

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-5 The Enabling Spirit

Do you know where the first mention of the Holy Spirit is in the Bible? The first book of the Old Testament begins with the Spirit of God moving over the waters. He is working with God the Father creating the heavens and the earth. This, however, is just the beginning of the Spirit's work in Scripture. Throughout the entire Old Testament we see Him moving through the leaders of God's people. The Spirit enabled them to accomplish the work to which He had called them. In this lesson, we will survey five of the ways the Spirit helped Israel.

The first way the Spirit of the Lord moved on behalf of God's people was through mighty demonstrations of His power. For instance, in Exodus, God's Spirit worked powerfully to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. According to the prophet Jeremiah, the Sovereign Lord brought His people out of Egypt "with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Jer 32:21). You will remember from Lesson 2 that the outstretched arm of God is a symbol of the dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah adds that God brought His people through the sea by His Holy Spirit who was among them. By "his glorious arm of power ... [He] divided the waters before them" (Isa 63:11-12). During that time, God also led the Israelites "by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night" (Ex 13:21-22). The cloud and pillar were symbols of the leadership and protection of the Holy Spirit over Israel.

The second way the Spirit worked on behalf of Israel was by enabling its leaders. For example, God's Spirit worked in Moses, the great deliverer of Israel. It all began when God appeared to him as "flames of fire from within a bush" (Ex 3:2). From the bush, God told Moses that He had chosen him to deliver God's people from Egyptian bondage. As you learned in Lesson 2, this divine fire reminds us of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly states that the Spirit was on Moses.

On one occasion, Moses was overwhelmed by the amount of work he had to do. God, however, provided him with an answer. He told Moses to gather 70 elders of Israel. Then God "took some of the Spirit that was on [Moses] and put it on the seventy elders." Immediately they began to prophesy. Now they were ready to help Moses. Joshua noticed that two men in the camp, who had not gathered with the others, also began to prophesy. He complained to Moses, saying, "My lord, stop them!"

But Moses replied, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" (Num 11:25-29). This wish of Moses would one day be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when God began to pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

The Spirit also enabled Joshua, Moses' successor, to lead Israel in the conquest of Canaan. Like Moses, Joshua was a man in whom was the Spirit (Num 27:18). Because of this, Joshua was a great leader, and God did many mighty works through him.

A third way the Spirit worked on behalf of God's people was by giving craftsmen the skills they needed to do their work. In the wilderness, God commissioned Moses to build the tabernacle. It would serve as a place where His people could gather to worship Him. God told

Moses to build the structure “exactly like the pattern I will show you” (Ex 25:9). He then chose two men, Bezalel and Oholiab, to lead the project. God said to Moses, “I have filled [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Ex 31:3). So, the Spirit not only equips preachers and leaders to do their work, but also equips lay people. He enabled these craftsmen to do their work well.

A fourth way the Spirit of the Lord helped the Israeli nation was to endow the judges with military prowess. After Israel finally settled in the Promised Land, God raised up men and women, called judges. He anointed them to lead His people in battles against their enemies. Let’s look at four of those judges to see how the Holy Spirit worked through them.

Othniel was the first judge of Israel. The Bible says, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war” (Jud 3:10). Through the Spirit’s power Othniel gained a great victory over Israel’s enemies. After that, Israel enjoyed 40 years of peace.

Deborah was the only female judge. She was also a prophet (Jud 4:4). She prophesied that Israel would be victorious over their enemies. The Spirit also gave her a plan on how to defeat them. She then urged Barak to lead an attack on the Canaanite forces of Sisera. Barak followed Deborah’s instructions and gained the victory.

Gideon is possibly Israel’s greatest judge. His story is also found in the Book of Judges. The Bible says that “the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon,” empowering and enabling him to lead the armies of Israel to victory (Jud 6:34, ESV).

Samson is the most puzzling of the judges. At times, he did things contrary to God’s will. Nevertheless, the Spirit often moved on him. When he was yet a young man, “the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him” (Jud 13:25). One day he came upon a lion. The Bible says, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat” (Jud 14:6). On another occasion, the Spirit again came upon him and he struck down 30 of the enemies of Israel. Yet another time, the Spirit came powerfully on him. He slew a thousand Philistines with only the jawbone of a donkey. When God empowers us, we can do things beyond our natural ability.

The stories of the judges teach us that God will empower His people with His Spirit to accomplish His work. We should always be open to the working of the Spirit in our lives.

The fifth, and final way the Holy Spirit worked on behalf of God’s people was by anointing and enabling its kings to perform their duties. This was especially true for the nation’s first two kings, Saul and David.

King Saul was the first king of Israel. Samuel, the last judge, anointed him as king. Then, “As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart.” From there, Saul went to Gibeah where he met a group of prophets. As he drew near to them, “the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying” (1Sam 10:9-10). Saul was truly anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God then helped him win a great victory over the Ammonites. Sadly, however, Saul did not continue to seek God. In time, God had to withdraw His anointing from Saul and give it to David.

King David was a man in whom the Spirit dwelt. From the day Samuel anointed him as king, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1Sam 16:13). Unlike others in the Old Testament upon whom the Spirit came and went, the Spirit remained upon David. He even became one of the writers of Scripture. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he penned many of the Psalms. One time, after David had sinned a great sin, he must have remembered how the Spirit had departed from Saul. He repented and prayed, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:10-11). We should cherish the Spirit of God in our lives. And, we should be careful to do nothing that will grieve the Holy Spirit and cause Him to depart.

This lesson is **important** because it points out how the Holy Spirit anointed and enabled the great men and women of the Old Testament.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that we need the Holy Spirit, just like these Old Testament leaders did. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit helps us live for God and do His will—including performing signs and wonders.

Let’s **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. Jeremiah said that God brought His people out of Egypt “with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” What is the meaning of the phrase “outstretched arm?”
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that, “When the Bible says that God stretches out His arm, it means that God was moving powerfully by His Holy Spirit,” you answered correctly.
2. What enabled Moses and Joshua to fulfill their roles as leaders of Israel?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “It was because the Holy Spirit dwelled in them,” you are right.
3. Name four judges whom the Holy Spirit empowered to deliver Israel.
A. [PAUSE] If you said, “Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson,” you answered correctly.
4. In which king of Israel did the Holy Spirit dwell continually?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, “King David,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to re-listen to this lesson several times until you can accurately discuss how the Spirit enabled the Old Testament leaders. Memorize David’s prayer: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:10-11).