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**Any Ol' Interpretation
Won't Do!**



RETHINKING EMPOWERMENT

*I will put My Spirit within you and
cause you to walk in My statutes,
and you will be careful to observe
My ordinances.*

Ezekiel 36:27

*He commanded them...to wait for
what the Father had promised...
you will be baptized with the Holy
Spirit...you will receive power when
the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and you shall be My witnesses both
in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and even to the remotest
part of the earth.*

Acts 1:4, 7-8

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When teaching theology classes at seminary, I would interject issues to stimulate the students' thinking. I looked forward to our discussions about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the Christian life. Since almost everyone in the class came from either a traditional amillennial or a traditional premillennial background, I would pose the question concerning the Old Testament saints' responsibility to obey God's Words even though they did not possess the Spirit. Since both views require the Spirit in order to obey, the question created considerable discussion. After further study of the biblical evidence, passage by passage, we would discuss the material again.

Students had entered the course with their own predetermined view about the Spirit's empowerment. In the business community, that frame of reference would be called a paradigm. After weighing the evidence, thankfully, most would come to a different conclusion regarding the passages that addressed empowerment. They had shifted their orientation. They had experienced a paradigm shift, moving from one frame of reference to another.

My prayer is that as you read this book, you rechecked your orientation, your paradigm, regarding the Spirit's ministry. If your

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view has been out-of-kilter, misdirected, or biblically unsupportable, my hope is that you have undergone a paradigm shift and have begun to look at things differently, seeing a better way.

Look Again

If there is, in fact, no promise of “special empowering” for believers to live the Christian life and if God does not cause obedience, then the conclusions of these typical approaches are invalid. Consequently, we must rethink the means of walking obediently in the Christian life. There is a better way to address the Christian walk. Consider the following:

1. Not only must there be no confusion regarding the empowering of the apostles (Acts 1:8) with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), but also we must not impose an empowering concept whereby God sovereignly intervenes, causing the believer to obey. Rather, the Christian walk is a matter of choice. The choices are available as the result of being made a new person in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Believers should choose to walk in the light of their heavenly position (1 John 1:5-2:2; Eph. 5:8). Since God longs for the believer’s life to reflect his new position in Christ, the critical distinction between one’s relationship to God and fellowship with God must be understood.
2. The two characteristics of “filling” by the Holy Spirit should be understood and not confused: (1) for service or ministry and (2) for influence in the believer’s life. The first concerns a “special empowering” for service. However, the second involves the obedience of the believer through conscious choices to live according to God’s Word (Rom. 12:2; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 1:25), via the Spirit’s voluntary filling (Eph. 5:18), leading (Gal. 5:18), and teaching (1 John 2:27) ministries.

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3. Each believer faces a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-25). Rather than being influenced by the flesh, the believer should allow the Spirit to influence him. A believer is not “caused” to obey; rather he chooses to obey or disobey. To walk by the flesh is to walk in the realm of death, that is, out of fellowship with God. On the other hand, to walk by the Spirit is to walk in the realm of life or in intimacy with Christ. The realm of existence, whether darkness or light, is the result of the believer’s choice, not the Spirit’s manipulation (Col. 3:8-14; 1 John 1:5-10).

These three concepts provide a better approach to understanding the biblical pattern of the New Covenant and the Christian walk, and a clearer explanation for the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

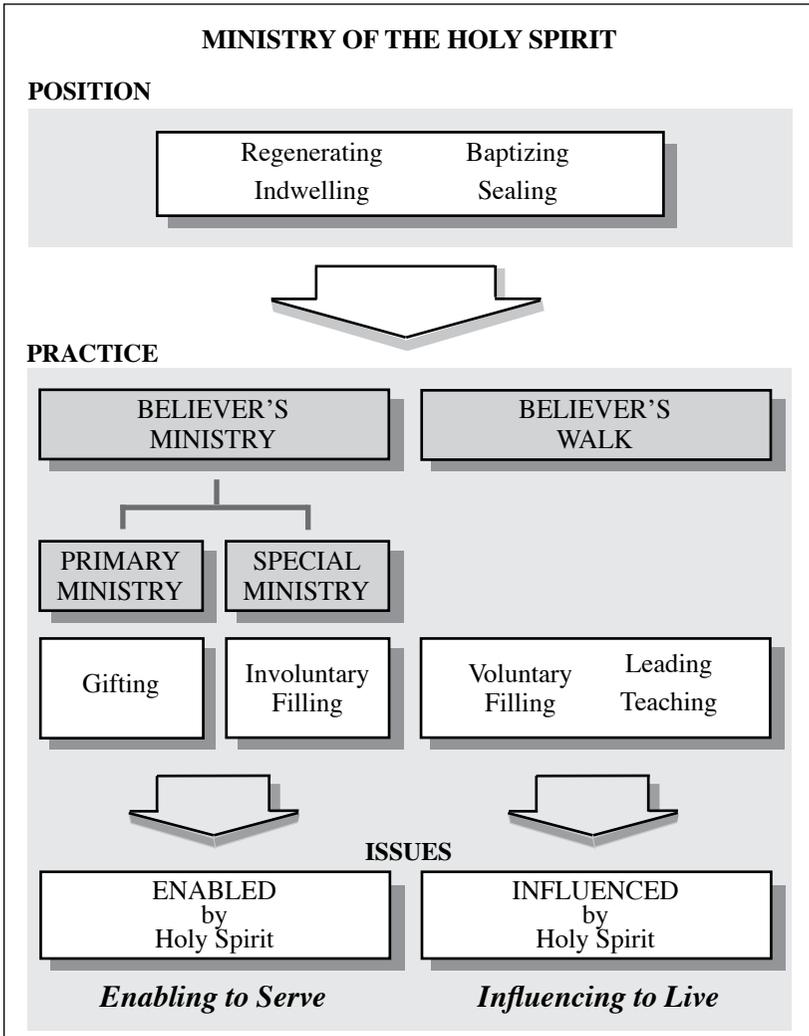
A Clearer Clarification

However you interpret the “empower” passages that were addressed previously, other passages must be noted in order to understand the dynamic of the Spirit in the life of the believer. As suggested earlier, looking to Acts 1:4-8 and Ezekiel 36:27, and confusing the two aspects of the Spirit’s filling will not lead to a proper interpretation. In fact, if believers are energized to walk by the power of the Holy Spirit, you must ask yourself, What exactly does that mean? How is that actually worked out? What are the logical conclusions?

Romans 6 presents for the believer (1) an intellectual realization of his codeath, coburial, and coresurrection with Christ (vv. 4-11) and (2) the expression of that position through being available to the influence of the Spirit (vv. 12-13). The result is a walk of obedience by the believer. God regenerates, indwells, baptizes, and seals a believer at salvation, providing a positional standing in Christ. He also grants accessible influence of the Spirit by means of His voluntary filling, leading, and teaching ministry through the Word of God. The former action is of God; the latter is the believer’s conscious choice.

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The believer allows the Spirit to influence him by choosing to live according to God’s Word. To realize experientially one’s heavenly position is the biblical concept of walking by the Spirit—becoming who you already are by choosing to allow the influence of the Spirit in your life. As a result you really LIVE (Rom. 8:12-13).



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The expressions of experiencing the *power of God* (2 Cor. 13:4), the *power of the resurrection* (Phil. 3:10), and *strengthened with power through His Spirit* (Eph. 3:16), refer to both the realization of a believer's new position and its expression in obedience. This is not a mystical experience with God imposing His will as in the *typical approaches* (traditional amillennial and traditional premillennial), but rather an experience influenced by the Spirit, as He fills, leads, and teaches the believer through the Word of God.

The chart, *Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, on the previous page distinguishes the main issues in the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life—*enabling to serve* versus *influencing to live*. To confuse the two issues results in the *typical approaches*, but the *better way* (alternative premillennial approach) correctly distinguishes the two. When the Spirit is allowed to influence the believer's walk by voluntary filling, leading, and teaching via the Word of God, the believer is then living in the revealed light of God's Word. The concept of the Spirit causing obedience through some mystical empowerment is foreign to the Scriptures.

So each believer is challenged to *change his expectations and to experience LIFE, obediently and abundantly!*

*To realize
experientially
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