

POWERED BY PRAYER AND THE SPIRIT

Intro. I grew up in Thomasville NC. Randleman was just down the road. Randleman was the home of Petty Enterprises, the famous stock car racing family. They raced the famous hemi-powered Plymouths. Petty created quite a stir when he declared that his vehicles were “powered by petty” instead of “powered by Plymouth.” I suspect he was just telling the truth. They had rebuilt the stock Plymouth engine so that it no longer resembled the stock version. They wanted power, raw power, lots of power.

Perhaps you have been thinking our church can't make a difference in the global scheme of things when it comes to advancing God's kingdom to the Ends of the Earth. But have you looked under the hood lately?

1. The Proof and the Power (Acts 1:3, 4-8)

Acts is the second volume in a two-volume work. In v. 1 he reminds us of the first account (Luke) where he told of all that Jesus did and taught. He covered the life of Jesus until the giving of the final commandments and the ascension (2). Verse 3 picks up the account.

To build their faith and prepare them for their mission, Jesus gave them incontrovertible proofs concerning His resurrection. We are told about some of these events such as the revelation on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24). You may recall the invitation to touch Him and the meals taken together.

Did you notice the linking of the resurrection and “the kingdom of God?” The resurrection is both the basis for their empowering and the content of their kingdom message. The King came to planet earth, you crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead (look at Acts 2:22-24).

The empowering is so essential to their ministry that Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power (4).

Nothing has changed! The church today is as dependent upon this power as was the church of the first century. We have two issues when it comes to empowering. One, we attempt too little because we have not taken advantage of what it means to be “powered by the Spirit.” Two, we are so anxious to do something that we fail to wait until we are empowered. Have you ever seen a child, so anxious to get into the game that he runs out onto the field without his glove? The church is often guilty of running programs and devising our plans that we fail to appropriate His empowering.

2. The Power and the Prayer (Acts 1:12-14)

What would you do first if you had just seen and heard the resurrected King? Know what they did? They obeyed his last command (4) to wait for the Promise of the Father. Obedience should be the first response of every kingdom centered disciple. Obedience is the foundation for the reception and release of God's power. We are often guilty of

wanting to claim God's promises without meeting His conditions. Could this be part of the reason we are so lacking in supernatural power?

What to do while we wait? Pray, pray, and pray some more! Did you notice the emphasis on continual prayer that was of "one mind?" The idea of one mind occurs 11 times in NT and 10 of those are in book of Acts. Look at the second reference in Acts 2:46. Our prayer must be one of conviction and not convenience.

Obedience and prayer are the foundational elements for supernatural empowering and thus for effective kingdom ministry for every believer and every church. What priority are we giving prayer?

3. Prayer, Power and Proclamation (1:8, 2:36)

Power was not promised nor given for the amazement or amusement of the early believers; it was given for the proclamation of the gospel and the advance of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Did you notice in Acts 1:8 the inextricable linking of "power" and "witness." When they receive power they will be witnesses. Witness is not something we "do" it is what we "are." By virtue of our relationship to the King, we are His witnesses.

The reception of the Spirit was accompanied by visible and audible signs to make it abundantly clear that their **prayer** had been answered, the **power of the Spirit bestowed**, and thus the **proclamation** must begin.

Don't get so lost in the spectacular events of Pentecost that you miss the message for the church in every generation. 1) We have a message to declare. 2) It is a message for every nation under heaven (2:5). Whether the miracle here is one of speaking or hearing, the point of the universality of the gospel is clear. 3) We can proclaim this message with confidence because the Holy Spirit empowers us to do so.

Pentecost was an inauguration not a culmination. The church today stands in the lineage of those empowered by the Spirit to take the message to the ends of the earth. We will be privileged to complete the task? I don't know, but I do know that I want to be faithful to continue the task.

Invitation.