

The Holy Spirit's Work and Power and Global Evangelisation

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Abstract

Global Evangelisation is an enormous task. It has always been the greatest challenge confronting the Church. Therefore, the idea of accomplishing it with ordinary human strength, physical, mental or any other, will be accounted for as sheer folly. In this article, as has been noted by leading missiologists, global evangelisation will be taken as synonymous with world mission. global evangelisation means “to give all men an adequate opportunity to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour and to become His real disciples.” From the above definition, which the writer has adopted in this article, it is obvious that this is a God-sized assignment that needs God's provisions for it to succeed.

Keywords: Holy Spirit, Power, Global Evangelism

Introduction

“It is fashionable to say that we live in a post-Christendom situation” in which “The grip of Christianity on customs, laws, morality and education is a thing of the past” (Scherer 1981:9). So, the enormity of the task is irrefutable. However, the provision of God for the fulfilment of the task is always adequate. The provision Jesus Christ promised before He departed which was later released to the disciples is the Holy Spirit sent by the Father (Whitfield 2011:17-34). Thus, each member of the Trinity is fully involved in the redemption of mankind with distinct personality and assignments (Schweer 1998:97-98). This is in line with G. William Schweer who stated that:

Mission, then, begins and ends with God. Mission Springs from God's grace and loving Nature. Mission is God's Mandate, God's Plan, God's provision, God's power and God's intent. The biblical teachings on the nature of God inform and inspire all believers to missionary efforts. We go because he loves all humans; we witness because He calls the lost; we succeed because of His power. This is His mission in which He graciously allows us to participate (Schweer 1998:113).

It is, therefore, impossible to talk about, engage in and/or succeed in mission without the involvement of the Triune God. Pointedly, Roger Greenway asked, “How can Jesus' followers ever find the strength and the resources to bring the gospel to so many people in so many places and in the face of so much opposition?” So, “The Spirit plays an important role in personal salvation, church formation, and the general spread of the gospel. Without Him, it is impossible for individuals or the church to experience revival” (Greenway 1999:53). So, God has provided for what is needed to accomplish the task.

Considering the above, this article discusses the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, highlighting His characteristics as well as His work and power in global evangelisation. This is to remind the reader of the crucial place and role of the Holy Spirit in all mission endeavours and the need to “allow” Him to do His work. At this point, the person and character of the Holy Spirit will be examined.

The Person and Character of the Holy Spirit

Much has been written and published about the Holy Spirit. The Bible is filled with writings about the Holy Spirit's person and activities. Denzil R. Miller, in his book *Teaching in the Spirit*, highlighted some of Jesus' teachings about the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. He taught, for example, that the Holy Spirit will be given to all who ask (Luke 11:5-13) and about the Holy Spirit and salvation (John 3). The Apostles also worked closely with and wrote about the Holy Spirit.

For instance, the Apostle Paul's staggering amount of writing about the Holy Spirit indicates that he always linked everything he did or that happened during his ministry to the place and/or work of the Holy Spirit (Miller, 2017:24). Miller also opined, considering the book of Romans, that "if this was a 52-minute sermon, this would mean that in this sermon, Paul mentions the Holy Spirit, on the average, every 1.79 minutes." He further clarified that, however, that "Paul did not write this letter to teach about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, He wrote to teach about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Yet he mentions the Holy Spirit every 1.79 minutes. This same analysis can be done for other letters of Paul and the result will be similar. This underscores the importance, place and role of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of the Church. Thus, it is difficult to find any Christian theological or missiological literature in which there is no mention of the Holy Spirit. As good as this may sound, the Holy Spirit is also "the most misunderstood and ignored" of the *Trinity* (Munroe 2007:189), a term "Which refers to three distinct divine personalities, each wholly God yet one essence (Winfield 2011:14)."

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God. It follows that He is a person and not a mere force or phantom, not a cloud or mist, not a feeling or a sensation as some misconstrue Him to be (Munroe 2007:190, 195). This is seen in the use of personal pronoun "He" about the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ (e.g., John 14:15-17; 15:26; 16:7, 13, 14). He is God "and equal to the Father and the Son" (Munroe 2007:192-193). He possesses the same spiritual attributes as the Father and the Son: Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), Omniscient (1Cor 2:10-11), and Omnipotent (Luke 1:35) (Whitefield 2011:14). He also has personal attributes and abilities: He speaks, He directs, He hears (Munroe 2007:196-197), He can be grieved (Verwer 2017:89), lied to, quenched, resisted, and blasphemed (Whitefield 2011:15).

It is necessary at this point to consider His work in global evangelisation.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Global Evangelisation

The Holy Spirit has been at work from before time began into this post-modern era. He was active in the creation of the universe (Genesis 1 and 2). However, He became more prominent in the New Testament, and especially in the starting of the Church and in her sustenance to this day. Therefore, "The activity of the Holy Spirit concerns the whole world when Jesus promises the Spirit's coming and the success of world missions" (Schirmacher 2017:34). As Jesus Christ puts it, "And when he comes, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

Below are some of the Holy Spirit's roles in the redemption of mankind, the essence of Christian Mission.

1. The Holy Spirit Initiates and Directs Missions.

The Book of Acts of the Apostles is replete with this very important role or work of the Holy Spirit in Mission. He is the director of the missionary enterprise (Fuller 2015:92-96). He guaranteed the successes recorded by the early church and contemporary mission activities.

As Joseph and Michele stated, “The biblical text which is most central to our reflections in this paper, Acts 13:1–4, has as its clearest emphasis the *Holy Spirit’s* role in directing missionary decision-making” (C. 2001: 59). The Disciples could not go out to carry out the Commission until He was sent (Acts 1:4-5), and He directed where and when to minister, e.g. Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10:19-20), Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, (Acts 8:5-25). Humans on their own cannot just evangelize because “the whole missionary movement is inspired, guided, directed, and brought to fruition by the Holy Spirit” (McGavran 1983:106). This statement agrees with Avery T. Willis’ assertion that “the Holy Spirit is the executor and the administrator of the Great Commission” (Willis 1979:60). Also, McGavran, writing on the axioms of Evangelical Mission stated that:

Those who engage in world evangelisation speak often of the factors which cause the growth and expansion of the church into new territories. But who creates these factors? Evangelicals believe that it is the Holy Spirit who brings about the conditions which enable His household to multiply and ramify throughout the earth, bringing blessings and salvation to all who believe in the Saviour (McGavran 1983:107).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the one who originates the ideas for mission (Hesselgrave 1996:72) and calls the “workers” and directs how the mission will be accomplished. This point is further developed in this article, plus Johnstone stated that “In day to day ministry, the Holy Spirit uses many ways to prompt God’s servants - the Word or a verse that comes to us in deep power as His Word to me, other people, circumstance, or most frequently the deep inner convictions or burden to pray, speak or take some action” (Johnstone 1998:172).

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the motivator for mission as some have eloquently pointed out, against the popular position of the Great Commission being the motivation (Gnanakan 1995:175). Ken Gnanakan puts it this way, “we may be rather shocked to discover that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, ‘Go...and make disciples,’ has not always been the motivation for missions.” This position arises from a careful evaluation of the Acts of Apostles. Moreover, “Harry T. Boer recently pointed out that a closer look at the account of the life and witness of the early church surprisingly reveals a total absence of any reference to this commission.” The writer of this article agrees with Boer because if the Great Commission, which is a “command,” was enough to motivate people to world evangelisation, the period after the Reformation (Gnanakan 1995:175-176) would not have recorded the low evangelistic activities it did.

It took the Holy Spirit to awaken someone like William Carey to set off the era of modern mission though he also based his challenge to the church on the Great Commission. Gnanakan, however, stated that Boer “was careful not to displace the Great Commission, from what he states is ‘the heart and soul of all missionary witness.’ He wants, however, to show that the commission derives its meaning and power wholly and exclusively from the Pentecost” event as the motivation for world evangelisation (Gnanakan 1995:175-176). Thus, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to initiate, Direct and motivate for world evangelization. Furthermore,

2. The Holy Spirit convicts of Sin, prepares the heart for the Gospel and opens doors for mission (John 16:8). “The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts of the unbelievers to desire what Christ offers, to inquire about the Christian faith, and to convict them of their sin and their need for salvation” (Greenway 1999:57). “He convicts people and enables them to be spiritually reborn” (Munroe 2007:195). No human strategy and wisdom can accomplish this. This was the same sentiment Apostle Paul shared when he wrote to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 2:4). It takes the Holy Spirit to enlighten the unbeliever, prick them, and lead

them to repentance (Cheeseman 2003:30). “It is the work of the Holy Spirit, in response to someone’s prayers, that causes people to yield their will to the will of the Father” (Daugherty 1998:219). Ordinarily, people do not come to Christ through an intellectual presentation of the Gospel (Reisinger 1982:52), but through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit (Janvier 2012:23). Once they are saved, He empowers them to do “good works” (McGavran 1983:111), including involvement in evangelism (Reisinger 1982:52). He prepares the way for receptivity to the Gospel (Bush 1999:115). Thus, this writer agrees with Scott W. Sunquist that,

Simply put, I have come to believe that God’s Spirit is at work in all peoples and his Spirit seeks to recover the image of God in each person and in every culture. The same Holy Spirit who applies redemption to us, and gives us spiritual gifts, is also working in the lives of people of other loyalties (Sunquist 2014:38).

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can through the Gospel bring sinners to repentance and to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Next, we will examine how the Holy Spirit is the Human Resource Manager of Mission.

3. The Holy Spirit selects and deploys missionaries.

One of the works of the Holy Spirit in mission is to select or call and deploy workers. He chose Paul and Barnabas and determined their assignments as recorded in Acts 16:7-12. He ordered the Church to send them to the Gentiles (Little 2008:68). So, He calls, directs and guides missionaries (Fuller 2015:96). There are testimonies of this even in contemporary times. Talking about the mission trend in the 10/40 window, Bush stated: “Another significant trend in these latter days’ spotlights how the Holy Spirit is drawing missionaries to the 10/40 Window who have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ” (Bush 1999:112). A similar experience was shared concerning a couple whom the Holy Spirit moved to Swat in Pakistan. It went thus, “...Since I knew that no missionaries were allowed in Swat, I asked, ‘How did you and your wife ever get into Swat?’ ‘I had never heard of the place,’ he replied. ‘I applied through the State Department under a Fulbright Fellowship to teach English in Germany, and they sent me to Swat instead’ (Wilson Jr 1997:144). The writer of this article agrees with what Christy Wilson stated after the above testimony: “The Holy Spirit has scattered Christian professionals like this couple all over the world as witnesses for Christ” (Wilson Jr 1997:144). Concluding this point, it is obvious, in agreement with Pablo Carrillo, that,

Serving the Lord in cross-cultural frontier settings is a complex enterprise, humanly speaking.... Fortunately for us, it is the Holy Spirit who carries the final responsibility of accomplishing this great task. The Lord of the harvest knows where to sow, where to reap, and what type of workers should be sent to each situation (Carrillo 1995:195).

The Holy Spirit “employs” and “deploys” workers into the field as He deems fit. Furthermore,

4. The Holy Spirit comforts, encourages and inspires passion for the lost in the believer.

Jesus in His prayer for the disciples shortly before the Passion, referred to the Holy Spirit as the *Paraclete*, which means, “comforter” among other meanings. Believers who are engaged in the task of evangelism and mission are faced with a lot of difficulties, discomfoting situations and discouraging experiences. The Holy Spirit provides them with the needed comfort to ensure they do not lose heart, by raising intercessors. Furthermore, “He awakens

an interest in missions in the hearts of the believers” (Johnstone 1998:172), “plants in the minds the believers a compassion for people who are perishing, builds faith in God’s promise that the proclamation of the Gospel will not be in vain” (Greenway 1999:54-55). “To make it happen, the Holy Spirit works in individual believers to bring us to a point of commitment, and then He spreads the vision through us to others” (Foltz 1994:144). This work is manifested in the believer as the motivation to obey the Great Commission (Johnstone 1998:173). Harry T. Boers implied that the Pentecost “is an essential link between the Great Commission and the Holy Spirit” (Gnanakan 1995:182). Patrick Johnstone testifies that:

I have the witness of the Holy Spirit who assures me of these things. He gives me the words to utter whatever my circumstances. He gives assurance that God can use even me to testify so that the devil’s captives have their blindness removed and can be set free. The Holy Spirit also gives discernment in every situation. We can have that gift of inner knowing what is of God and what is of Satan; His peace being our referee whistle-blower (Johnstone 1998:4).

This work of the Holy Spirit ensures the continuity of the mission enterprise. This leads to the next work of the Holy Spirit, namely equipping the saints.

5. The Holy Spirit equips the believer for the task. The gifts of the Spirit are given to believers to enable them to accomplish their task (Ephesians 4:1-13). This is quite necessary because of the peculiar nature of the assignment. Though many have approached this spiritual assignment purely using physical resources, they learnt in a very hard way how not to go about the task. Avery T. Willis puts it this way,

Today we face the same basic problem the disciples faced - trying to fight spiritual battles with human resources. Most Christians live and serve as if the Pentecost had never happened. They bravely try to obey Christ’s commands in their own strength, yet they wonder how Satan so often outsmarts and overpowers them (Willis 1979:58).

At the Baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was there to authenticate the ministry of Jesus and to empower Him for the assignment (Mark 1:11). This implies, in agreement with Schweer, that all Jesus did, both in facing the Devil’s temptation in the wilderness and performances of miraculous signs and wonders, was possible by the leadership and empowering of the Holy Spirit (Schweer 1998:108). Denzil R. Miller also lent his voice, stating that “Because He was anointed by the Spirit, Jesus performed His kingdom ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit (Miller 2017:108-109). Hence, it is valid for Schweer to opine that,

Without the Spirit’s continuous work, the mission enterprise would be impossible. Because he continues to do these things today, the story in Acts is an unfinished account. Each follower of Christ has his or her own missionary ministry to fulfil, and each one must do it under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit (Schweer 1998:109).

Furthermore, this writer in agreement with the above thinks it is apt to say that the Holy Spirit is to mission what oxygen is to fire. That is why it is impossible to brush Him aside in any activity that involves mission. He plans the strategy and provides for the needs of the missionaries (Fuller 2015:96). John Oak put it beautifully when he stated that “we can conclude that one of the greatest reasons for the coming of the Holy Spirit on the earthly church is to open the mouth of the believers to proclaim the Gospel” (Oak 2004:102). In other words, the boldness to evangelise the world comes from the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31). Therefore, from the above, this writer concludes this section that the Holy Spirit at work in

the believer's life produces boldness and courage to evangelise which creates avenues for the demonstration of His power.

The power of the Holy Spirit in world evangelisation or world mission will be discussed in the next section.

The Power of the Holy Spirit in World Evangelisation

The place of the power of the Holy Spirit and its demonstration in world evangelisation cannot be overemphasised. Cheeseman puts it concisely that "there are impossible things to be done but they are being done by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Cheeseman 2003:30). Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, one "can see how vital the activities of the Holy Spirit are in missionary expansion" (Schweer 1998:108). The message that Peter preached and three thousand souls were won (Acts 2:14-41), the ability of Stephen to face death as the first martyr of the Christian faith (Acts 6:8; 7:54-60), the repeated trials and persecution the disciples and apostles contended with yet did not draw back are all attributed to the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. And "if there is anything we need today in evangelism, it is the power of the Holy Spirit" (Reisinger 1982:52).

However, the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit does not always bring about salvation. This writer's study of such biblical passages as Acts 3, 4 and 16:16-39 revealed that the demonstration of the Power of the Holy Spirit always attracted two responses. One is that of awe and repentance leading to salvation, while the other is that of unbelief and hostility towards those who demonstrated it. This points to the fact that there is no guarantee that the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit will cause repentance in all that witness it. However, the believer should be ready to be a channel for the demonstration of the power and leave the outcome to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to face the power and onslaughts of the Devil. This writer's analysis of some of the passages of scripture reflects that this is both biblically correct and contemporarily valid. For instance, Paul could face Elymas (Acts 13:8-11), discern the spirit of divination in a damsel and cast it out (Acts 16:16-18), raised the dead (Acts 20:9-12), and cheated death (Acts 28: 3-6) through the help of the Holy Spirit (Dombong 2014:2). Peter raised the dead (Acts 9:39) and did many miraculous signs that aided the spread of the gospel. Janvier added to the discussion when he stated that "we partner with God as we supply the work and the Spirit supplies the power" (Janvier 2012:21). In contemporary times, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in Africa, witch doctors, sorcerers have surrendered their instruments of divination and their idols when they came face to face with the gospel of Jesus. The people in these areas are very curious and demand for the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (Cheeseman 2003:31). It is a common saying among missionaries, especially in Nigeria, that if you want to see the raw power of the Holy Spirit demonstrated, go to the mission fields. In other words, the Holy Spirit provides the power needed in spiritual warfare.

The power of the Holy Spirit is very important and indispensable in global evangelisation (Love 1996:195). As Janvier opined, believers, especially those in frontier missions, must live in the conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit. Indeed, no amount of study, training, or experience would substitute the power of the Holy Spirit in global evangelisation (Janvier 2012:23). So, the failure or success of any mission enterprises lies in the absence and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Holy Spirit is the one who supplies the power and works in and through believers to accomplish the Father's desire for all men to be saved. He also works to ensure that the prediction of Jesus that the gospel must be preached to all nations as a witness, then the end will come, is accomplished.

So far, in this article, the indispensability of the work and power of the Holy Spirit in the accomplishment of global evangelisation has been demonstrated as some cardinal aspects of the character and person, the work and the power Holy Spirit and how they affect the assignment, were examined. This writer, therefore, recommends as follows:

First, the Church should give due recognition to the Holy Spirit in all her endeavours, especially in missions and evangelism. For this to happen, individual believers must pay attention to the leading of the Holy Spirit and obey His every instruction in all missiological and ecclesiological decision-making processes.

Second, all plans and strategies of mission must be done under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who must be allowed not just to be a rubber stamp on the Church's ready and "irrevocable" strategic plans. The work of mission is the work of the Holy Spirit, and through His power alone can it be accomplished in a way that is not only fruitful but also pleasing to Him. From Biblical precedents and contemporary experiences, prayer made in humility and out of righteous and pure hearts is one way to usher in the reign of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the Church, mission agencies and all believers should raise up their voices to the heavens for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these end times in which the devil has become much more ferocious. This is how the harvest can be gathered in before the day of evil comes. Remember, the work and power of the Holy Spirit are indispensable factors in global evangelisation.

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