

# Counting on the supernatural:

Depending on the Spirit in all of life

BY RANDY HURST

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hat does it really mean to be Pentecostal?”

The question came abruptly from the well-known Christian author and speaker beside me on the plane. Of course, the standard answer to that question when I was growing up was one word — “power.”

But I hesitated to answer, mentally searching for a few seconds. Then I responded, “It means to be dependent.”

The concept of spiritual dependence led to a variety of subjects concerning daily Christian living — divine guidance, control of emotions, heart motivation, and the capacity to forgive and show mercy. As I have contemplated that simple word — “dependent” — I have concluded that it is essential to understanding a life of walking in the Spirit.

## Counting on the supernatural

*Jesus' last words to His disciples were, "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."*

In the early years of the Pentecostal movement, believers had few resources. Most lacked formal education. Many churches met in storefronts and basements. Today, for most Pentecostals in America, those circumstances have radically changed. But our essential need for the Holy Spirit's help has not.

Living a truly Christian life isn't difficult — it's impossible. We need help. God knows that because He made us and understands us. He created us with certain innate abilities. But He also designed us to need Him. We were designed to be dependent.

Next week is Pentecost Sunday. We will celebrate the coming of the Spirit, the Helper our Lord promised would empower His followers to be His witnesses in the world. As with His first followers, we desperately need the supernatural working of the Spirit to accomplish God's purposes in our lives.

### THE PROMISE OF POWER

In the final hours before Jesus' crucifixion, He taught His disciples extensively about the Holy Spirit, whom He would send from the Father to be their Helper: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that Jesus' promise concerning the Helper was in the context of keeping His commandments. Jesus' disciples would not be able to obey His commands in their own ability and willpower. Neither can we.

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After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit continued to act in the daily lives of the New Testament believers and in the life of the church as a whole. Spectacular miracles took place. The sick were brought into the streets on beds and couches so that the shadow of Peter might touch them. Luke also records that "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."<sup>3</sup>

Notice that Luke describes these miracles as "extraordinary." Other translations use the words "special" or "unusual." Placing the sick where Peter's shadow would touch them or taking Paul's handkerchiefs or aprons were not regular practices of the church. Instead, the sick were instructed to call for the elders of the church and be anointed with oil.<sup>4</sup>

### SPECTACULAR OR SUPERNATURAL

When many people think of the Holy Spirit's power, they usually envision visible, spectacular works. Most of the time, the kind of power we need in everyday life is neither spectacular nor sensational. But it is *supernatural*. Accomplishing God's purposes in the world requires divine help beyond our natural abilities. Supernatural living is not always outwardly dramatic.

The word translated "power" in Acts 1:8 (*dunamis*) is wonderfully comprehensive. It simply means "ability" and applies in practical ways to all of life. The power Jesus promised His followers is for every aspect of Christian living, enabling His followers to do and be whatever our Lord has purposed in our lives.

Each individual is unique. We struggle with different personal

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## Counting on the supernatural

weaknesses. The Holy Spirit knows our hearts, our motives and our personal flaws. When we depend on Him, He will help us in our uniqueness to live in obedience to our Lord. The help — the power — that we need varies with each individual. The shy, inhibited person may need courage to speak up. The outgoing, impulsive person may need restraint to shut up. The Holy Spirit's power will provide whatever help we need.

The fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life — love, joy, peace, patience and all the other characteristics Paul describes in Galatians 5 — may not seem spectacular. But they certainly can be supernatural, beyond our natural capacities.

When people look at our lives and see love (especially for those who have wronged us), overflowing joy in the midst of sorrow, peace in the crises of life, patience in tribulation and gentleness in response to hostility, these can be supernatural evidences that we are not merely subject to our own natural emotions.

We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live the life to which our Lord has called us. The supernatural working of the Spirit will not always be spectacular or sensational, but it is convincing evidence of the presence and life of the Spirit within us.

### NOT JUST SIGNS AND WONDERS

In recent years, much has been taught concerning signs and wonders. Those two words are frequently used in the Book of Acts. Jesus only spoke about signs and wonders twice. He warned His followers not to be deceived by false prophets in the last days who would show signs and wonders.<sup>5</sup> And when the official at Capernaum whose son was sick came to Him, Jesus said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."<sup>6</sup>

When Jesus taught His disciples about what would convince people that they were His true followers, He did not speak about signs and wonders but about *love*. He said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."<sup>7</sup>

We don't need signs, wonders and miracles every day. But we do need the Holy Spirit's help in everyday living. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual lives, in our emotions and in our relationships. We are not naturally capable of being all God wants us to be without His divine help.

We live by faith. We essentially do what we do because of what we believe — and how intensely we believe it. The Spirit imparts faith to us and strengthens that faith.<sup>8</sup> One of our greatest personal needs is motivation. The Spirit works in our desires.<sup>9</sup> He moves us to do what we don't have the internal motivation to do. He inspires our passion.

The Spirit also helps us when we pray. The apostle Paul wrote,

"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should."<sup>10</sup> He encouraged believers to "pray at all times in the Spirit ... with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."<sup>11</sup> Praying in the Spirit enables us to seek the Lord and intercede beyond our own understanding or wisdom.

We need the Holy Spirit at work in every aspect of our lives, not just in church on Sunday, but every day — in our homes, at school, in our neighborhoods and in the workplace.

### A CONTINUING INPOURING

In the Old Testament when the Israelites were fleeing Egypt for the Promised Land, God gave them bread from heaven, called manna, to feed them during their wilderness journey. It was not a supply to be stored up and carried with them. It was given to them as they needed it. A life overflowing with the fullness of the Spirit is much the same.

When Paul exhorted the Ephesian Christians to be filled with the Spirit<sup>12</sup> the tense of the verb implies a continuous action — to "keep on being filled." The infilling of the Spirit should be ongoing. We must keep praying in the Spirit, loving in the Spirit and living in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit baptism — as wonderful as it is — is not just a one-time experience. We need to keep being filled — a continual daily inpouring of the Spirit in our lives.

### A LIFE OF DEPENDENCE

In the Beatitudes, the first quality Jesus listed in describing the blessed life is poverty of spirit — the acknowledgement of our absolute spiritual need. Living the life our Lord has destined for us requires that we depend on His grace and the Spirit's power continuously.

Late in life, the apostle Peter wrote that "His divine power has given us *everything* we need for life and godliness."<sup>13</sup>

To be Pentecostal is to be dependent on the Spirit.

The Helper, whom Jesus sent from the Father to empower His first followers, will do the same for us today. The Holy Spirit will be the empowering presence to spiritually strengthen us and help us in all of life. **tpe**

RANDY HURST is commissioner on evangelism for the Assemblies of God. Look for the concluding installment in this series next week.

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

(All passages NASB unless otherwise noted.)

<sup>1</sup>John 14:15,16; <sup>2</sup>Acts 1:8; <sup>3</sup>Acts 19:11,12; <sup>4</sup>James 5:14; <sup>5</sup>Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; <sup>6</sup>John 4:48; <sup>7</sup>John 13:35; <sup>8</sup>1 Corinthians 12:9; <sup>9</sup>Philippians 2:13; <sup>10</sup>Romans 8:26; <sup>11</sup>Ephesians 6:18; <sup>12</sup>Ephesians 5:18; <sup>13</sup>Peter 1:3, (NIV)

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