

The Holy Spirit Activity 3

Introduction:

As we continue on the series of the Holy Spirit Activity in the Historical church, I want to remind you of last weeks thoughts so that we are all on the same page.

- 1). The Father made the Plan, the Son Paid for the Plan and the Holy Spirit Activates the Plan
- 2). Before the Church was sent into the world, the Spirit of God was sent into the church
- 3). The Holy Spirit gave the Saints motivation beyond their fears and Divine Demonstration to the world.
- 4). The Term “Filled” is a continual filling for the certain task, not just a one time experience.
- 5). The Administration and the structure of the church was conducted by the Leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - a). Unqualified people were placed in certain positions
 - b). The Holy Spirit used people out of their norm or beyond their knowledge – Paul to the Gentiles.

What we have gathered thus far about the activity of the Holy Spirit has come from the book of Acts. Or the Gospel in action. The 28 chapters of Acts provides tremendous history and examples of how normal people like you and I, trusted God build the Kingdom of God on Earth.

The reality is that the Book of Acts continues, there is no end to what the Spirit of God is doing in the churches. We continue to hear of Faceless, fearless hero's of faith that influenced nations by obedience to the Spirit of God.

Today, we are going to go beyond the 28 chapters of Acts and discover that the Holy Spirit was very active in the 500-1500 years of Christianity.

Religious Persecution did not stop them

First, think about this... Christianity did not begin as a major movement, it did not have the backing of every culture. It was a small group of believers that were thrust into pagan atmosphere. Religious persecution and political unrest was the norm. Yet Christianity flourished. Even, after the death of the apostles.

Rulers murdered James, threw him off a building publically for reason of political election, we read of Paul being beheaded, Peter Crucified upside down, Timothy beaten to death by pagans, Mark dragged by horses, Matthew killed by the sword...

Bartholomew, also know as Nathanael, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed to our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia when he was flayed to death by a whip.

Andrew was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it." He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.

The apostle Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the subcontinent.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. Matthias, the apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded.

Current Rumors like that would have many changing their religion quickly, but the reason they were able to die for the faith is because they were filled with the Spirit of God at that moment.

Example of Acts 7:59-60

59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

This was the first martyr for the faith besides Christ, the devil's plan was to send discouraging shock waves through the other believers, but in reality it only caused them to be scattered preaching the Gospel everywhere they went.

Not only that, this incident was a part of the picture that brought the great Apostle Paul to his knees.

Acts 22:20-21

20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21 "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

No matter how small the beginning of Christianity, the devil's society could not stamp out the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

Rev 2:12-13

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Def: of Dwelleth – Permanent House Seat. Gr. Thronos – Concrete place of Power.

The point is that the church was thriving and living in the midst of Satan's place of power. What a show of power and activity of the Holy Spirit.

The reason Christianity grew beyond the deaths of the Apostles was the fact that Christianity was of God. And activated by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit motivated the historical saints to go beyond their fears and spread the Gospel everywhere they went. Thus confirming the words of a wise Jewish ruler...

Acts 5:38-40

38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."

The Second greatest Threat to Christianity

The second greatest threat to the beginning origins of Christianity was Paganism. Paganism was the norm, the perversion and religious cults that were supported by the governments of that day had great influence.

As Christianity spread, it Paganism was confronted by Purity, Plurality or the belief of many gods was confronted with One Savior, One Way.

What kept Christians pure in their walk, what kept Christianity clean in their advancement? The Holy Spirit!

John 16:7-11

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

The Holy Spirit has guided the early church into the ways of Holiness, thank God we are not left to our own. We need this kind of Holy Spirit power in our lives, we might ask for Signs, Wonders and Miracles. But let us be like King David in his time of Repentance.... Ps 51 – Take not thy Holy Spirit from Me” He needed the conviction of God to keep him in line.

Another Threat to the Early Church

Tradition was a heavy blow to the early church, This was the force that attacked Jesus on every side.

Jesus said – You have made the Word of God of none effect by your traditions showing us that the man’s tradition can be more powerful than the word of God.

This is what caused Paul to persecute and raise havoc on the early church...

Gal 1:13-14

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

In the first 500 – 700 years of the early church, Christian Religious traditions of men came near to stamping out the movements of the Holy Spirit. Many were burned at the stake for praying and speaking in tongues, Many were accused and killed as being witches and mystics for Healings in the Name of Jesus.

Tradition will hinder the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our church. Tradition can even hinder divine miracles from happening. (The man at the pool of Siloe, he waited for the traditional stirring of the waters for 38 years) Jesus, by the leading of the Holy Spirit came and BROKE the back of tradition for He is not worldly, but otherworldly.

Traditions in the first 500 – 1500 years were proclaiming that the activity of the Holy Spirit died off with the apostles.... Listen to this

The Pentecostal Tradition

THE EARLY CHURCH

Clement of Rome (died c.96), and **Ignatius** (c.35-c.107) document the continued operation of spiritual gifts among average Christians.

Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130-202) describes charismatic gifts, especially prophecy, in his church in southern Gaul (modern France), warning against Gnostics who fabricate the gifts to win the naive.

Tertullian (c.160-c.225) and the Montanist "New Prophets" (whose condemnations as heretics has recently been questioned) practice healing, prophecy, and tongues. Tertullian separates "apostles," who have the Spirit fully, from "believers," who have it partially.

Antony of Egypt (251?-356) is said to practice healing and the discernment of spirits, as well as perform signs and wonders.

The heretical **Messalians** (c.360-800) teach that everyone is possessed from birth by a personal demon, driven out only by prayer and the reception of the Holy Spirit. They practice laying on of hands for this Spirit baptism, and they expect visual proof of the demon's departure.

THE MIDDLE AGES

Augustine (354-430) declares (as does John Chrysostom in the East) that *glossolalia* has ceased but also reports numerous divine healings.

Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022), an Eastern mystic, reports his most intimate spiritual experiences, including a "baptism in the Holy Spirit" distinct from those graces received in the sacraments. This Spirit baptism is accompanied by compunction (awareness of one's guilt before God), penitence, copious tears, and an intensified awareness of the Trinity as light dwelling within.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) experiences ecstatic visions, gifts of tears and compunction, wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy. Numerous miracles are attributed to her. She also is said to sing "concerts" in the Spirit and to write entire books in unknown languages.

The Cathars (c.1140-1300), the most radical heretics in the West, replace all Catholic sacraments with *consolamentum*—baptism with fire and the Holy Spirit. Members are expected to observe a severe ascetic lifestyle intended to lead to perfection.

Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) emphasizes the laying on of hands for reception of the gifts of healing, miracles, foreknowledge, irrefutable wisdom, diverse tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

THE REFORMATION AND BEYOND

Thomas Müntzer (1490-1525), a radical German reformer, emphasizes the "inner word" and baptism of the Holy Spirit, direct revelation in visions and dreams, Holy Spirit possession and guidance, as well as radical social reforms and the imminent return of Christ.

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), founder of The Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), frequently receives divine communication in visions, the gift of tears, and *loquela* (sung *glossolalia*).

Though the movement's founder, George Fox (1624-1691), discourages speaking in tongues, some Quakers do. Early Quaker literature also records visions, healings, and prophecies, which are likened to the day of Pentecost.

Jansenists, a radical Augustinian movement in the Roman Catholic church from 1640 to 1801, become known for their signs and wonders, spiritual dancing, healings, and prophetic utterances. Some reportedly speak in unknown tongues and understand foreign languages in which they are addressed.

Tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, religious "noise" and ecstasies mark the first Great Awakening, though Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) says the signs are not necessarily evidence of the Spirit's operation.

Praise Chapel....

John 14:15-18

15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

NKJV

Pagans and Jews converting by the thousands after hearing the preaching of the apostles. Apologists, using logical and passionate argument, convincing elite Romans to believe in Christianity. These are the images once elicited in histories of evangelism in the early church. But typical converts in the early days of Christianity probably did not hear about the faith from an apologist or at a public rally. More likely, their introduction came through "everyday evangelism"—through the ongoing life in the local church, the witness of individual Christians, and specialized "parachurch" ministries.

Mission-sensitive churches

Organized communities of faith deserve chief credit for evangelizing the Roman Empire, both before and after Constantine. Imitating a model crafted by Paul, early Christians planted churches, nurtured them, and made them centers for attracting and enlisting converts.

Churches were founded in almost every way possible. Sometimes a bishop, presbyters, or deacons were sent to evangelize and organize a new church. For example, in the mid-third century, Cornelius of Rome was reputed to have sent seven bishops to Gaul (modern France) to plant churches. Other times, churches that had spontaneously formed through lay evangelism asked for a bishop to instruct them.

Most churches had the same goal: evangelism.

"Enlighten those in darkness," intones an early liturgical prayer from Egypt. "Raise up the fallen, strengthen the weak, heal the sick, guide all, good Lord into the way of salvation and into thy holy flock."

Some converts learned about the faith through friendship with church members. Others saw or heard about exorcisms or healings. Some witnessed the arrest of a Christian or even a martyrdom. Others lived in Christian households as slaves or indentured servants. By the end of the third century, Christians had built formal churches near pagan temples across the empire.

However pagans heard about Christianity, they came to the church out of curiosity and stayed because it offered security in an age of anxiety. Visitors heard Christian teachers claim the church was *the* people of God. They were told of promises of immortality and escape from eternal punishment, and of assurances of salvation. And they heard about, and sometimes witnessed, the power of two ceremonies, baptism and the Eucharist.

The example of Christians' high moral standards and their practice of offering charity to all, regardless of social status, also made a deep impression on unbelievers. Galen (129-199), the Greek physician, in commenting on those "people called Christians," wrote, "They include not only men but also women who refrain from cohabitating all through their lives, and they also number individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control in matters of food and drink, and in their keen pursuit of justice, have attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophy."

Classes and the sacraments

Once inquirers displayed an interest in the Christian faith, the catechetical process (something akin to today's confirmation or new members classes) probably provided the chief means for drawing them into the fold. As depicted by Hippolytus around 217, these classes, which led to baptism, began with a preliminary inquiry by skilled teachers, engaging their students in a dialogue designed to point the way to conversion.

Churches carefully sifted out candidates not likely to make the serious commitment, which was critical during periods of persecution. Before enrolling them as "hearers," Hippolytus wrote in *The*

Apostolic Tradition, teachers were to examine candidates about their lives and their reason for embracing the faith. The Christians who brought the "hearers" were asked to "testify that they are competent to hear the word."

Hippolytus wanted to exclude people in certain professions—panderers, sculptors or painters of idols, actors or pantomimists, teachers in pagan schools, charioteers, gladiators and others connected with the shows, priests in other cults, military commanders or civil magistrates, harlots or licentious persons, enchanters, astrologers, diviners, soothsayers, and the like—unless they changed their occupations. He would not let magicians even make an inquiry about the faith. The rest of the initiation process, which took about three years (or as many as six in some places), primarily sought to secure an authentic commitment. In the fourth century, Augustine outlined the typical procedure for instructing people to faith. After scrutinizing the candidate's motives, the catechist (teacher) would present the message of salvation history, from Creation to the Second Coming. The catechist often had to deal indulgently and patiently with slow or stubborn candidates, repeating and prodding them on.

Catechumens could participate only in the instructional (preaching) service. After instruction the catechist prayed for the candidates, laid hands on them, and dismissed them. (The *Ite! Missa*, meaning "Go! You have been dismissed/sent," is thought by some scholars to be the source of the word *Mass*.)

Catechumens were not allowed to participate in the Eucharist, which followed the preaching service. No doubt, the great mystery surrounding this rite, (as well as reports of its efficacy) kept many straining at the leash to receive baptism and post-baptismal instruction.

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper had powerful appeal in the ancient world, where mystery cults (which were full of mysterious rites) prospered.

In the Eucharist, for example, seekers were told, one could partake of heavenly manna of an "unbloody sacrifice"—not the costly offerings of bulls and goats and other plants and animals, which pagans were used to. Referring to a Dionysian ritual, Clement of Alexandria wrote, "Come, O madman, not leaning on the thyrsus, not crowned with ivy. Throw away the mitre, throw away the fawn-skin." Then, referring to Christ and the Eucharist, he said, "Come to your senses! I will show you the Word and the mysteries of the Word."

Ordinary saints and country hicks

Formal traveling evangelists played a key role only during the second century. "Casual" evangelism, on the other hand, was important throughout the early period.

Responding to criticism that Christians were just a bunch of country hicks, Origen agreed that common folks accounted for Christianity's spread. The planting of Christianity in Georgia (former Soviet Union), for example, resulted from the witness of a captive woman named Nino (see "The Exile and the [Slave Girl](#)," page 21).

The most famous example of individual witness, though, is Justin. He was eventually martyred for his faith around 165, and he credited his conversion to two sources: first, to the fearlessness of Christians in the face of death. Second, he had a conversation with an old man.

It occurred during his years of spiritual searching, when he was reading philosopher after philosopher to understand the meaning of life. One day while strolling on a beach in Ephesus, Justin met an old man, who engaged him in a discussion about philosophy. It was but one conversation, and Justin never saw the man again. But this one conversation kindled in him, he said, a love for the prophets and for "friends of Christ." Not long after that conversation, Justin converted.

Parachurch schools

Scholars are not sure how evangelistic/philosophical schools came into existence. Most likely they began with private initiative like many of the other philosophical schools in the ancient world. Certain teachers established a reputation and gathered followers. Pantaenus launched the school in Alexandria made famous by Clement and Origen. Justin established a school in Rome where he could present Christianity as "the true philosophy."

How did such teachers discharge their tasks? One of Origen's most famous students, Gregory Thaumaturgus, described his story.

Gregory and his brother Athenadorus crossed paths with Origen by chance on a trip to Caesarea, and Origen did his best to effect a deep and genuine friendship with them.

Once he had persuaded them to remain in Caesaria, he taught them the physical sciences, then philosophy and ethics, and finally the Scriptures (which he considered the queen of all learning). But it was his embodiment of what he taught, Gregory judged, that most impressed him and his brother. "And thus, like some spark lighting upon our inmost soul," Gregory later wrote, "love was kindled and burst into flame within us—a love at once to the Holy Word, the most lovely object of all, who attracts all irresistibly to himself by his unutterable beauty, and to this man, his friend and advocate."

As a result, Gregory became the fabled evangelizer, the "Wonder Worker" of Cappadocia (see ["Key Converts," page 22](#)).

And so it went: countless converts, by their lives and witness, brought the good news to others on a very personal level, whether in church or in conversation.

Tertullian
(160-225)

Pugnacious apologist

While some apologists tried to reconcile Christianity and philosophy, Tertullian tried to draw a sharp distinction between the Christian faith and the world.

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullian was raised in Carthage in North Africa, educated in classical literature, and is said to have trained to be a lawyer. But some time around a.d. 197, he converted to Christianity and may have become a priest. Tertullian did not leave a record of his conversion, but many scholars believe that the heroism of Christian martyrs made a deep impression on him.

Tertullian declared that the church need not even argue with such people: "You will lose nothing but your breath and gain nothing but vexation from their blasphemy."

His earliest known work is a letter of solace and encouragement to imprisoned Christians awaiting execution. Shortly after that, he sent a long letter to the Roman authorities mocking their attempts to suppress Christianity.

"We are but of yesterday," he wrote, "but we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods."

Tertullian is more commonly remembered for his apologetic writings—and for his razor sharp wit—in defense of the Christian faith. To the pagan world, Tertullian's tracts asserted that Christians posed no threat to the empire and were loyal citizens; so Christians should be tolerated.

In his writings to Christians, Tertullian warned that separation from pagan culture was necessary to avoid moral and doctrinal corruption. The theater, pagan banquets, public assemblies, and above all, the gladiatorial games were incompatible with Christian faith. "With such dainties" he wrote, "let the devil's guests be feasted."

Tertullian leveled his deepest criticism at those who attempted to change or modify the Christian faith. God, he insisted, was the same loving and merciful God in both the Old Testament and New; Christ was God incarnate and the fulfillment of all messianic prophesy, and the church alone carried on the legitimate faith received from the apostles.

Gnostics, heretics, schismatics, and pagans, he said, were just plain wrong. They had no right to quote the Scriptures, which did not belong to them anyway.

Tertullian declared that the church need not even argue with such people: "You will lose nothing but your breath and gain nothing but vexation from their blasphemy."

But with Christians he did argue, in book after book. He disliked infant baptism, believed the return of Christ was at hand, and had little time for clergy, who were (in his opinion) lenient about sexual immorality. He believed the Holy Spirit still spoke through believers of his day, and he held this belief so strongly, he ended his days among the Montanists, a movement eventually condemned by the church.

Nonetheless, his learning and writing have earned him a lasting legacy as one of the great African Fathers of the church.