

## Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power



David Wilkerson May 5, 2014

As I read Paul's letters to the Corinthian church, I stop and ponder these words: "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4, my italics).

When I was a young minister, I sought the Lord for clear manifestations of his Spirit. I prayed, "Oh, God, fill me with the power of your Spirit and give me a convicting message. Demonstrate your power. Shake the house as you did at Pentecost, so that people run to the altar and fall in reverence before you."

Yet, as I read Paul's letters to the Corinthians, I find no such experiences. There was no one being "slain in the Spirit," no mention of houses being shaken. Instead, we find Paul preaching about everyday concerns, such as carnality, strife, marriage, divorce, proper dress, giving, the care of widows, maintaining order in church services, etc.

By Paul's own admission, he had no charisma. His voice wasn't commanding and he confessed to trembling during his preaching: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). So, where was the demonstration of the Spirit and of power in Paul's life?

Paul declared, in essence, "My life is a demonstration of what the Lord can do. He can take a person without charisma, without a commanding voice, indeed, the vilest of sinners, and do something powerful with him." This was not pride speaking. Paul simply knew who he was in Christ. He knew his battles and struggles weren't over, yet he also knew his life was a picture of what God can do with anyone who yields to him.

He explained, "I didn't come to you with a strategy or the methods of men. I came to you with the mind of God, and I spoke a simple, direct message that went straight to your heart. When I taught on marriage, it moved you. When I spoke about giving, your hearts were stirred because you knew my words came from the Lord."

Look around at society. People are sin-sick, stressed out, despairing, with many at their absolute limit, desperate for answers. They don't want to hear philosophical arguments or advice from yet another self-help book. The only way this world will be touched is by standing face to face with a life that demonstrates Holy Ghost power.

Paul tells us: "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

The Greek word for "spectacle" in this verse means "theater." The translation is, "God is going to turn your life into a theater. He has put you on a stage, and the audience is the entire world." Here is the role he has scripted for us: "We are fools for Christ's sake" (4:10). In the world's eyes, who but a fool would follow the difficult ways Paul lays out? For in the preceding verse, Paul explains: "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death" (4:9).

Paul speaks of great trials, afflictions, persecution, even death—hardships that a select number in Christ's body are called to endure. He says, "You've heard my testimony. You know I have endured infirmities, afflictions, persecutions. I have been made a spectacle before the whole world, including angels, principalities and powers. All eyes are on me, to witness the battle and the outcome. Now God is appointing other believers to this same

ministry.”

All who are godly will suffer some persecution for the Lord’s sake. But some, like Paul, are called to endure many sufferings and infirmities for the cause of Christ—to “go onstage” to endure tremendous battles and hardships. For them, it becomes like a boxing match, and they’re cast down many times by buffetings and trials. “We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears” (2 Corinthians 7:5).

Some believers face one agonizing crisis after another. Consider Job, who was despised by his friends because of his suffering. They told Job, “You’ve clearly angered the Lord. Obviously, there’s some hidden sin in your life.” God isn’t ashamed to put these servants onstage before hell, angels and all the world because he trusts them. They have patiently endured their trials in secret, holding onto faith through fires, floods and storms.

Satan still accuses this kind of saint today, just as he did with Job, challenging God, “Take down the wall and let me at them. They’ll quit.” God does often take down his hedge of protection for a season, and angels watch in amazement as they behold the scenes that unfold before them. Fiery darts are shot, followed by horrible lies, overwhelming temptations, awful accusations, physical afflictions. Doubt moves in, and God’s child is about to give up.

Then suddenly, the spectacle stops. Now the embattled servant moves to center stage, attracting the attention of all, and he cries out, “Though he slay me, I will trust my God. Come what may, live or die, I am the Lord’s.”

We have been handed a script for our part in the play.

Paul spells out our role to all who are onstage: “Everyone else onstage will be strong, but you will be the weak one. All others will be honorable, but you’ll be despised. You will experience hunger, thirst, nakedness, and you’ll be buffeted, pounded in the face. Yet you will bless others while they revile you. You’ll endure persecution and be slandered. You will be made as the filth of the world, the offscouring and dregs of all things” (see 1 Corinthians 4:10-13).

Many believers have read the script that Scripture lays out, and they long to experience this true demonstration of Holy Ghost power. So they take a stand like Paul’s, saying, “I’ve had enough of lethargy. I’m going all the way, to enter the fullness of the power of Christ, who is in me.”

That’s when the curtain opens. You’re standing on the stage, and suddenly your life is a spectacle to all. How do you react when the hardships Paul describes come to pass in your role? As you face afflictions, buffetings, trials, is the love of Christ exemplified in you? Or do you turn away in anxiousness and fear?

Paul assured the Corinthians, “I don’t write this to frighten you” (see 1 Corinthians 4:14). The apostle knew that once we set foot onstage, the Holy Spirit is with us and will not abandon us. Instead, he comes upon us with power such as we’ve never known. In our role of weakness, the Lord gives us strength and, with God’s hand upon us and Christ’s presence in us, we are able to endure for the prize set before us.

Of course, some believers have read the script and rejected it. They’ve turned away from the stage, saying, “This isn’t the role I wanted.” Such believers seek a comfortable lifestyle. And if you’re living “at ease in Zion,” you don’t need Holy Ghost power. That’s why the world yawns at every Christian who lives in such ease. They won’t listen to someone whose words are empty, not backed by spiritual authority. As Paul states, “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Corinthians 4:20).

Are you onstage now, your life a great spectacle? Are your weaknesses showing? Are you being buffeted? Do you sometimes feel like walking offstage, saying, “I can’t take any more of this. I feel like quitting”? Even David felt such things during his life, crying, “Oh, I wish I had wings like a bird, so I could fly off to some quiet place.”

At such times, God is making you a demonstration of his Holy Spirit and power. Your life is being watched—your family is watching you, your neighbors are watching you, everyone at your job is watching you—and they’re all wondering, “How will it end? Will he make it?” “Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Here is the best news of all: we know the director of this spectacle. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of

our faith” (12:2). He has taught us how to play our role, by his own dramatic example at center stage: “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

Christ knows that our role in this spectacle is not easy. But he has gone before us on the path, and we are to look to his example to draw encouragement: “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (12:3).

Dear saint, each time you pick up your Bible, you hold in your hands the script that God has written for your life. And he provides much-needed intermissions from the drama—offstage and behind the curtain, when you’re alone with the director in prayer. In those times, he puts his arm around you and whispers, “You’re doing fine.”

This may surprise you. You might think, “What do you mean, ‘fine’? I want to quit!” But the director assures you, “You haven’t read the whole script, as I told you to do. It’s all in there. Right now, in the midst of your suffering, I’m doing a great work in you. I am making you a demonstration of my Holy Spirit and of my power. Yes, it’s going to be difficult, and there will be more buffeting. But you’re going to make it.

“Now, go back onstage, and I will breathe life into you. I am always with you. And when the final curtain falls—when it’s all over—you’ll come to my house for a great feast. Everyone who has been in this spectacle since the very beginning—from the Cross down through history—is going to have a celebration.”

Beloved, that is why we endure: for the indescribable joy set before us!

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