

# The Power of the Holy Spirit-NOT for SALE

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Acts 7:57-60; 8:1-25

The entire world is in a rush to gain power. Whoever has power, can control: e.g., power of energy, power of economy, power of politics, power of leadership, power in the church...you name it. POWER. We seek POWER.

Power in itself is not a negative thing. In fact, controlled power in the engine of the car gives us mobility. We need power to survive. We need energy to walk, to build, to create... the issue is not the power; the issue is what we do with the power when we don't have God in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is the powerful presence of God in us; the HS transformed the lives of people.

## 1. The Power of Being in the Grace of God

We ended last week **with trial of Stephen**. After his sermon there was anger and gnashing of teeth versus the grace of God on Stephen's face full of the Holy Spirit. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to be an **Advocate**. Stephen saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing** at the right hand of God. Jesus was standing there, advocating, defending...

- Yet, the court people acted like kids, covering their ears. They didn't want to listen, they rushed him outside to kill him.

- It was illegal to kill someone without the permission of the Roman authorities. They did not care; the amount of anger and hostility was so enormous; they just wanted to kill this man.

-Who was standing there? **Saul (later Paul)** who witnessed all these.

## 2. The Power of being in Trial for Jesus' sake: Power of Martyrdom

Saul heard Stephen's sermon, the story of redemption; we don't know why they laid their coats on the feet of this young theologian.

What else did everyone witness?

**While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup>Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59,60 NIV11)**

**Like Jesus**, Stephen was falsely accused, taken outside the city, clothes laid down, (yet it was not his own), and killed. The two sentences came out of his mouth like Jesus:

**“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”**

-Stephen was the first martyr. **Blood of the martyrs**: the church was built on the blood of the martyrs. And his death was not in vain at all. His death paved the path for the conversion of a young man named **Saul**. Saul (Paul) heard, witnessed all these events. Saul saw Stephen’s face and heard his prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers. Those are not in vain. We will see later.

Let us go to the next passage. (Chapter 8)

**On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. (Acts 8:1-3 NIV11)**

### **3. We find here the POWER of Persecution.**

Stephen’s death shook the city. Persecution continued, and it was so severe that Christians scattered to Judea and Samaria. The Apostles remained in Jerusalem. As we see Saul-Paul is persecuting the Christians. He knows that Stephen’s message was true, yet he is not open to God’s Spirit to work in Him.

AMAZING, you can know things, yet knowledge is not enough. Later we will see how the Risen Lord will say to Saul-Paul on the road to the Damascus: **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”**

**<sup>4</sup> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup> When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup> For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:4-8 NIV11)**

Interesting, they did scatter, and that made it possible for the Word of God to be preached all over Judea and Samaria and bring joy to the city.

“The North African Christian writer and apologist Tertullian (c. 160–225), addressing the rulers of the Roman empire, said, ‘Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to the dust... The more you mow us down the more we grow, the seed is the blood of Christians.’”<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. The power of Holy Spirit reaching out to the “enemy” territory through deacon Philip.**

The apostles chose **seven** DEACONS (chapter 6). One of them was **Stephen**, who was martyred. Now deacon **Philip** is on a mission. Where? Samaria...

N.T. Wright writes: “Philip, like others, has had to leave Jerusalem in a hurry following the death of Stephen, but he is by no means in hiding. On the contrary, he has gone off to a town in Samaria... And, significantly, at that point he is referred to as an ‘evangelist’; clearly, we may suppose, the different ‘offices’ in the early church were not mutually exclusive, and Philip could still be a ‘deacon’ while engaging in other work as well.”<sup>2</sup>

-Now to go to the Samaritans was not on the Jews’ priority list. They considered the Samaritans as half-breeds. They weren’t considered true Jews. The Samaritans were left behind when the Jews were exiled. When they came back from the exile, Jews did not want to have any relationship.

-Jesus had an encounter with the Samaritan woman. Eventually after Jesus challenged her faith, she became a missionary to her village. And many came to Jesus through her, and they urged Jesus to stay with them “**And because of his words many more became believers.**” (John 4:41 NIV)

Illustration: I was thinking about my life. When I accepted Jesus, I was young. I did not want my non-believer friends to know about my faith. But then I realized that is wrong. So, I did express my faith. Some took it well, some ridiculed me. I was scared and embarrassed. I look back and I can see only the power of Holy Spirit doing that in me to stay firm in my faith and not to be in shame.

-Many of us did not go to a school of theology. This does not mean you cannot have the power of Holy Spirit in you to be God’s hand, God’s voice, God’s feet.

**Philip was not Peter** (or Paul), or John. **He was a simple deacon** whom God used. He can use you. Why? The power of the Holy Spirit.

## 5. False Power (sorcery)

**<sup>9</sup> Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” <sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. (Acts 8:9-13 NIV11)**

Here we have a new person by name of **Simon from Samaria**. Some called him **Simon Magus, the magician**. He was a famous man. He practiced sorcery and amazed people with his predictions. He was even called the **Great Power of God**. Wow, power.

We see a shift here in Samaria. Although people believed in Simon, now Philip **proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptized.** (Acts 8:12,13 NIV11)

Now I don't know how genuine Simon was in his experience of conversion and baptism. He saw signs and miracles, he got excited. It was his desire to have THAT KIND of POWER in him. (please notice, not Holy Spirit, no, but the power.)

Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem. Most likely they heard what was going on in Samaria and they came to help Philip. **When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.** (Acts 8:14-17 NIV11)

John Stott says: “It was particularly appropriate that one of them was John, since Luke describes (Luk. 9:51–56) him in his gospel as wanting on one occasion to call fire down from heaven to consume a Samaritan city.” <sup>3</sup>

We find here a separation of conversion (accepting the Word of God by Philip) and receiving Holy spirit (Peter and John laying hands.)

-Oh boy churches are divided because of this. Is Christian conversion happening in two steps?

- We should not take one incident alone without the entire scripture. We should be careful not to build a theology, or a doctrine from one passage.

- In the book of Acts, we find that Holy Spirit is moving always to new places. No one can stop the Spirit of God.

- Conversion in the scripture is clear **as being a single event**. God puts in us a new life through His Spirit. We receive new life.

Peter in his first sermon preached about forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is one event.

**“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”** (Acts 2:38-39 NIV11)

Also Paul agrees with this: ‘if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ’ (Rom 8:9; cf. Rom 8:14-16; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 3:2, 14; 4:6).<sup>4</sup>

Please notice, after our conversion, we do experience the power of the Holy Spirit in us as we grow in faith. But it is clear that we receive the person of the Holy Spirit when we become a follower of Jesus. Thus, this event in this chapter is a unique situation which Luke points out saying: **“because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them.”**

-Why this event happened this way?

I am not sure. But reading commentaries they suggest that the issue is between Jews and Samaritans. Jews did not respect or accept Samaritans. Peter and John coming from Jerusalem the center of Jewish people is very important. By coming and laying hands over them was a good sign that Jews accepting this new Christian group as genuine believers.

“so that when the apostles laid their hands on the Samaritan believers, the power of the Holy Spirit was made visible.”<sup>5</sup>

**Bible does not tell us what the sign was of receiving the HS. Speaking tongue? I don't know.**

The result, it was good that this reconciliation happened between them.

Otherwise, we will have split two churches from the beginning.

Let us go back to Simon.

-Simon got excited with this. He saw the power, and he wanted to have that power. He likes to buy it.

**<sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:18,19 NIV11)**

As I said before, Simon doesn't want the Holy Spirit, he wants the power. Essentially, he just wants the prestige that comes along with having this great power.

Peter rebuked him: **May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! (20)**

**Brothers and sisters, Holy Spirit cannot be bought, it is not for sale, why? Because it is gift of God to us.**

-You think Simon will come to his senses and repent; he did not repent. So sad.

**Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." (Acts 8:21-24 NIV11)**

Simon is not repenting NO, he just says "pray that this does not happen to me" That is not repentance.

"He does not express a desire to be right with God; ..... he wants freedom from punishment rather than the true freedom that God gives." <sup>6</sup>

### **Application:**

There are many points we can learn from this passage.

-What kind of power are you seeking?

-Are you seeking the power of Holy Spirit?

-There is difference between Simon and Philip. Philip is proclaiming Christ and Simon is proclaiming himself.

-The Power of Holy Spirit will lead us to persecution, martyrdom, going to enemy territory, humility, carrying the cross and follow Jesus...

**<sup>25</sup> After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. (Acts 8:25)**

1. Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. 50; cited in Stott, *Acts*, 119 from Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary, Acts* P 269

2. N.T. Wright *Acts for Everyone (book1)*, P 127

3. John Stott *Bible Speaks Today*, Acts p151
4. John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, p 156.
5. R.C. Sproul, *You Will be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth*, Acts. P 115