

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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The Kind of Preachers We Need and The Kind of Preacher I Want to Be (Part 3)

Luke 1:13-17

After covering John the Baptist's family, features, and fame, we now turn to his preaching. We can only imagine what John sounded like for there were no tape recorders back then. However, I imagine John as a very loud and forceful preacher. He could not have been heard by the crowd that came out to meet him by the Jordan River if he did not speak up and out. I believe that he took Isaiah's admonition to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet" (Isaiah 58:1) literally. I cannot picture a soft-spoken, quiet John the Baptist.

Regardless of how John sounded, his preaching was special and powerful. But what made John the Baptist so special? And what made him have such an impact during his generation and among his people? It was not his apparel of camel's hair, nor his appetite of locusts and wild honey. It was not even his location of being by the Jordan River. Those were unique characteristics of John the Baptist the man, but they did not make John the Baptist the preacher that he was. You can dress in camel's hair, but that will not make you like John the Baptist. It will make you look strange and foolish. You can eat locusts and wild honey, but that will not make you a great preacher like John the Baptist. What was it that made John the Baptist what he was? It was not his physical appearance nor his attributes. It was his spiritual condition. That is what made John so special, and that is what we can and should want to emulate.

The first characteristic of John that we must notice is that he was **Powered by the Spirit**. This truth about John the Baptist cannot be emphasized too much. It is the very foundation for the two thoughts

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that will follow. If you take away this truth, then you destroy everything else about John the Baptist. John was the man and the preacher that he was because the Holy Ghost was inside of him and completely dominated him. If the Holy Ghost had not filled John the Baptist, then John would have been a total failure in his ministry and no one would be talking about him almost 2000 years after he died. In fact, if John had not been filled with the Spirit, he might have lived a longer life, but it would have been an utter and complete failure of a life. It cannot be stated too much. It cannot be preached too much. It cannot be stressed too much. In order to be an effective preacher for the Lord Jesus Christ, we must be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is a command for every believer (Ephesians 5:18), but it is an even greater necessity for the preacher. If he is not filled, then the people will have no example to follow and the church will not be what the Lord wants it to be. It will be nothing more than a useless organization. We must follow John's example and be filled with the Spirit.

A few words of explanation about John's filling of the Holy Ghost must be given. I cannot go into great discussion about this because it is a whole sermon in itself, but the Holy Ghost's ministry in the Old Testament is different than in the New Testament. John's filling was following the pattern of the Old Testament where the Holy Ghost would come upon the people for a period of time when they would be used by God to fulfill a particular task. We can see examples of this in the lives of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. In none of these instances was this empowering or indwelling by the Holy Ghost permanent. The Holy Ghost would come upon the Old Testament saints and then leave. The men upon whom the Holy Ghost came did not seem to have any part in obtaining the Holy Ghost. He just comes upon them. In that regard, John's filling is like the Old Testament indwellings—it occurs because God wants a particular task done. John's task was that he would be the forerunner of the Messiah.

The timing of John's filling is different from that of New

Testament believers as well. The empowering of Old Testament saints all occurred at different times. John's filling takes place while he is in the womb of Elisabeth. That is different from the filling of all New Testament saints which initially takes place at our conversion. However, when we sin, that filling is lost. We can be filled again when we confess our sin and ask to be filled with the Spirit. In its timing, John's filling follows the pattern of the Old Testament (which are all different) more than the New Testament (which initially are all the same).

But John's filling is similar to the New Testament indwelling because it is permanent. From the language used in Luke 1:15, and based upon the record of John's life, he lived continually filled with the Spirit. The Holy Ghost never left him. (That is different from Samson and Saul. The Holy Ghost left them in Judges 16:20 and I Samuel 16:14. Even David prayed that the Holy Ghost would not leave him in Psalm 51:11. No New Testament believer would ever have to pray that.) Unlike the accounts mentioned above, and others in the Old Testament, the New Testament believer will never have the Holy Ghost leave him. We are continually indwelt by the Holy Ghost (Romans 8:9). There may be some other distinctions and similarities between John's filling and ours, but I do not want to spend any more time on them. I want to focus on the results of John's filling. That is where we can find some application for us, and that is now where we turn our attention.

Notice The Meaning of being powered by the Spirit. The word filled means "to fill; to wholly take possession of; to be illuminated, sanctified, and guided by His influence." This is the same word that is used of Elisabeth in Luke 1:41, of Zacharias in Luke 1:67, and of the church in Acts 2:4 and 4:31. It is also used of Peter in Acts 4:8 and of Paul in Acts 9:17 and 13:9. It is very similar to the word used in Ephesians 5:18, so it is proper to make application from John to us as believers and preachers today.

What made John so unique in his day was that John was not in

control of himself. He was under the complete control of the Holy Ghost. Israel had not seen this since Malachi had died over four hundred years before. Then John comes on the scene and he is completely different from the scribes and Pharisees. It is not his physical appearance that is so astounding. It is not even the manner of his preaching or the words that he uses. It stands out so much because the people can sense that John is under a greater control than himself. The people probably could not explain it, nor could they understand it. But when they told others about John, they could only say that there was something different about him. He preached as if God was preaching through him, and that is really the case.

I wonder if others can tell that our preaching is different from the preaching of those on the television or even some on the radio. Can they see in us or hear in us that our preaching is on another plane? Can they tell that our words are not simply the words of a man, but are really the words of God? How can that be possible? It is possible if we are filled with the Holy Ghost. That is what John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and others had, but many in our circles seem to be missing it. Preachers of yesteryear had the power of the Holy Ghost upon them, but many preachers of today seem not to have it. I cannot put into words what our preaching is missing, but I can tell you whom our preaching is missing—the Holy Ghost. We are powerless and cause no impact in the lives of sinners. It is because we are not filled with the Holy Ghost.

John the Baptist was not his own man. He was the Holy Spirit's man. John did not go his own way or do his own thing. He went the way of the Holy Spirit and did what the Holy Ghost wanted him to do. He was completely under the control of the Holy Ghost. He went where the Holy Ghost said to go. He said what the Holy Ghost said to say. We too must be completely under the Holy Ghost's control.

We can see not only the meaning of being powered by the Spirit, but also The Manifestation of being powered by the Spirit. There will be some results if we allow the Holy Ghost to control us. The angel

revealed to Zacharias four manifestations about John's being powered by the Spirit. Let us consider them.

The angel revealed *The Privilege* that John would enjoy. Gabriel said in Luke 1:16, "*And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.*" The word turn means "to turn about; to cause to return; to bring back." It is the same word use in Acts 3:19—*be converted*, Acts 9:35—*turned to the Lord*, Acts 11:21—*turned unto the Lord*, and Acts 14:15—*turn from these vanities unto the living God*. John would be preaching a message of conversion. He had the wonderful privilege of seeing men turn away from their false gods and ideas unto the true and living God. There is no greater privilege than to preach and see men and women respond to the preaching by forsaking their old gods and ideas for the God of the Bible. That is the whole reason that the Lord left us here—to preach the Gospel and to cause men to turn to Him. But make no mistake. They will not turn to God because of us or our great words or personality. The Holy Ghost is the One who will cause them to turn. If our preaching is to be effective, and if we are to have this privilege of seeing people converted, it will only be as we are powered by the Spirit. May we be powered by the Spirit, so we can see conversions.