

e-CWIP interactive apostolic ministry training

Class 102 – Doing the Stuff: Session Eight Pulpit Notes

Developing Spiritual Strength

Although all grace for Christian living comes from God, in talking about developing spiritual strength we are not talking about grace to stand under temptation, but rather strength to do exploits for God. Of course, this is not natural strength but strength in the inner man.

An important New Testament concept is embodied in the Greek word ***oikodome***, which has traditionally been translated into English as “edification.” Literally it meant “architecture,” or a “building.” Symbolically the Greeks used it to mean “strengthening.”

God has revealed in the New Testament that there are at least seven things which edify His people or build up their interior life, and we must pay close attention to them if we are to become strong in spirit. The key words in these verses are all derived from the word ***oikodome*** and the verb ***epoikodomeo***, meaning to build up.

1. The word of God’s grace

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

(Acts 20:32)

2. Love

Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies (builds up). (1 Cor. 8:1)

3. Prophecy (or tongues and interpretation) to a congregation

But he who prophesies speaks to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself; but he who prophesies edifies the church. I want you all to speak with tongues, but rather that you prophesy; for greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks with tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. (1 Cor. 14:3-5)

4. Speaking in a tongue edifies one's self; Jude also notes that we build ourselves up on our faith by praying in the Holy Spirit

He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself... (1 Cor. 14:4)

But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost... (Jude 20)

5. The various other elements of a worship service are all to be done to edify the congregation

How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine [teaching], has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edifying. (1 Cor. 14:26)

6. The ministry of the fivefold ministers edifies the Church

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... (Eph. 4:11-12)

7. Pure words which minister grace to people edify them

Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. (Eph. 4:29)

We should be actively praying for this kind of strength on a daily basis. A good way to begin to pray for strength is to pray the apostolic prayers of the New Testament for yourself. For example, Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19:

For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Keeping in step with the Spirit: 12 keys for growth in supernatural ministry

1. Learn to minister to the Lord in order to grow in fellowship with the Lord and in sensitivity to Him.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, such as Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed... (Acts 13:1-4a)

Ministering to the Lord will in our own life increase our **sensitivity to the Spirit** and result in a greater measure of the Spirit's **cultivated presence** in our lives.

2. Don't quench the Spirit (don't suppress His activity)

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thess. 5:19-22)

The expression *quenching the Spirit* refers to man's suppressing the activity of the Spirit either corporately or individually, whether out of fear or out of a desire for control.

3. Don't grieve the Spirit (don't bring Him displeasure)

Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, so that it may minister grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you are sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Be therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor [coarse] jesting, which are not proper: but rather giving of thanks. (Eph. 4:29 - 5:4)

The word "grieve" here means to cause pain, sorrow or grief to a person. The expression *grieving the Spirit* refers to causing the Spirit displeasure through actions which cause the weight of His Presence to lift off a meeting or off our persons. It is not as if the Spirit is *absent* from the room, for that would be impossible. However, we can deduce from this passage that there are certain behaviors and attitudes which will cause Him to be displeased and withdraw the sense of the nearness of His Presence. Perhaps you've seen a gathering of believers spoiled this way?

4. Expect to be stretched - it's a sign that you are still growing!

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways [of God]; who, passing through the Valley of Baca [Weeping] make it a well; the rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength; every one of them appears before God in Zion. (Ps. 84:5-7, para.)

Who likes to feel stretched? No one! But as we grow in these things, we will all have times when we feel inadequate or uncomfortable. God has a habit of pulling us into things which are unfamiliar, or for which we feel unsuited. As difficult as this can be, it's a good sign that you haven't "plateaued" but are still growing! And that's because God is not content to have you sit on the plateau you've reached.

5. Expect times of pruning and preparation.

...every branch that bears fruit, He [the Father] prunes it, that it may bring forth more fruit. (John 15:2b)

By the same token, we must recognize that there are in the Spirit seasons of lesser busyness in the Lord's work. After a season of fruitfulness, God makes adjustments in our lives so that we can bear more fruit! Related to this are the seasons of preparation. Many people are "hidden in God's quiver" waiting to be released. Moses, David, Jesus, Paul, Barnabas, and many others all experienced times of persecution or obscurity

which prepared them for the ministries they would carry. How important it is to take advantage of these times and derive the maximum benefit from them. Sometimes we are waiting on God - and sometimes He is waiting on us!

6. Never stop praying and pressing in for increase!

My brothers, I do not count myself to have taken possession, but one thing I do, forgetting the things behind and reaching forward to the things before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of this mind. (Phi. 3:13-15a, MKJV)

Here Paul tells us that the mature believer is not the one who believes himself to have arrived, but who continues to press for the prize. We must continue to pray for the miraculous even after we have begun to do the miraculous.

7. Accept God's version of "order" over yours.

We often talk about the fact that God's ways are higher than our own, but if we believed this we would not go into a blind panic when He begins to do what we find unfamiliar. Our response is to say, "That couldn't be God!" As many have pointed out, where was the Bible precedent for speaking in tongues?

8. Cultivate peace in your spirit.

They looked unto him, and were radiant; and their faces were not ashamed. (Ps. 34:5)

You will keep him in perfect peace [shalom shalom] whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isa. 26:3)

If it is possible, as much as lies with you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:8)

It's more difficult to be God's vessel and flow in the gifts (which we've said is a listening skill more than anything else) when we have no peace in our spirits. How much does it take to rattle us?

9. Be sober-minded... great harvest comes with great opposition.

Beloved, do not be astonished at the fiery trial which is to try you, as though a strange thing happened to you... (1 Pet. 4:12, MKJV)

We need to be sober-minded about the fact that not everyone will give you a thrilling reception when you begin to move in the things of the Spirit. Settle it in your heart now that you will not expect to be universally loved.

10. When things start "popping," maintain the normal spiritual disciplines of the Christian life.

And at evening, when the sun did set, they brought to Him all who were diseased, and those who were possessed by demons. And all the city was gathered together at the

door. And he healed many who were sick of different diseases, and cast out many demons; and did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. (Mark 1:32-35)

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them, and said, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, look out from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:2-4)

Now thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the fragrance of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet fragrance of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish... (2 Cor. 2:14-15)

To "do the stuff" and be much **for God**, we must be much **with God**. Both Jesus and Peter felt it necessary to stay in the place of prayer even in the midst of much busyness and supernatural ministry.

11. Grow in fellowship with the Spirit.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor. 13:14)

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us... (Acts 15:28a)

How important is it to include the Spirit in everything we do? By taking Him as our constant companion we will continue to grow in intimacy with the Lord and become in turn more useful vessels for His use.

12. Take the Spirit as your Paraclete: He is the sufficiency of God to you!

*Then the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort (**paraklesis**) of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. (Acts 9:31)*

parakaleo = a verb: to call to one's side for help, to strengthen, to comfort, to encourage, to exhort

parakletos = a noun, a person who is doing these things: and advocate, a counselor, a defense attorney, an encourager, a comforter

paraklesis = a noun, what that person ministers to others: a presence coming alongside to help; encouragement, strength, comfort, consolation

Jesus the Paraclete

My little children, these things write I to you so that you will not sin. And if any man sins, we have an advocate [parakletos] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous... (1

John 2:1)

The Holy Spirit, Another Paraclete

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you **another Comforter**, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but ye know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. (John 14:16-17)*

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me: and you also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-17)

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

Jesus said the Spirit would be another Comforter. In the Greek language there are two words for *another*: One means *another of a different kind*, and the other means *another of the same kind*. Jesus said the Spirit was *another of the same kind as Himself*: the Spirit would be to them everything Jesus had been to them while He was with them - and more!

Because of this, the potential of the believer is nearly limitless... for the limitless One lives within us! As we saw at the beginning of the course, Jesus said we would do His works and even greater works because he was going to His Father. Jesus taught that it was better for us to have the Spirit here with us than for Him, Jesus, to be with us. All of the grace, strength and ability of God - the things of Jesus in their entirety - they are ours through the ministry of the Holy Spirit! In cooperating with Him, the Gospel will have its full effect in our lives and the lives of those we meet.

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance... (1 Thess. 1:5)

Some concluding thoughts for Course 102

Some final reflections as we come to the end of this journey...

1. Realize that a course like this can raise more questions than it answers. How do we respond to that?
2. We don't learn about spiritual gifts and sensitivity to the Spirit in a vacuum. Why do we study these things at all?
3. Jesus has called us to walk in newness of life. So allow Him to continue to show you new things and stretch you!

See! I am with you always, even to the end of the age! (Matt. 28:20b)