

## There is Real Power in the Spirit – Do We Really Believe This?

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Many years ago in a small town, a group of ministers decided to call Rev. D.L. Moody to come and to hold special services for revival. One of the ministers stated, "All I hear about these days is D.L. Moody! Does Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?" "No," answered another minister, "but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on D.L. Moody! (Wesley Bible Curriculum)" D.L. Moody was an evangelist during the late 1800's who is said to have preached to over 100 million people before his death in 1899. Dwight L. Moody was known for putting very spiritual men into leadership roles within his organization. They believed in prayer. However, they believed in something that is just as important that we seem to have missed in today's world. Often, we hear about how we should be going back to the basics in prayer and that is fine. However, if one doesn't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit that works through prayer, often times our prayer becomes empty and lifeless. Dwight L. Moody believed in the power of the Holy Spirit and his workers prayed Holy Spirit filled prayers that helped to bring great spiritual awakenings in America and over in England and Scotland. Those revivals were Spirit lead, not human lead. Moody knew that for a revival to be successful, the Holy Spirit had to be completely in control. In other words, they had to keep themselves from getting in the way of the working of the Spirit. They believed more in the working power of the Holy Spirit than in themselves. Plus, the Church at that time was living in dark times. Alcoholism was a bad problem in America and Europe as it is now. Sin was everywhere and the society was living and embracing sin like a child embraces their teddy bear. They were living in very dark times and they were seeking help from the only source that could bring light to a very dark and heartless world. We can fast forward to our current time period and we can say that we too are living in a very dark world. A world that has become very dark because of the sin that it embraces. We should believe that the Holy Spirit is still more than capable in bringing bright light to a sinful world. D.L. Moody and his workers believed that with all their hearts and minds. We can still enjoy light in a very dark world today. Do we really believe this? I wonder.

We will be starting a new sermon series dealing with light in a dark world and we'll be spending a lot of time in the Old Testament. The reason for this is the Old Testament took place in a very dark place. The only light available was from God and that was because of the covenant He had made with a people that kept rejecting Him throughout the Old Testament. We'll see this more and more evidence of this as we go through this sermon series. So, let's start by looking at some Scripture.

Let's start by looking at Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34. Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet states this, "The day will come," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord. "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already know me.' Says the Lord. 'And I will forgive their wickedness and will never again remember their sins.' (NLT, 1160)"

This was very difficult days for the Weeping Prophet. The Babylon Empire had been sent by God to punish Judah for continually breaking the Covenant the Lord had made with their ancestors. So, Jeremiah's job was to be the spokesperson for God and to warn the people of the coming destruction. Jeremiah kept reminding them about their disobedience toward God and His law. Then, we read in chapter 39 and 40 that Jerusalem finally falls. Jeremiah is kept at the city and God's tells the remaining people in Jerusalem to obey their conquerors. The Jews disobey again and go to Egypt which God tells Jeremiah in chapter 43 that they will be conquered there as well by the Babylonians. So, we see a group of people who continually sin against God. God states in verse 31 that He will make a "new" covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. At this time, Northern Israel had already been conquered, and now was the time for Judah to be conquered. Israel as a whole was still under the old covenant God had made with the past ancestors of Israel. The Lord kept reminding Israel of this like in Exodus 19: 5 when He had Moses state this to Israel, "Now if you will obey me and



keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the nations of the earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, my holy nation. (NLT, 125)” All Israel had to do was obey God and love Him with everything they had. This did not happen. Israel kept rejecting God over and over again. Sometimes God would send a revival, but the people would go back to breaking the covenant with God. In Hebrew, covenant means a treaty and compact. Israel would continue to break that treaty with God. Now, we have to ask a question, why was it so hard for Israel to keep the covenant? God had given them His law to follow and God kept sending prophets to warn the people all the time, but the people just didn’t want to stop sinning against God.

If we go back to Jeremiah 31: 31, we see that God was telling the people the old covenant was going to come to an end and God was going to make a new covenant with His people. This new covenant will not be like the old one where they kept disobeying because they wanted to keep rejecting God so they could continue to fulfill their own lust for the things of this world. They were always following the customs of the pagan nations around them. They didn’t want God to be their God. I wonder if we realize how bad people were in the Old Testament. Apostle Paul makes this statement in Romans 3: 10 where he states through the Spirit, “No one is good, not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their speech is filled with lies. The poison of a deadly snake drips from their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. They are quick to commit murder. Wherever they go, destruction and misery follow them. They do not know what true peace is. They have no fear of God to restrain them. (NLT, 1772)” Everything Paul is quoting here is from either the Psalms or Isaiah which is from the Old Testament. This was the life of the people in the Old Testament. Only a few would follow God out of true love for Him. This is how people lived in the Old Testament. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament is a good example of how life was in the Old Testament. In Genesis 18, Abraham has a talk with God about God getting ready to destroy the two cities. God promises Abraham that He won’t destroy the city if ten righteous people can be found. We know the rest of the story, only Lot and part of his family is rescued. Peter states this in 2 Peter 2: 7, “He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual

conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard). (EVS)” Lot was a righteous man according to God, but the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah had or wanted nothing to do with God. The people of the Old Testament could not fulfill their end of the covenant with God.

So, instead of doing away with the people, God tells Jeremiah to tell the people a day is coming where God will make a new covenant with His people. Part of that covenant will include something totally new. In verse 33, God states, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (NIV)” The Old Testament really shows us the real need for Jesus Christ to come to this earth, to die on the cross, and to have victory in the grace. The people in the Old Testament had a hard time living a righteous life. Only a few were able to do so. God is now telling the people during Jeremiah’s day this new covenant will include a helper.

During Jeremiah’s day, God had sent another prophet by the name of Ezekiel. While Jeremiah first stayed in Jerusalem after Babylon first conquered Jerusalem, Ezekiel was one of the Jews that were sent away as captives to Babylon. God has Ezekiel state this as well to the captives about the new covenant God was going to make with His people in Ezekiel 36: 25 – 27, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new; obedient heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command. (NLT, 1244)” God lets the people know that now the new part of the covenant is that they will have help. After their sins have been washed away, God’s Spirit will now give them a new heart that will have the right desires and will not be stony or hard against God. In other words, people will now be able to live a righteous life like Lot in a sinful world. People will have an easier time in obeying the laws of God because they will be written upon their hearts by the Spirit of God. We call this the Holy Spirit. John talks about this new covenant in 1 John 2: 7, “But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don’t need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you all things, and what he teaches is true – it is not a lie. So continue in what he has taught you, and continue to live in Christ. (NLT, 2016)” We are living in this new covenant



and how thankful we should be today because without that Spirit, how many of us would be really considered righteous without His help? The Old Testament teaches us about the need of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The people in the Old Testament didn't have the Holy Spirit living in them like we do today. God would send His Holy Spirit into some leaders like Moses and King David. The general people didn't have this special gift. When we read in Ezekiel about being washed clean, this is also part of the new covenant with God. God sent His only Son to carry our sins upon that cross and the blood that was shed there, washes us clean from sin. Then the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will live within us. His Spirit will start writing His perfect law into our hearts and minds so that we know what His will is for our life – that is to be righteous and holy because God is righteous and holy. Paul states in Romans 8: 11, "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you. (NLT, 1781)" There is true power that lives within us. Rev. Dwight L. Moody believed in the power of the Holy Spirit. This power can truly change our lives if only we would allow Him to. There is true life in the Spirit. We can enjoy light in a dark world because our sins can be forgiven and we can enjoy the presence of the Lord within us. This is why Jesus wanted to do the will of His Father by dying on that shameful cross. He knew that we needed to be part of the new covenant. That new covenant can only be through Jesus Christ. Only then, can we enjoy the presence of His Spirit within us. Do you enjoy living in the Spirit today? We must ask the Lord to help us to be more depended on His Spirit in our daily life. If the same Spirit raised Jesus from the dead, how much more can that same Spirit help us daily? Let's be thankful for the new covenant the Lord has made with us.

*NLT Life Application Study Bible.* Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996

*Wesley Bible Curriculum 2023.* Wesleyan Publishing House: Fishers, 2023