

Spirit-filled – Word & Spirit

Key texts: *John 16:12-15; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Acts 4:31; 1 Thess. 1:4-5*

R. T. Kendall writes in his book *Holy Fire*; *“There has been a silent divorce in the Church, speaking generally, between the Word & the Spirit. When there is a divorce, sometimes the children stay with the mother, sometimes the children stay with the father. In this divorce you have those on the Word side & those on the Spirit side.”*

Of course we need to be clear that the Word & Spirit have not & cannot be literally divorced. Yet at the same time there is a real sense in which they have been separated by churches deciding to focus on one more than the other. But then again can you really have one without the other? Can we understand & live out this book without the Holy Spirit’s help, & can we genuinely claim to know the Holy Spirit if we reject, undermine or undervalue the words he inspired? You cannot be void of the Word & filled with the Spirit. Think about it. How do we know there is a Holy Spirit? How do we know about spiritual gifts? How do we know about New Birth & Pentecost? How do we know who he is & what he does? We know because of the words he inspired, the God-breathed words of Holy Scripture!

There is a danger we can get locked into a narrow view of the activity of the Spirit... The Word helps protect us from this. We need to understand the Holy Spirit is dynamic, diverse & unpredictable. Yet he is also the Spirit who brings self-control & order. Sometimes he comes as a gentle dove & sometimes he comes like a hurricane. His ministry covers many areas –

awakening, illumination, spiritual gifts, conviction, freedom, unity, empowerment, sanctification & much more. Basil the Great wrote that; *“His works are ineffable in majesty & innumerable in quantity.”* We know this because of the words he inspired. The Word helps us understand & identify the scope & magnitude of his activity. It helps expand our vision of who he is & what he has come to do in, for & through us.

How do we be a church solid in God’s Word & dynamic in the Holy Spirit? The answer is we embrace both wholeheartedly & we accept that they are so intimately related they cannot actually be separated. To an extent we can have the Word without the Spirit but we cannot have the Spirit without his Word & we cannot have the Word living & abiding in our lives without the Spirit!

The ministry of the Word is a foundational ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is his sword (Eph 6:17). The Word provides the cutting edge - the vision, power, substance, benchmark, expectation and plumb-line for everything else. The word wets our appetite for encounters with the Spirit, it raises our expectations to see him in action in our lives & times together. For reasons like this the Word is the only foundation for a Spirit-filled church.

1. The ministry of the Word is a foundational ministry of the Spirit

This is the clear testimony of the New Testament. Sometimes we miss the forest for the trees. We get so focused on one chapter that we miss the big picture. In John 16:12-15 Jesus says to the disciples:

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, *the Spirit of truth*, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

Part of the fulfilment of these words is the Bible you now have, especially the teaching contained in the New Testament. We have it because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, guided these men into all truth as Jesus promised... This truth is given to glorify & magnify Christ – his person & work – which is the Spirit’s primary agenda! A Spirit-filled church is a Christ proclaiming, Christ-loving, Christ-exalting & Christ-reflecting church. A Spirit-filled church is also a church in intimate relationship with God the Father (cf. Gal 4:6)...

Of course at the time these men didn’t know we would have these words in the fashion we do today. They simply preached, wrote & recorded as the Holy Spirit guided them. They were preaching sermons based on OT Scripture & what they had learned from Jesus! The Spirit was enabling them to connect it all together. They were writing accounts of Jesus’ life & early church life. They were writing letters to individuals or church’s, teaching them doctrine & giving instruction regarding real issues. In John’s case he also wrote out a Revelation given to him by the Holy Spirit (Rev 1:10). It was as these men preached, laboured, travelled, suffered &

ministered to real people, in varying cultures, in different circumstances that the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth.

The same Holy Spirit guided others to compile their writings together into what we know as the New Testament completing the Canon of Scripture. And it is the same Spirit who has preserved them & speaks through them right up until today when the Word of God is more accessible than ever before... The Spirit is on a mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God. In his second letter Peter writes in chapter 1:19-21;

“We also have the *prophetic message* as something *completely reliable*, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that *no prophecy of Scripture* came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

This is true of every part of Scripture – Old & New Testament. Scripture is the completely reliable prophetic word of God. It was written as the Holy Spirit carried men along. It is striking how clear this is in the book of Ezekiel. Over & over again Ezekiel testifies. **“As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me”** (2:2). **“Then the Spirit of the Lord came on me, and he told me to say...”** (11:5). **“The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia in the vision given by the Spirit of God”** (11:24). Over & over again phrases like this appear in the book, Ezekiel was very aware of being carried along by the Holy Spirit. In fact we will learn more about the Spirit from Ezekiel...

No prophecy outside of Scripture itself can be called **“completely reliable”**. It is only reliable as far as it reflects & applies Scripture. Everything else needs to be tested by Scripture, but the prophecy of Scripture itself is completely reliable & a foundational ministry of the Holy Spirit is to ensure it is prophetically heralded & taught as the authoritative Word of God. We will never read or hear anything more prophetic than the Scriptures. Paul warned the Corinthians **“Do not go beyond what is written”** (1 Cor. 4:6). And he told Timothy that the church of the living God’s role is to be the pillar & foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). It is the churches job is to hold it up high...

For such reasons the pure word of God needs proclaimed more than anything else. This is one of the primary things the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to do; this is a primary ministry of the Holy Spirit! The apostles couldn’t stop heralding the Word of God even when they were arrested & told to stop (Acts 4:20). In fact when they got released they had a prayer meeting & Acts 4:31 says; **“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”** So the direct result of being filled with the Spirit was that they continued to preach the word of God boldly. A Spirit-filled Church is a Church that continues to herald & teach the word of God.

A Spirit-filled church is also a church whose leaders give their primary attention to the ministry of the word. As the Church grew in Acts the apostles delegated other responsibilities to other people because the

ministry of the word was so important to the health & growth of the church. When they took this step things grew even more rapidly (cf. Acts 6:1-7). They were even accused of filling cities with their teaching. All this helped to lay a foundation for the young Church in Acts. There was lots of amazing things happening but it was the ministry of the word which was given priority. We see this clearly all the way through the book of Acts.

We see this priority in how God gifted the church with various leaders. In Ephesians 4 the four key ministry roles are roles which focus on the ministry of the word... In 1 Cor. 12:28 the top three ministry roles listed, & the only ones numbered, are roles focusing on the ministry of the word... We see this emphasis in how Paul taught ministers to prioritise their lives. He told Timothy; **“devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching”** (1 Tim 4:13). He said; **“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress”** (1 Tim 4:15). He charged him before God; **“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and teaching.”** And just in case we are in any doubt as to what the word is Paul sets the context by reminding Timothy **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training for righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Tim 3:16-17). Paul also said that church overseers should be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2), although he also

made it clear that not every elder is called to make preaching & teaching his life's work (1 Tim 5:17-18).

Jesus made the ministry of the word his priority. Mark 1:35-39 says;

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

In Luke 4:18-19 he quoted from Isaiah & applied the words to himself;

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

The reason he said he came was to preach & the Spirit anointed him to *proclaim* good news... to *proclaim* freedom... to *proclaim* the year of God's favour! I could easily keep labouring this point with Scripture after Scripture... however I also need to point something else out. Word's alone, preaching, teaching, bible-studies & discussion alone are not enough. They are not the end, they are meant to lead to somewhere. Faith comes by hearing, but that hearing leads somewhere. Julian Adams writes; *'Any theology that does not lead us into an encounter with God simply makes us more religious.'* All the messages, preaching, theology, teaching & revelation are deigned to lead us into encounters with him...

2. Word's alone are not enough – we need more than talks, sermons, preaching & discussion

Turn with me to 1 Thess. 1:4-5:

“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.”

Word's alone are not enough! We also need power, the Holy Spirit & deep conviction. These things need to accompany the ministry of the word or else it will be of little or no effect. We need the breath of heaven upon everything we do, including the ministry of the word. I find it interesting the way Paul worded this... He seems to be implying that he ministered in other places where these things were not evident. However in Thessalonica he saw power, the moving of the Spirit & deep conviction accompanying his preaching... That's how he knew God had chosen them. That's how he puts it! He saw these things as evidence of God's favour on these people!

In Thessalonica the ministry of the word was accompanied with power, with the Holy Spirit & deep conviction... We need the same things to accompany it here; we need the awakening, illuminating, miraculous & strengthening power of God. Paul said to the Corinthians; **“For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”**

We need the deep conviction of sin that leads to real repentance & we need the deep conviction that the gospel is true, God's Word is true – we are made completely righteous in Christ, the gospel is the power of God

unto salvation, every word of God is true, we are more than conquerors,
God is love & everything he declares he is; God is with us & for us in Christ!

We need the Holy Spirit & ALL HE BRINGS... for words are not enough.

This is what the rest of this series is about. The Bible, the ministry of the word, they are not ends in themselves... Their purpose is to bring us to God, to reveal him so we encounter & know him & are changed by him. We do not worship a Trinity consisting of Father, Son & Holy Bible. We worship the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Some churches who have taken the Word side, to use Kendall's divorce analogy, almost forget that. It's a fine line but we esteem the Bible so highly not because it is an end in itself but because it is God's Word. And it is given to bring us to him & to lead us into all he has for us – it is a lamp to our feet a light to our path – it is given to awaken & sustain desire to encounter him & to help lead us into the Spirit-filled life. **The Word is the menu... God himself is the meal...**

Bill Johnson writes; *“Revelation is initially given for relationship & ultimately for the transformation of our lives... God is not that interested in our increased understanding of concepts if there's no relationship increasing with it. When God gives us revelation, he is inviting us to a new place of experience – knowing him.”*

Conclusion: Smith Wigglesworth Prophecy given in 1947:

During the next few decades there will be two distinct moves of the Holy Spirit across the church in Great Britain. The first move will affect every

church that is open to receive it and will be characterized by a restoration of the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The second move of the Holy Spirit will result in people leaving historic churches and planting new churches. In the duration of each of these moves, the people who are involved will say "This is the great revival", But the Lord says 'No, neither is this the great revival but both are steps towards it.

When the new church phase is on the wane, there will be evidenced in the churches something that has not been seen before: a coming together of those with an emphasis on the Word and those with an emphasis on the Spirit. When the Word and the Spirit come together, there will be the biggest movement of the Holy Spirit that the nation, and indeed the world, has ever seen. It will mark the beginning of a revival that will eclipse anything that has been witnessed within these shores, even the Wesleyan and the Welsh revivals of former years. The outpouring of God's Spirit will flow over from the UK to the mainland of Europe, and from there will begin a missionary move to the ends of the earth.

If we are to be a part of what God is doing, not 10, 20, 30 or 40 years ago, but today, then we need to be a church that embraces the Word & Spirit. We need to become a church solid in the Word & dynamic in the Spirit. Being a spirit-filled people means being a church of the Word & Spirit.