

The manager of a logging company sold a farmer a chainsaw. He said, "This is guaranteed to chop down 50 trees a day." The farmer was impressed with that. A week later, the farmer stormed back through the front door, threw the saw on the counter, and demanded his money back. "There's something wrong with this saw. There is no way it will do 50 trees a day. It can't even do one tree a day!" The foreman grabbed the saw, pulled the cord, and the chainsaw started, "Bzzzzzzz." The farmer jumped back, surprised, eyes wide open: "Hey, what's that noise?"

The chain saw had power. The farmer simply needed to learn how to access it. For so many Christians, God's power is available to them. But they simply don't know how or don't want to access it.

When we don't access the Holy Spirit we have religion. There are lots of instructions, but you don't get power. You get good advice, but you don't get the strength to carry it out. Good advice without power is bad news.

God's word and mission to share Jesus cannot be carried out on our own. That certainly is the dilemma with God's word. The word tells how we should act and live as disciples, but it doesn't give us the power to do it. Religion without power is bad news.

Jesus knew his disciples needed more than teachings & rules; they needed power

So Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait until they received the promised Holy Spirit. When you have received that power, then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Cootamundra)

Teaching plus power is good news. The church is here today because of Pentecost. The Cross is good news about God's love and forgiveness. The empty tomb is good news about life eternal. Both the Cross and the Resurrection, though remarkable demonstrations of the love and power of God, would have been forgotten events in ancient history if the Holy Spirit

had not provided the dynamic for the witnesses to go into all the world and speak that good news.

Excitement and enthusiasm are just emotions —no match for the opposition the disciples, and we, encounter when sharing Jesus. They needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, they could not begin to do the job. And neither can we.

The disciples where filled with the Spirit

The record of events recorded in the second chapter of Acts is straightforward: "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. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

They heard something like wind; they saw something like fire.

Jesus had told them during his teaching ministry that the Holy Spirit was like the wind that blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. You can't see the wind; you only see its effects.

The tongues that seemed like fire that rested on each of them reminded them of the holy presence of God.

In the power of the Spirit Peter preached to the crowd of people from many countries that had gathered around the temple They had just heard the good news preached in their own language as the gift of tongues had broken the communication barrier. They heard about the power of our risen Lord.

They were amazed, astonished, perplexed. Some said that these people had had too much to drink, such exuberance could only be the result of drunkenness.

Something extraordinary had happened. Something had changed their lives. The Spirit of God had fallen upon them and by that one act had initiated for all Christians down through the centuries the possibility of the indwelling power of God. It was after this outpouring of the Spirit of God that we find the church engaging in effective communication of the gospel.

So how does that effect today?

We must know Jesus Christ and what He did by His life, death, and resurrection. We receive the Holy Spirit when we ask Jesus to be in charge of our lives. Saviour and Lord. It is the Holy Spirit that changes us from the inside out and empowers us to share the good news of Jesus with others.

Here we find the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to his disciples. This was the beginning of the church. God taking up residence in the lives of his people in the person of the Holy Spirit. And from that day to this, those who have opened their lives to Jesus Christ, who have responded in faith to him, are people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

But if all this is true, why isn't the church throughout Australia as alive and power-filled as those early Christians seemed to be? I think there are two reasons. One could be the fact that the Holy Spirit, though he dwells in every believer, some shut Him up inside our lives in some quiet closet and He is unable—because we will not give him permission—to make us effective disciples.

Remember that Jesus said, as recorded by John, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come into them" It's not enough to open our lives to Christ. We've got to turn every room in the house of our lives over to him. If we shut him up in some little closet of our lives, he can't begin to fulfill in us what God wants for us—the very best.

We can simply choose to run our lives and the church instead of listening to him and trusting his guidance.

But I think there's another reason why some modern Christians don't seem to be as alive and power-filled as those early disciples. I suspect that there are some people today who are sincere believers in Jesus Christ who are ignorant of the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in them and is able to give them the power to live as transformed Christians.

At Pentecost Peter took the opportunity to explain what was happening. He witnessed to Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Lord, and on that day over three thousand people believed in Jesus and became part of the church.

Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit comes, He will bear witness to me." The Holy Spirit never calls attention to Himself. And where the Spirit is genuinely at work, it is Christ who is lifted up, not the Holy Spirit. Where Christ is lifted up, there you can be sure the Spirit of God is at work. AW Tozer says, "Whenever Jesus Christ is glorified, the Holy Spirit comes.

It was while the disciples were gathered in a caring and praying fellowship, open and available to the promise of Jesus being fulfilled in them, that the Spirit was poured out upon them. Today it is the same, while Pentecost was unique it is still our openness and obedience to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to effectively serve our Lord.

But Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit is like the wind. He blows where he wills." You can see the effects of the wind, but you never see the wind itself.

So, how do you catch the wind? You can't package it in a box. You can't chase it down and collar it with a leash. You could take a large-mouth bottle and hold it open against the wind and quickly cork it. But wind that is contained is no longer wind. It's just air. It's air that's capable of sustaining life, but it's powerless to drive the sailboat across the water or to lift the

soaring hawk to greater heights or to turn the blades of a windmill. You can't catch the wind.

I'm afraid that sometimes we have tried to catch the wind. We've tried to catch the wind in our own little theological systems. We have theological definitions and outlines. We say, "Here is where the Holy Spirit fits into our systematic theology."

And there are those Christians who, having some kind of a special experience, say, "This is the Holy Spirit, and unless you have experienced this particular kind of activity in your life, you are not filled with the Spirit." They have boxed the Spirit into their experience.

Too often we treat the Holy Spirit as if He were an idea to be debated and not a person to be received. Essentially, we've closed Him in so that he becomes air that sustains life but that's all.

As God's people, we need to have your sails unfurled, we can't be moved by the wind of the Holy Spirit if the sails aren't up.

Conclusion: There was a bible teacher who brought two glasses of water and two packets of Alka-Seltzer to class. He dropped one Alka-Seltzer, with the wrapper on, into one glass. Then plopped an unwrapped one into the second glass, and watched with fizz.

He said, "Both glasses have the Alka-Seltzer, just as all Christians have the Holy Spirit. But notice how you can have the Holy Spirit and it's not being used." We are to let God work in our lives and unwrap the packaging around the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit means that we allow him to occupy and control every area of our lives. Tozer says, "When we have the Holy Spirit we have all that is needed to be all that God desires us to be".