

The church is intended to be a beautiful place of community - a place where when one suffers, everyone suffers, a place where when one rejoices, everyone rejoices, and a place where everyone experiences real love and acceptance in the midst of great honesty about our brokenness. Without the Spirit of God in our midst, working in us, guiding us, and living and loving through us, we will never make up this kind of community. When we read the book of Acts, we see the church as an unstoppable force. The church was powerful and spreading like wildfire, not because of clever planning, but by a movement of the Spirit. If a church is built only by our own efforts, not in the strength of the Spirit, it will quickly collapse. Let us pray that God would build His church, an unstoppable force, empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

No matter where we live and what our days look like, we have two choices: one is we live each day to depend on ourselves, to live safely, and to try to control our lives. The other choice is we can live as we were created to live – as a temple of the Holy Spirit of God, as a person dependent on Him, desperate for God the Spirit to show up and make a difference. When we begin living a life characterized by walking with the Spirit, that is when people will begin to look not to us but to our Father in heaven and give Him the praise. We will grow and change more into the people we've been created to be by the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us.

Questions for Reflection

1. What would be the main elements for church growth? How can you help church growth? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in church growth?
2. What is the fruit of the Spirit for you? How do you exhibit your fruit of the Spirit to others? What is the fruit of the Spirit you need in your life and ministry?
3. How do you focus on what God wants you to do? How do you take the time with God? How's your prayer life?
4. How do you walk with the Holy Spirit? What would be your next step (practical ways) to live by the power of the Holy Spirit?

August 26, 2018
Forgotten God (6)
Supernatural Church
Galatians 5:22-26
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

I really want our church to grow in ministry and in numbers. How can we grow our church? How can we draw people to our church? Many people agree that a group of talented, charismatic leaders can draw a crowd. If we find the right creative team, musicians, and speakers, we can grow any church. It doesn't even have to be a Christian church. The fact is that without making a conscious choice to depend on the Holy Spirit, we can do a lot. If we host a BTS concert (a Korean Boy Singers Group) in our church, our church would be packed inside and outside. If the Hillsong members were our regular praise team, we might need to consider building a larger sanctuary. My point is that a growing and energetic gathering is not necessarily evidence of the Holy Spirit's work. We can create a whole brand of churches that do not depend on the Spirit. However, God cares most about the faithfulness of His people, not the size of the congregation. He cares about whether people are lovers of Him.

Sometimes Christian events resemble the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 more than Elijah, the prophet of God. The prophets of Baal had a loud, passionate worship gathering that lasted from morning till evening. When they were done, they had a great time of fellowship. But *"no one answered; no one paid attention"* (18:29) After all of that, Elijah prayed. God heard his prayer, and fire came down from heaven.

My favorite part of that story comes when it is all over and the prophets of Baal are saying, *"The Lord - he is God! The Lord - he is God!"* (18:39). They didn't say, "Elijah is a great speaker" or "Elijah sure knows how to connect with God!" They were stunned by God. They were in awe of His power. They knew what they experienced could not have been manipulated by Elijah. They experienced the power of God.

What happens at the Christian gatherings? Is it more like what the prophets of Baal experienced? We can have a great time singing and dancing ourselves like crazy. But at the end of it, fire doesn't come down

from heaven. People leave talking about the people who led rather than the power of God. But, people need to see the transformation in their lives and respond by saying, “The Lord - He is God!” Has anyone ever been amazed by your peace? your love? and your joy? Have you ever prayed that God would so fill you with the Spirit that people would know the change could be empowered only by the Spirit?

Even in our daily living we can look more like the prophets of Baal as we live our lives. We try to fix our problems, not stopping long enough to call on the power of God Almighty. We are made to be like Elijah. He prayed and asked for help, and God sent down fire from heaven in response. Perhaps what we need is wisdom to make decisions, courage to do the right thing, and love because we feel alone. Whatever we need, the point is that God is aware of us and our circumstances, and He knows what we really need. He is able to bring these things, people, and circumstances into our lives.

God who knows each of us wants to completely transform us. He wants to set our timid hearts ablaze with strength and courage, so that people know something supernatural has taken place – life change just as miraculous as fire coming down from heaven. Today’s text, Galatians 5:22-23 says, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such thing there is no law.”* Look over those traits right now and ask yourself if you possess each to a supernatural degree. Do you exhibit more kindness and faithfulness than the Mormons you know? Do you have more self-control than your Muslim friends? Do you have more peace than Buddhists? Do you have more joy than non-believers? If God truly lives in us, shouldn’t we expect to be different from everyone else? Many Christians are content to find a bit of peace, peace to survive the week or even the day. When we exhibit the peace that surpasses the world’s understanding, people will say, “Your Lord - He is God!”

In fact, we are not strong or good enough. We don’t have all the other elements that make up the fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, we need to focus on what God wants us to do and forget the kind of people He wants us to be. We need to focus our energies and time on asking for help from the One who has the power to change us. We need to take the time to ask

God to put the fruit of His Spirit into our lives. When we spend time in communion with our God, the things around us will be changed.

James 5:17 says, *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently.”* Elijah was a human being with a nature like ours. He was just like us. What is the key thing about him? He prayed fervently. If Elijah didn’t have the courage to face down the prophets of Baal that day, if he didn’t pray fervently and courageously, then he would not have experienced God’s power in such a profound way. God delights in showing up when His people are in desperate need of Him.

You know the story of Gideon in Judges 7. Gideon started with an army thirty-two thousand men strong. To make a long story short, God purposely dwindled it to only three hundred men. God did this so that no one could say, “Look what we did” Instead, everyone knew that it was God’s power that defeated the enemy. It was only through God that a tiny army of three hundred men could defeat the much larger Midianite army.

God wants the praise for what we do in our lives. But if we never pray bold, courageous prayers, how can He answer them? If we never follow Him to positions where we need Him, how can He show up and make His presence known? When people see your life they respond by praising our Father.

When we live by our own power and strength, relying solely on our natural talents, then people naturally praise us for how we are living. But when we are living in a way that requires us to depend on the Holy Spirit, people respond by praising our Father in heaven. When was the last time you experienced the hand of God? Think about the times in your life when you have been touched by God. We experience God through a variety of means. God delights to communicate and share Himself with His beloved daughters and sons. God delights to show up when His children call on His name and when they are trusting fully in Him to come through, whether that is in relationships, in battling sin, in strength to make sacrifices, or in endurance to be faithful in daily life.