

## **“Download God’s Power Here”**

Acts 2:1-13

*Series: Forgotten God Week 3. Theology of the Holy Spirit 101*

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On Friday, Riley went on a rampage. A raging nor’easter, a bomb cyclone with wind gusts up to 60 miles per hour, Winter Storm Riley flooded streets, knocked down trees and cut through powerlines. Woodside was one of three thousand customers which lost power. Computers, sound systems, internet, kitchen appliances, lights all off. Now, coincidentally, what title did I put out on the sign? “Download God’s Power Here” God does have a sense of humor. That’s the only power you’re going to get here. I was afraid the community would see the sign and think they could come charge their phones.

Some years ago my cell phone was dying a slow death. I couldn’t recharge it. I plugged it in all night, but the next morning the battery was still half-strength. With each recharge it got weaker. Nothing I did made it better. Finally, it reached critical condition. The dreaded red line appeared with the warning: low battery. Frantically I rushed it to the emergency room – the Apple Store. When I explained the problem to the guy behind the counter I expected him to swing into action, call in a team of experts stat, hook it up to monitors, and fill it with antibiotics to kill all the computer viruses. He didn’t. Instead, he took out a metal toothpick, stuck it in the recharging slot and pulled out a big hairball of lint - enough to knit a sweater. “That’s your problem,” he said. “Oh” I said. All that lint from my pocket blocked my ability to download the power.

What is blocking the power of God in your life?

In our message series *Forgotten God* we are learning how Jesus puts His presence and power in His followers through the Holy Spirit. God wants to download the power of the Holy Spirit into you. To understand how God recharges you let me introduce you to the Spirit – call it theology of the Holy Spirit 101.

First is the Holy Spirit is our **Creator**. One question I often hear is: Where was the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? He was in the beginning.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)

In these verses we see God the Father, the Son of God, the Son known as the Word of God, symbolized by God speaking, “Let there be light” and the Holy Spirit – the whole Trinity – creating all things together.

This leads us to the second truth: the Holy Spirit is **God** - the third person of the Trinity. We don’t worship three gods but one God revealed in three persons. This is why

Jesus tells us to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). One Name – Yahweh – three persons. This is why Paul ends 2 Corinthians the same way we end every service, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14). God above us, God with us, God in us. The Trinity may be hard to comprehend in your mind but not hard to experience. God is all around us and in us.

Third, the Spirit is **Almighty**. Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit possesses the power of God. This is probably a good time to clear up a misconception – the Holy Spirit is not a ghost. Yes the Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe in the Holy Ghost” but that’s just an old term for Spirit. It doesn’t mean the Spirit is a cousin of Caspar the friendly ghost. He’s not afraid of the ghostbusters. The Spirit is Almighty God.

Fourth: The Spirit is not a force, the Force or an “It.” The Spirit is a **Person** equal to the Father and the Son, a Person with thoughts, feelings and will, a Person who relates to us. You can talk to the Spirit, pray to and through the Spirit, work with the Spirit.

In both Hebrew and Greek, the word for Spirit is “wind.” In Greek the word is “pneuma” which we use to describe anything that uses wind power: pneumatic jackhammers, vacuum cleaners, pipe organs, nail guns. My wife did not want me to have a nail gun. She was afraid I would scratch my head and nail myself to the wall. Those, however, are mere child’s play compared to the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the wind. The Holy Spirit, along with the Father and the Son, created the wind and every other force in nature. The Spirit is stronger than any nor’easter.

The Holy Spirit wants to make a pneumatic you – a Spirit powered, Spirit driven you. The Spirit does this by entering you. In the Old Testament the Spirit entered some people – prophets, priests, kings – at certain times for a specific purpose. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Spirit comes to all who believe in Jesus. Before Jesus ascends to heaven His last words are:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Ten days later, a small congregation of 120 believers is holding a prayer meeting when a loud and raucous nor’easter descends on them.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:1-2)

They are not priests, prophets, kings or rabbis. They are not powerful or popular. They are not scholars or rulers. All of them are filled with the Holy Spirit. And Jesus wants to fill you too. If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit lives in you.

The one who made the Creation wants to make you a **New Creation**. God promised to do this through the Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 26:25-27)

This is fulfilled in the New Testament. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The forceful winds of Winter Storm Riley leave destruction. The forceful winds of the Holy Spirit bring a beautiful new creation. Your heart may be hardened by too much hurt, calloused by too much doubt, chained by too much addiction, broken by too much rejection, strained by too much stress, stained by too much mess. It doesn't matter: the Spirit can make you a new creation. He takes out your stony heart and gives you a fresh, clean, pure heart and He fills it with Himself. How do you download the power to be a new creation? Get rid of the lint of false idols and impurities in your life. They are blocking the power of the Spirit.

The Spirit also gives you a **New Birth**.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

The Holy Spirit gives you a second birth – not a physical birth but a spiritual birth. You are born into God's family; you become a child of God. I know so many who don't feel at home in their physical family, their family of origin. Too many of their troubles are traced back to a difficult relationship with their Dad or Mom or both. We can judge them, blame them, avoid them, rebel against them. It does no good. Every parent is imperfect, flawed, broken. Some parents are cruel and abusive. Most do the best they can. Yet here is the good news: You have a Father in heaven who loves you perfectly, graciously, endlessly. The Spirit issues a birth certificate with your name and God's name on it. You are not perfect the minute you enter His family. But the Spirit gives you the place where you can grow in grace, where you can develop a family resemblance to Jesus.

What lint blocks the new birth? Rejecting God, running from God, rebelling against God is invitation to His family. Frank ran from his parents. He was a rebel. As a teen he was kicked out of an alternative school for drinking and defying authority.

I believed in God. I just didn't want Jesus running my life. I wanted to run my own life. But I was miserable. I got my thrills and identity from challenging the system. The more I tried to fill my life with things I thought would make me happy, the more empty I felt inside. I realized for the first time that sin had control over my life and there was absolutely nothing I could do in my own power to overcome it. Suddenly, I had an overpowering conviction that I needed to get my

life right with God. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. My years of running and rebellion had ended. It was finished. The rebel had found the cause.

At the age of 22 Frank gave his life to Jesus Christ and was born anew. This past week Franklin Graham spoke at the funeral of his father the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham – the one who helped more people be born again than anyone else in history. His once rebellious son Franklin now carries on his evangelistic mission not because he is the son of Billy Graham but because he is the son of Almighty God through the new birth of the Holy Spirit. Don't rebel – embrace the grace – you are a child of God.

And that's the third thing the Spirit does – He gives us a **New Purpose**.

Remember Jesus said,

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Some years ago a storm came through and knocked out our power before the Higher Ground Service. I wanted to alert everyone but fortunately I stopped before I put on Facebook the phrase, "The Church Has No Power." Sadly that is too true today. Why? We've lost our purpose. Jesus says the power of the Holy Spirit will come on you and you will...make new members? No. Build big sanctuaries? No. Fill worship services? No. Start denominations? No. Do mission projects and mission trips? No. All good stuff. Nothing wrong with any of it. But they are not the goal, not the purpose, not the reason why God gave us the Holy Spirit. He gave us the power so we would be witnesses to Jesus, make disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19), tell others about Jesus through our words and actions. That's what happened on the first Pentecost.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?" (Acts 2:4-8)

And after Peter gave the first witness to Jesus,

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)

The power of the Holy Spirit flowed through the disciples to three thousand people that day. Why don't we experience the full power of the Holy Spirit? We keep it to ourselves. We do not witness to Jesus. We do not make disciples. What good is the air hose if it does not fill up the tire? What good is the helium tank if it does not fill up the balloon? What good is oxygen mask if it does not fill the lungs? If you want to receive the full power of the Holy Spirit it can't stop with you. It has to flow.

So here is my question – have you helped someone find their way back to God and believe in Jesus in the last year? Have you invited someone beyond Woodside to worship or your growth group in the last year? Has your growth group started another growth group in the last year? God wants more people in His family. Your purpose and mine is to let the power flow through you. Francis Chan tells the story of Domingo and Irene Garcia.

He’s a mechanic. She’s a hairdresser. They have been foster parents to thirty-two children and have adopted sixteen. Domingo and Irene are in their late fifties and currently have eleven children living with them, and they tell me they would take more if they could. Anyone who has children knows they could be doing this only by the Spirit’s power.

While other people their age are figuring out how to live most comfortably, they can’t stop thinking of the 500,000 kids in America who need parents. And while they see these kids as a huge blessing, they are also very open about the hardships they face daily. God has provided for them over and over again.

One of the wonderful blessings they have enjoyed is watching their biological children follow in their footsteps (by adopting children). They live such extraordinary lives that CBS news ran a story on them. Even the secular world notices the unusual and supernatural love these two have shown to those in need.

For those who may think that Domingo and Irene have always been as gracious as they are today, let me share some insights from their past. Irene, in the early days of their marriage, hated Domingo. He was abusive, and she prayed regularly that he would die. She even daydreamed about his driving off a cliff because of the pain he inflicted on her. Now she calls him the godliest man she knows.

For anyone who thinks their own life or marriage is hopeless, remember Domingo and Irene. God loves to take people in the worst of situations and transform them by His Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Download the power of the Holy Spirit and let it flow through you.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Chan, *Forgotten God*, p. 59-60.