indeed God, and I believe with all my heart that He is, how can unbelief and doubt hinder the God of the universe? Many students of the Scriptures, including myself, have concluded that Jesus did not rely on His power as the divine Son of God to heal and do miracles, but that of the Holy Spirit. In other words, there was power available to Him as the Son of God, but He refused to step outside of obedience to the Father. Instead, experiencing all things as a man, and being in complete submission to the Father, He deliberately put Himself in a dependent state, relying on the Father's direction and the power of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower Him in this life on

earth. In Paul the apostle's letter to the Philippian church, he talked about the Son of God emptying Himself:

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8).

What steps downward do you see Jesus taking in the above passage? Paul says we are also to have this same attitude (v. 5). What does this mean in our day-to-day lives?

Paul writes that Jesus emptied Himself and took the very nature of a servant. What on earth does that mean? John Wimber, the man God used to start the Vineyard stream of churches, wrote about the *Kenosis*, the self-emptying of Christ, in this way:

The Greek word from which 'emptied' is translated is *kenosis*. Its precise meaning is unclear. Some theologians interpret *kenosis* as meaning Christ completely emptied himself of deity while on earth, so he was limited to the knowledge and abilities of an ordinary man. This interpretation comes dangerously close to denying Christ's deity. Others interpret *kenosis* as meaning Jesus retained his divine nature but *emptied himself of his divine prerogatives* [A right or an exclusive privilege] - the high position and glory of his deity. *This interpretation is probably closer to the truth.* Jesus did not give up his divinity, but he *did* lay aside his glory (John 17:5) and submitted to the humiliation of becoming a man (2 Corinthians 8:9). The idea behind *kenosis* is not that Jesus took on humanity and took off deity as though they were coats that could be changed; it is that he took on humanity while remaining fully God.¹

Theologians and scholars call this teaching *the hypostatic union*, the coming together of two natures in one person (John 1:14). Jesus was different from any man that ever walked on planet Earth. He was and is 100% God, but He is also 100% human—the God-Man with no mixture or dilution of either nature. This self-emptying of Jesus meant that He set aside His divine attributes and glory to become fully man, yet at the same time remained fully God. He had to be fully human to take the full punishment that the race of Adam deserved through rebellion—death, and separation from God. His death only had worth to deliver Adam's entire race from the curse of sin, because He was God in human form and was completely innocent of sin, being the Lamb of God. ⁷No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him-- ⁸For the redemption of his soul is costly (Psalm 49:7-8). Only the God-Man could redeem (buy back) fallen humanity from Satan's clutches.

Jesus Depended on the Power of the Holy Spirit.

There were times during His ministry when the omniscient Son of God did not know certain things. For instance, when He met the demonized man on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, He

¹ <http://www.oocities.org/davidmwilliams/PP5.html>. Found under the heading of: E. What does John Wimber believe about the deity of Christ?

asked him his name and found out his name was Legion (Mark 5:9). Unless the Holy Spirit revealed things to Him, in His incarnation as Man, Jesus did not know all things. Then also, after the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Christ returned to the disciples, He was confronted with a man with a demonized child... **“Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood" (Mark 9:21).** If Jesus were able to access His complete knowledge of all things as God fully, He would have known how long the boy had been in that condition. Some might suggest that Jesus was operating under His own power when He knew the name of Zacchaeus when Christ came upon him in the tree (Luke 19:1-10). I believe the Holy Spirit gave Him what Paul calls a word of knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8) about Zacchaeus’ name, a spiritual gift that is still in operation in our day.

Like each of us, Jesus could not call on all wisdom and knowledge as God, instead, He had to learn and be taught: **“Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).** In another place, talking about His return to earth, He said, **“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Matt 24:36).** Now that He is restored and seated alongside the Father, I believe that His divine rights, privileges, and glory are restored and that He fully knows all things, including the day He will return for His bride, the Church—the called-out ones.

For more than three years, from His baptism to His crucifixion, Christ was modeling to His people how to live a God-honoring life by the power of the Holy Spirit, not leaning upon His deity as the Son of God. This is what was behind Satan’s temptation in the wilderness, three times Satan tried to get Christ to operate outside of the Father’s leading, in His weakened state of having fasted for 40 days. **“If you are the Christ,”** he said, **“command these stones to be made bread” (Matthew 4:3).** While in His incarnation, He had to be reliant on the Father’s direction and ministering under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Very truly I tell you, **the Son can do nothing by himself;** he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does (John 5:19).

A little while later in a conversation with the Jews at the temple, Jesus again described the fact He could do nothing on His own initiative. **“By myself I can do nothing (John 5:30).** Everything He did, His words of knowledge and His miracles, were as He was led and empowered by the Spirit and under the direction of the Father: **“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speaking just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28).** When Philip wanted Jesus to show him the Father, Jesus gently and graciously told him: **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” (John 14:10).** Being fully human meant that He taught His disciples by training them on the job. They were to follow in His footsteps and do ministry as He did: **“because as He is, so also are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).** The same cry goes out today from a weary world. They are asking us: **“Show us the Father!”** If you are a Christian, we have been made ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) to minister with the authority of our King to God-thirsty people.

In what way is a Christian like an ambassador? In what way can we represent our King and His

kingdom and show them the Father?

Jesus' teaching of the disciples was of a show and tell model, that is, He showed them by doing a course of action, then taught them the how and why. They were then able to do ministry in the same way. When He sent out the 12 disciples, they were told to heal the sick, drive out demons and to cure diseases (Luke 9:1-2). Some would say that only the 12 were to do this, but they leave out the commissioning of the 72 to also heal the sick (Luke 10:9), and they were also casting out demons (Luke 10:17-19). Even though Jesus modeled to the disciples how to pray for the sick and be led by the Spirit in ministry, there was a difference with Jesus, for the Scripture says: "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for **He gives the Spirit without measure**" (John 3:34). The assumption is that with the disciples and ourselves, we are gifted according to the measure given to us by the Spirit. In Jesus, there was no hindrance to the flow of thought, leading and power of God. Therefore, we can conclude that the barrier was on the side of those listening to Jesus, but not receiving. The Lord would not override their will, and He will not do this with us either. We need to make room for Him to move in us and through us. □

There were times when it seemed that Jesus was operating under His power as the Son of God, such as His rebuke to the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee after being asleep in the back of the boat (Mark 4:39). But this is an example again to the disciples that he who believes in his heart, not doubting, can move mountains (Matthew 21:21). The lies of the enemy buffet us constantly too, for when we see a need in front of us, the enemy is quick to tell us that we can't do that. Again, I am not diminishing the deity of Jesus; I am merely stating that, for His incarnation, He had emptied Himself of His divine attributes and became just like us. He was tired (Luke 8:23), He was hungry and thirsty (John 4:6-7), just as each of us can get, yet He was God in human flesh. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He chose to live among us as us, so that He could feel what we feel and strengthen us as a High Priest. "For this reason, he had to be made like them, **fully human in every way**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17 Emphasis mine).

The Longing of Jesus

The passage of Scripture below is an example of the show and tell model that Jesus taught His disciples. □

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶"What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. ¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not." ¹⁹"**You unbelieving generation,**" Jesus replied, "**how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.**" ²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around,

foaming at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. ²²"It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ²³"If you can?" said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for one who believes."** ²⁴Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" ²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. ²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" ²⁹He replied, **"This kind can come out only by prayer"** (Mark 9:14-29).

Notice that afterward Jesus sat with them privately and they were able to ask Him questions as to their difficulties in ministering deliverance to this boy. □

In Verse 19 above, Jesus seemed frustrated with the nine disciples. Is that assessment correct? If so, why would He be frustrated?

The Lord Jesus in this passage seems disappointed, even frustrated at the nine disciples due to their inability to deliver the man's son from the demon. We must realize, too, where this story is in relation to Jesus' time with his disciples on earth. Jesus' time of training with His disciples is coming to a close. He will soon be on His last journey to Jerusalem to be crucified. Perhaps His frustration with the nine disciples was because of His great longing that His disciples minister in the power of the Spirit before He was crucified. He gave them power and authority to minister in the Spirit, although they had not yet fully received God's power. The Holy Spirit would come more strongly on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the up-coming Passover and crucifixion (Acts 1:8). We live today with an ability to do ministry just like the disciples. He cares that we know how to minister in His grace and power.

My prayer is that we all grow up learning how to step out in faith and a life of prayer and faith in Christ. He hasn't changed. He's the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He is still looking to minister through His body, the church. His after-ministry remarks instructed them about their prayerlessness. If we were to have Jesus show up in our churches today, He might give us the same post-ministry directive—that we have been lacking in prayer and need the power of the Spirit operating through us. The ministry of Christ has little to do with our self-effort and more to do with the Spirit's work.

Jesus Embodied an Attitude of Grace, Compassion, and Love.

What I am saying is that Jesus had a free flow of the Spirit's power because 1) He had no sin or anything that hindered the flow of God's Spirit. 2) He was grace and truth personified:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace** and truth (John 1:14).

I believe this heart attitude of Jesus enabled Him to fully manifest the power of God in this world of sin, shame, and pain. It was His very character that was an attraction that drew little children to Him. There was something about the smile on His face and His joy at seeing small children; they could not help but hang on to His legs with their parents wanting Him to say a blessing over them (Luke 18:15-17). I have often thought this a good measure of a Christian leader, how does he or she react to children and also waiters in restaurants. Even the Roman soldiers that were sent to arrest Him came back without Him, remarking as to His character. ⁴⁵The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" ⁴⁶The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks" (John 7:45). Imagine what it was like for the sinful woman when she saw the regular custom of washing a visitor's feet was not performed on Jesus. He was reclining at the table of Simon the Pharisee without the customary washing of His feet by Simon's servants. The sinful woman came up and began washing His feet with her tears and her hair. Simon was shocked that Jesus let a sinful woman touch Him. But the gracious Lord Jesus allowed her to bestow an act of devotion, thankfulness, and love for her forgiveness. This is the grace-attitude needs to be embodied in each of us. □

If the grace of God touches your life, you can be assured that others are drawn to Christ (Colossians 1:27). You will find that the more you enjoy your relationship with your heavenly Father, the more others will be drawn and want to know what is different about you. Sometimes people will not be able to understand what it is, but there will be a hunger and thirst for whatever you have—they may even ask you. It is as we enjoy living for God's glory and not for ourselves that it will be a witness to others and affect people for the kingdom of God. It is working from the inside out, not the outside in. The works that Jesus did He did out of love for the Father. That is why knowing the love of the Father, and the grace that flows from His love will make us conduits for the power of the Holy Spirit. □

The love of the Father is what I received when I was first born from above, as a believer in Jesus. I did not understand all the points of the gospel; I did not have any church background. However, I witnessed the love of God in a man speaking about the crucifixion of Christ and what He suffered for us. I was invited to a Bible study, and for the first time, I heard that God had sent His Son into the world to pay for the wrongs that I had done in my life. I listened to the good news at a time when I was aware of the guilt in my life. I had tried to be good, but I continually failed at trying to live a moral and upright life. I needed to change. The speaker, to whom I was listening was so moved in his presentation of Christ that he was sobbing so severely that he had a hard time speaking. His love for God was what I wanted. I was so loveless and had little love expressed to me. I was so struck with the love of God coming from this man, that I opened my heart and accepted the gift of God in Christ soon after. I will be forever thankful for the love that was in that man that day. □

Perhaps, you too have led a life of sin and felt little love in your life. Maybe, you are looking for something that you can't quite describe in words. You too are aware of your inadequacy and are empty of the love of God. Why waste another day apart from the love of the Father? Christ has completely taken the wall of your sin out of the way between you and God. There is nothing you can do to make Him love you more or less. He loves you just as you are. Receive His gift of

love, mercy, and grace. Sincerely ask Him to forgive your sins and lift your guilt and shame off you. He said:□

²⁸Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**. ³⁰"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

Prayer: Father, I come to you today with a sincere heart knowing that You hear all things and know all that I have done. Please forgive my sin, and lift my heavy burden from me. I turn around from my sinful life, and I ask you to give me new life in Christ. I receive You today as Savior and Lord of my life. Amen!

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