



The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Great Commission

By Timothy W. Berrey

Introduction:

George Mueller:

"It pleased God then to show to me the doctrines of grace in a way in which I had not seen them before. At first I hated them, 'If this were true I could do nothing at all in the conversion of sinners, as all would depend upon God and the working of His Spirit.'"

1. Encouraging works of the Holy Spirit (in relation to the Great Commission)

A. He will give you what to say in times of persecution (Matthew 10:18-20).

Matthew 10:18-20 (NASB95) – and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. **19** "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. **20** "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

B. He will reprove those you confront about their sin, their righteousness, and their judgment (John 16:7-11).

John 16:7-11 (NASB95) – "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. **8** "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; **10** and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; **11** and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

C. He will bear witness to the truth you speak about Jesus (Acts 5:32).

Acts 5:32 (NASB95) – “And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

The Spirit is witnessing because *they are witnessing*. We must speak the Word because God brings people to birth through the Word of truth.

James 1:18 (NASB95) – In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

You will not successfully see a church formed just by praying, studying, or advertising. You need to speak the Gospel to people in the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Example works of the Holy Spirit (in relation to the Great Commission)

A. He will lead (or not lead) you to specific geographical places (Acts 1:8; 8:1; 16:6-7).

Acts 1:8 (NASB95) – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Too often, we allegorize these places to symbolize our city, our region, and the world. This verse is prophesying (promising!) that Christ’s witnesses will go to each of these places. Sometimes, the Lord had to step in and use circumstances to compel His witnesses to take the next step in His plan.

Acts 8:1 (NASB95) – Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 16:6-7 (NASB95) – They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; **7** and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.

B. He will orchestrate “divine appointments” (Acts 8:26-29).

Acts 8:26-29 (NASB95) – But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) **27** So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”

This does not mean you wait for His specific leading before doing any evangelism, however. Acts 8 ends with Philip preaching the Gospel to all the cities he passes through from Azotus to Caesarea.

Acts 8:40 (NASB95) – But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

C. He will prepare you for people He is sending to you (Acts 10:10-20).

Acts 10:10-20 (NASB95) – But he [Peter] became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; **11** and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, **12** and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. **13** A voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!” **14** But Peter said, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.” **15** Again a voice came to him a second time, “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.” **16** This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. **17** Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon’s house, appeared at the gate; **18** and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. **19** While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. **20** “But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself.”

3. Hindering the works of the Holy Spirit through us (in relation to the Great Commission)

A. We are grieving or quenching Him (Ephesians 4:29-30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Ephesians 4:29-30 (NKJV) – Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (NASB95) –Do not quench the Spirit; **20** do not despise prophetic utterances. **21** But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; **22** abstain from every form of evil.

B. We are disobedient to Him—not filled with (“under the influence of”) Him (Acts 1:8; 4:8, 31; 13:9-10).

Acts 1:8 (NASB95) – But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Acts 4:8 (NASB95) – Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people,

Acts 4:31 (NASB95) – And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 13:9-10 (NASB95) – But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, **10** and said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?”

In the Book of Acts, when the Spirit filled believers, they spoke! Too often, I don't want to witness in the way that He wants me to. I want to define the terms of my witnessing. I want someone who I think will listen. I don't want it to be too public, so that I can focus on the person at hand and not feel embarrassed if the response does not go well. I am not serious about getting the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

Mark 16:15 (NASB95) – And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

C. We ask for the wrong things (unlike the apostolic company in Acts 4:29).

Acts 4:29 (NASB95) – “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.”

We ask for protection from persecution instead of boldness in it.

D. We are not dependent on Him (Romans 15:18-19). Or We are too self-sufficient, self-focused, or too desirous of personal glory or power.

Romans 15:18-19 (NASB95) – For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, **19** in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

George Mueller:

“But when it pleased God to reveal these truths to me, and my heart was brought to such a state that I could say, ‘I am not only content simply to be a hammer, an axe, or a saw, in God’s hands; but I shall count it an honor to be taken up and used by Him in any way; and if sinners are converted through my instrumentality, from my inmost soul I will give Him all the glory’; the Lord gave me to see fruit; the Lord gave me to see fruit in abundance; sinners were converted by scores; and ever since God has used me in one way or other in His service.”

Charles Spurgeon:

“If we had the Spirit sealing our ministry with power, it would signify very little about talent. Men might be poor and uneducated, their words might be broken and ungrammatical; but if the might of the Spirit attended them, the humblest evangelist would be more successful than the most learned divine, or the most eloquent of preachers.”

Conclusion: