



LESSON 8 - SPIRIT OF POWER.

Sooner or later, everyone should be arrested and imprisoned for a good cause; or put into a position of suffering and sacrifice; or at least be criticized or

inconvenienced a little. Because if we are co-conspirators with the Spirit of God to bring blessing to our world, sooner or later it's going to cost us something and get us in trouble.

Jesus told His followers to "count the cost." He promised that those who walk His road would experience push-back, even persecution.

Jesus often talks about the wiles of Satan and how he uses our vulnerability or our indecision to place doubts into our minds. Some people today still interpret Satan and demons as outmoded superstitions – unrealistic.

But they are not outmoded superstitions – they are forces that can take control of individuals, groups and even whole civilisations, driving them to destruction.

Think about this – it is like a gathering of people having fun, when someone yells out fire – and everyone stampedes towards the exits. And in many cases, people are injured or even killed in the chaos. This is a "spirit of panic" which possessed them and drove them to violence – to step over and on others to get out. This turned peaceful, decent individuals into a dangerous mob.

Imagine previously decent people being possessed, controlled and driven by forces, mind-sets or ideologies of things such as racism, revenge, greed or fear and getting a foothold in a community. They gradually allow the spirit of the group to

possess them. If nobody can break out of this frenzy, it's easy to imagine tragic outcomes – vandalism, riots, beatings, gang rapes, exploitation, slavery and terrorism.

You don't need to believe in literal demons and devils to agree with Jesus and the apostles: there are real and mysterious forces in our world that must be confronted.

Read Acts 4:1-12

The Sadducees were a small but powerful Jewish religious sect, did not believe in the resurrection and stood to gain financially by cooperating with the Romans. They had unlimited power so were able to arrest Peter and John for contradicting their beliefs. These teachers made up the Jewish High Council that had condemned Jesus to death.

Peter and John were asked - by what power and what name did you do this?

They were filled and guided by the Holy Spirit which lead them to boldly stand up for the truth in Jesus as the Lord and Saviour.

Verse 12 states: Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

How do you react to this statement?

This truth is not a decision or statement made by the church – it is the specific teaching of Jesus Himself.

John 14:6 states: Jesus said: I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one can come to the Father except through me.

Jesus was not a pluralist. He held to the 10 commandments – the Lord is God and we owe fidelity to Him alone.

No other faith believes in one God who sent His only Son to take our punishment through His love; a God who wants to be

in relationship with us and who is actively involved in each and every one's life.

When Jesus returned to His Father, He sent the third member of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit to fill us. Jesus said – suffer graciously.

Read: Acts 4:13-22

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1 Peter 2:21-23 says: Christ left you an example so that you might follow in His footsteps. When He was insulted, He did not reply with insults. When He suffered He did not threaten revenge.

Instead He entrusted Himself to the one who judges justly.

To do that takes courage and power; it takes love and a sound, non-reactive mind – **it takes the Holy Spirit.**

Read: Acts 4:23-31

We are learning to be filled, led and guided – not by the spirit of fear but by the Holy Spirit instead – a Spirit of power, love and a sound mind to face with courage whatever crises may come.

Being filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit takes on a profound meaning and practical importance.

Where unholy, unhealthy spirits or value systems judge and accuse – the Holy Spirit inspires compassion and understanding.

Where unholy, unhealthy spirits or movements drive people toward harming others, the Holy Spirit leads us to boldly and compassionately stand up for those being harmed.

Where unholy, unhealthy spirits or ideologies spread propaganda and misinformation, the Holy Spirit boldly speaks the simple truth.

Where unholy, unhealthy spirits or mind-sets spread theft, death and destruction, God's Holy Spirit spreads true aliveness.

Don't expect, however that overcoming evil with good is going to be popular, easy, convenient or safe. As God's word tells us – when people are threatening you, hating you and calling you a heretic, an infidel or worse – a bold and courageous spirit of empowerment, love and a sound mind is exactly what you need.

Engage: what aspect from this lesson especially provoked, challenged, disturbed or comforted you.

Can you recall a time where you suffered in some way for standing up for what is right, or when someone else paid a price for standing up for you?

How do you respond to the idea that racism, revenge, fear or greed can possess people?

Activate: all of us can't do everything or fight every injustice however we can identify, with the help of God, where we may have a special call to action and issues. If you can identify one record the various ways you may start to stand up for them.

Meditate: imagine your life as a tree in a storm. Imagine deep roots, a strong trunk and flexible branches.

After holding this image for a few moments, ask God for the strength to stand bold and strong against whatever adversity may come.