

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH



Jim Cymbala March 12, 2016

The Christian church was born through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we read through the book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament, we see a picture of the early church the way God intended it to be. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Here was a community of believers who freely loved the Word of God and were devoted to the apostles’ teaching. No one needed to badger or coerce them to love the Word. Instead, the Spirit within them inspired it. The same Spirit who wrote the Bible created an appetite inside of them for what it said. They shared with one another the deep love the Spirit had put in their hearts. They also became bold witnesses for Christ, filled with wisdom beyond their training. Their hearts were full of the Holy Spirit and they experienced surprises as God did things that no one could anticipate.

Not only had the Holy Spirit been sent to earth, but He acted in and through His people—demonstrating His power to glorify Christ. The early church experienced Him moving in their hearts and in their lives. Because of the hostile environment around them, they were repeatedly driven back to God for a fresh supply of the Holy Spirit, and they were wise enough to yield to His direction. Is the Holy Spirit moving like that in our lives? And in our churches?

I sometimes wonder if the early Christians were around today, would they even recognize what we call Christianity? Our version is blander, almost totally intellectual in nature, and devoid of the Holy Spirit power the early church regularly experienced. How much loss do we suffer because we don’t expect the Spirit to show up as promised? Everything we read about the church in the New Testament centered on the power of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the Christian believers. Sadly, for many of us this has not been our experience.

I believe it’s time to return to the kind of faith we see in the New Testament church. They believed God’s Word, they expected the Spirit to do great things, and He came through as promised.

He will do the same for us today.

Jim Cymbala began the Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn, he is a longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson.

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