

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc dantrygg@msn.com Today's Date: November 11, 2008

Learning to Operate in the Power of the Spirit

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the one believing in Me, the works that I do s/he also will do, even greater ones than these will s/he do, because I go to the Father. ...and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper (one like Me)..." Jn. 14:12,16

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of servings, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of in-workings, but the same God, the One in-working all things in all persons. But to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit for the common good ("carrying together"). For, on the one hand, to one is given a word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to a different person a faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, and to another in-workings of powerful-acts, and to another a prophetic-utterance, and to another distinguishings of spirits, to a different person kinds of tongues, and to another an interpretation of tongues." I Cor. 12:4-10

We should not be surprised at the "super-natural". If by "natural" we mean what is physical, or sensory, we know that there is an entire realm of angelic beings, both good and evil, that we do not normally see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. God Himself is not open to physical, scientific examination. There is no "litmus test" for God, that I am aware of, yet we know that He exists. **Furthermore, we should not be surprised that God would desire to communicate with us.** The fundamental basis for our faith is that God *exists*, that He *cares about us*, and that He is *willing to participate in our affairs*. Not only has He done so in ancient history (the Bible is the *record* of His interactions with people), but it is clear from the Scriptures that He intends to foster personal relationships, even of an intimate nature, with His people (Ps. 25:1-14; Prov. 3:32; Jn. 14:16,17,21,26; I Cor. 2:10-13). **Nor should we be surprised that God would want to work powerfully through us, ...even miraculously.** This was the model of ministry taught and exemplified by Jesus (e.g., Mk. 1:21-45; 6:7-13; Lk. 10:1-11,17-20). It was carried on through the apostles and other believers of the early church (Acts 2:43; 4:29,30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:1-13). Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts indicates an ongoing expectation that these kinds of manifestations of the Spirit would continue to occur (I Cor. 12:4-11).

The phrase, "inworkings of powerful-acts", which we find in I Cor. 12:10 is interesting. The word **"inworking"** occurs in reference to miraculous acts in a couple of other passages (Mt. 14:2; Gal. 3:5). **The thrust of the verbal form "inworking"** (Gk. – *energeō*) **is the focus upon the inner activity** that ultimately is expressed in the outward act. **God is stirring something inside** which, when we respond to it, results in an expression (a "working out" – II Cor. 12:12) of His power in a specific, supernatural event, ...and a miracle "happens". In several cases the power of the Holy Spirit was *with* Jesus to heal people (e.g., Lk. 5:17; Acts 10:38). As He recognized what God wanted to do, and responded by going after what He perceived the Father initiating (Jn. 5:19,20), God's Spirit came through Him to touch those He prayed for, and they experienced healing. **Paul uses the word, "inworkings" to help us zero in on the inner process of what happens when we are being led to join God in a working of the Spirit.**

It seems that the gifts listed in I Cor. 12:7-11 are temporary, and available to anyone that God chooses to distribute them to. All these gifts seem somewhat "revelatory" in nature. In other words, God reveals to the person that He desires to use them to minister to someone else in accordance with an inner "disclosure" of the Holy Spirit. Again, we go back to Jesus' *modus operandi*, He did what He saw the Father doing, and He said what He perceived the Father saying to Him (Jn. 5:19,20,30; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49). Paul writes, "...there are varieties of inworkings, but the same God, the One inworking all things in every person. But to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit toward the common good" (I Cor. 12:6,7). **There are "inworkings", plural, which means that there is no one experience that everyone will have that will clue them into the fact that God wants to act.** Again, it is a "test-out-by-trial" proposition (Rom. 12:2). You must be open to the notion that God might want to use *you* to do something "super-natural", so that if that is indeed His plan, you will rise to the calling and prompting of God to do whatever He directs you to do.

How will we learn to do miracles, if God wants us to? Jesus told the apostles, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). The verb in this verse is better translated actively as "you will (for yourselves) *take/grasp/seize* power [*dunamis*] when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." This sounds exactly like what Paul is describing in I Cor. 12. **We need to actively take and then outwardly express the inworking power of the Spirit when it comes, or nothing will happen.**

Biblically, the gathering of God's people is to be both a learning laboratory, as well as a dispensing station of God's grace. The ministry gifts described in Eph. 4:11 were given to help others to discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts so that, as everyone utilizes their God-energized abilities, the Body would build itself up in love and maturity. The message of vs. 15 is that **this happens as we actively express truth toward one another, in word and**

deed. This picture of what is supposed to happen when the people of God gather is diametrically opposed to the practice of most churches in history. It is an “every-member participating” kind of dynamic, such as we read about in I Cor. 14:26f. **By interaction and feedback, we help one another discover how the Spirit works in our own individual lives.** We learn to identify the Spirit's leading, and to confidently step out in response to what He is doing inside of us. **By interaction and feedback, we uncover the hidden things in one another's lives,** exposing bondage, brokenness, or immaturity. We are generally encouraged and strengthened by the personal interest of God and others in helping us grow. The ministry directed by the Holy Spirit is to the point, timely, and effective. **By interaction and feedback, the healing, empowering grace of the Spirit is expressed and released through us to one another.** In Eph. 4:16, our relationships are described as "joint(s) of the supply". This image indicates that we receive something from *one another*, ...some kind of nourishment, support, or strength..., as we interact "according to the inworking (energy) in measure of each part". If there is no time or opportunity to express this "inworking" toward one another, we miss out on that investment of grace, strength and ministry that God intended for us to receive. **Furthermore, because our gifts differ, there may not be any other way to bring exactly what is needed, or most effective, than through our interaction.** For example, you can cut a board with a hammer and chisel, but a saw is much more quick and effective. The right tool for the right job applies to spiritual things, too.

OK, so how do I learn to operate according to the power of the Holy Spirit? Following are some suggestions to help us to "tune in" to what God is doing:

(1.) We must be desirous, expectant and watchful for God to begin to reveal Himself to us. If we do not wish to "go down this road", it most likely will not happen. God has been known to countermand our human objections and reluctance (e.g., Moses in Ex. 3,4; Jonah), but generally He will not force Himself upon those who do not want His input (e.g., Mt. 10:14).

(2.) Be prayerful, and ask God to teach you. He is quite capable of making you aware of what He is doing, though you may not recognize it at first. Ask Him to keep you from self-deception, as well.

(3.) Pay attention to the experiences of others who seem to be in touch with God. We are all individuals, so that the experiences we have of the operation of the Spirit in our lives will not be *exactly* like what other people experience. There are often, however, enough similarities that I might notice that what other people experience is happening to me, as well. **This is one of the strongest tools available to help us "tune in".** Again, without interacting, we will never know what others experience. Especially *watch for confirmation*, i.e., when someone has the same thing happen with them as did with you. *Pay attention to patterns*, “*bread crumbs*” or “*puzzle pieces*”. Remember, we only see *in part*. Often, God will only reveal one aspect to you, and it will not make sense. As you share it, however, someone *else* may understand, or they may have some more information, ...or the person receiving prayer may know what it is about. *Compare experiences*. Ask questions, like, "How did you know that?", or "What did that feel like?", or "How did you learn to do this? What do you watch for?" In I Cor. 2:13, Paul points to this methodology as something he relied on. The last phrase of the verse literally reads "with spiritual ones judging together spiritual things." The word translated as “judging together” implies a collaborative effort, i.e., co-judging, co-discerning, comparing ideas and perceptions with one another, interpreting and explaining together.

(4.) Weigh all things carefully against Biblical revelation and your personal discernment. If something is definitely *contradictory* to the Scriptures, then we can rule it out. God will not be inconsistent. If something seems inappropriate, or you are uncomfortable with it, be cautious. Your inner discernment may be warning you not to proceed. A more clear understanding may develop as you wait, or as you confer with others.

(5.) Learn by experimentation. We are told to "test all things, and hold fast to what is good" (I Thess. 5:21). This is more of an *experiential* test than a theological test. The word for "test" is the Greek word *dokimazō*, which means to "test out by trial". The same word is used in Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10; and Phil. 1:10, which all refer to discerning the will of God. By understanding that God has set things up so that we would *learn by doing* and experimenting, and that He *expects* that *we will make mistakes* in the process, we can give ourselves permission to stretch out without so much fear of "doing it wrong". It is very much like any other skill-development process in life, whether learning how to walk, how to drive a bicycle or car. Our first efforts are awkward, unsure, uncoordinated, and we make mistakes. As we keep at it, however, we will learn to be more effective and skilled at what we do.

(6.) Respond to what you see the Father doing. This was one of the principles that Jesus carefully followed (Jn. 5:19,20). Often when you notice that God is working in someone *else's* life, you are made aware of that because God intends for *you* to be involved in what He is initiating. It would be appropriate to come up and verbally acknowledge what you see, and ask if you can pray or help in some way.