

Adapted from:
"THE LORD'S WORK, THE LORD'S WAY"
(Francis Schaeffer)

There is no source of power for God's people—for preaching or teaching or anything else—except Christ Himself. Apart from Christ, anything which seems to be spiritual power is actually the power of the flesh.

Though we today are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit when we accept Christ as Savior, being indwelt is not the same as having the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had to wait to receive the Spirit at Pentecost. Christians today are to follow the same order: to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation and to know something of the reality of the power of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit—and *then* to work and witness. The order cannot be reversed. There are to be many "fillings."

Doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way is not a matter of being saved and then simply working hard. After Jesus ascended, the disciples waited quietly in prayer for the coming of His Spirit. Their first motion was not toward activism—Christ has risen, now let us be busy. Though they looked at the world with Christ's compassion, they obeyed His clear command to wait before they witnessed. If we who are Christians and therefore indwelt by the Spirit are to preach to our generation with "tongues of fire", we also must have something more than an activism which men can easily duplicate. We must know something of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Central Problem

The central problem of our age is not liberalism or modernism, nor the old Roman Catholicism or the new Catholicism, nor the threat of communism, nor even the threat of rationalism and the monolithic consensus which surrounds us. All these are dangerous but not the primary threat. The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord's work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.

We can sense what this means in practice if we view the statue of Napoleon at the *Hotel de Invalides* in Paris. As he stands there with his hand in his coat at his breast, he is a personification of "I DID THIS." The sculptor has caught the attitude, the attitude of the great man of the world, the one who says in all three tenses, "I did this; I do this; I will do this." This attitude as shown forth so well in the statue personifies the flesh.

In contrast, we can think of the Lord Jesus Himself in the quiet of Gethsemane. As we see there the eternal Son of God who in the incarnation is now also true man and as we hear His words, we perceive no sign of Napoleon's massive egoism. To the contrary, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." Unfortunately, we Christians can and often do take Napoleon's stance, but what a contrast to the Lord Jesus Himself!

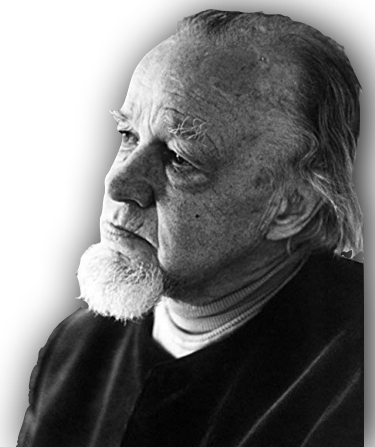
Led By The Spirit

Matthew 3 is a passage that has often been used as a proof-text for the doctrine of the Trinity. This is a classical text on the Trinity; but it is not to be a bare proof of the Trinity. The passage teaches much more, especially when we place it in the larger context of the next few verses: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). As soon as Jesus was baptized by the Holy Spirit, He was led by Him. If He was thus led by the Holy Spirit, how much more we need so to be!

The central thrust of the cross is the substitutionary atonement, but this does not exhaust its meaning. The cross also teaches a lesson in humility. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5,8). This is where the Christian is to dwell if he is to know something of the power of the Spirit.

Taking The Lowest Place

Christ taught His disciples that they were not to be called "Rabbi" or "Master" (Matt. 23:8,10) and that the greatest among them would be the servant of all (Mark 10:44). Doesn't each one of us tend to reserve this, following our natural inclinations



as fallen men while ignoring the Word of God? Don't we like the foremost place? And if this is our mind-set, isn't this living in the flesh, and to that extent leaving the Spirit no place?

Seeking the highest place is in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Lord. Christ instructed His disciples, "But when thou art bidden [to a wedding feast], go and sit down in the lowest room" (Luke 14:10). If we are going to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way, we must take Jesus' teaching seriously: He does not want us to press on to the greatest place unless He Himself makes it impossible to do otherwise. Taking the lower place in a practical way (thus reflecting the mentality of Christ who humbled Himself even to death on a cross) should be a Christian's choice.

To the extent that we want power we are in the flesh, and the Holy Spirit has no part in us. Christ put a towel around Himself and washed His disciples' feet (John 13:4). We should ask ourselves from time to time, "Whose feet am I washing?"

Seeking God's Approval

In addition to teaching us not to seek power, the Lord Jesus taught us not to seek human praise. Those who seek the praise of men, He said, have their reward when they have the praise. We often read this pietistically and miss the point. Jesus meant what he said: if our aim has been praise and power and we have it, either in the world or in the church, we have had it.

Trusting God's Methods

Is it not amazing: though we know the power of the Holy Spirit can be ours, we still ape the world's wisdom, trust its forms of publicity, its noise, and imitate its ways of manipulating men! If we try to influence the world by using its methods, we are doing the Lord's work in the flesh. If we put activity, even good activity, at the center rather than trusting God, then there may be the power of the world, but we will lack the power of the Holy Spirit.

The key question is this: as we work for God in this fallen world, what are we trusting in? To trust in particular methods is to copy the world and to remove ourselves from the tremendous promise that we have something different—the power of the Holy Spirit rather than the power of human technique.

Once after I had given a message like this, a man told me, "You have opened a door for me. What you say is true. I am on many Christian boards, and I have large holdings in cotton mills. So I am in one kind of business meeting or another. And sometimes in the midst of a meeting I will suddenly look up and say, Which meeting am I in?" He could see no difference whatsoever; in both cases just the clever thing was being done. This is not the way to have spiritual power. The Lord's work must be done in the Lord's way.

The real battle is not fought by Christians just against forces in this world, whether theological, cultural or moral. The real battle is in the heavenlies. The Scripture, therefore, insists that we cannot win our portion of the engagement with earthly weapons.

Besides, if we fight the world with copies of its own weapons, we will fail, because the Devil will honor these with his own, but our Lord will not honor these with us, for that does not give Him the glory. They may bring some results—activism does have its results—but they will not be the ones the Lord wants. Our hands will be empty of honor from God because He will not be getting the glory. We must not try to serve the Lord with our own kind of humanism and egoism.

In this war, if Christians win a battle by using worldly means, they have really lost. On the other hand, when we seem to lose a battle while waiting on God, in reality we have won.

Getting Things Done

Let us not think that waiting on the Lord will mean getting less done. The truth is that by doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way we will accomplish more, not less. You need not fear that if you wait for God's Spirit you will not get as much done as if you charge ahead in the flesh. After all, who can do the most, you or the God of Heaven and earth?