

Session 7: Empowerment

Series: *Is It So? Reconsidering the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*

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I. I. Introduction

The study focuses on disentangling the Holy Spirit's work from traditional evangelical assumptions through a literal interpretation of Scripture.

- The Spirit's ministry has been examined in various contexts, from regeneration to guidance, showing a consistent pattern of precise and contextual application.

This chapter examines the empowerment by the Holy Spirit, questioning if it's universally applicable or tied specifically to the apostolic age and dispensational promises.

- Traditional evangelical teaching often presents the Spirit as a source of strength and ability for all believers.
- The goal is to clarify whether empowerment serves as an emotional boost or aligns with specific purposes in God's redemptive plan.

II. II. Evangelical Position

III. A. Overview of Evangelical Beliefs

The Holy Spirit's empowerment is seen as universally available to all believers and essential for living a Christian life.

- Charles Stanley defines spiritual power as divine energy and authority, accessible to all who submit to the Holy Spirit.
- This power is not confined to church leaders or those in formal ministry roles.

IV. B. Scriptural Basis for Empowerment

The Holy Spirit empowers believers through the fruit of the Spirit, witnessing, and fulfilling God's work.

- Stanley identifies these as the primary avenues of the Spirit's power release.

Jesus serves as a model of Spirit-empowerment, demonstrating the necessity of the Spirit for living a life pleasing to God.

- Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit for conception, ministry, resisting temptation, and teaching.

V. C. Integration with Other Doctrines

The Spirit's role encompasses regeneration, baptism into the body of Christ, sealing for salvation, and ongoing filling for sanctification.

Empowerment enables enduring suffering, self-denial, and faithful discipleship.

- These claims, however, often lack explicit Scriptural grounding.

VI. D. Critique of the Evangelical View

Assumes uniform empowerment across dispensational contexts, which may blur the distinct purposes evident in Scripture.

Potentially conflates Spirit-led empowerment with human determination or natural ability.

- Raises the question: How do we distinguish between genuine Spirit-led experiences and human effort?

Lacks explicit Scriptural support for some empowerment claims.

- Claims like empowerment for endurance or self-denial lack clear biblical references.

VII. III. Biblical Teaching

VIII. A. Examination of Key Passages

Acts 1:8

- The promise of empowerment was specific to the apostles and tied to their ministry.
- Extending this promise universally might require acceptance of accompanying signs and wonders.

Ephesians 3:16-17

- Paul's prayer for inner strength indicates empowerment as internal fortification, not physical.
- This strength enables believers to persevere in their Christian journey.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

- Refers to the power accompanying the gospel message, not universal empowerment for all believers.
- The power likely relates to the miraculous signs validating Paul's apostolic authority.

2 Timothy 1:7

- Questions whether the "spirit of power" universally applies or refers specifically to the Holy Spirit.
- Caution against building a comprehensive doctrine of empowerment on this verse alone.

IX. B. The Role of the Word in Empowerment

Scripture is the enduring source of strength, equipping believers for good works.

- *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).*

Emphasis on transformation through the Word rather than emotional or mystical experiences.

- The Spirit empowers believers through the knowledge and understanding provided by Scripture.

X. IV. Conclusion: Empowerment as a Distinct and Purposeful Ministry

XI. A. Summary of Findings

The Spirit's empowerment is deliberate and specific, tied to the apostolic mission and foundational truths.

- It served to validate the apostles' witness, establish foundational truths, and advance God's redemptive plan during a unique period of transition.

Challenges the evangelical view of empowerment as universally applicable.

- This view risks reducing the distinctiveness of the Spirit's work and conflating human determination with divine intervention.

XII. B. Implications for Today's Believers

The power of the Holy Spirit is experienced through Scripture, equipping believers for their roles in this dispensation.

- The Word of God provides the necessary knowledge, understanding, and conviction to live faithfully.

Believers should embrace the sufficiency of Scripture over subjective experiences.

- The Spirit's work continues through the inspired Word, which remains entirely sufficient for our walk of faith.