

Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

God's Preserving Power

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Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.



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Today we will explore the testimony of Peter as to the preserving power of God. Peter's vision and understanding of Jesus Christ enlarged as he grew in grace and knowledge. His is a remarkable testimony of being kept by the power of God.

We persevere because the Holy Spirit preserves all true believers in Jesus Christ.

Peter addresses chosen expatriates scattered in a certain area. These are elect ones, *ekklesia*, called-out ones, according to the foreknowledge or before-knowledge of God the Father through the "holying" of the Spirit into or unto obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Peter 2:9 true believers are to "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." We find that God, the Sovereign First Cause, treats us as moral agents and rational creatures responsible for our choices and decisions. He sets before us weighty considerations and powerful motives. He gives solemn warnings. He promises rich rewards. He renews His grace and revives us by His Spirit to enable us to respond correctly. We are to co-operating with the "holying" work of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be holy as God is holy and to purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.

"This is that..." Peter began expounding on the day of Pentecost to show how the prophecy of Joel applied to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the last days. (Acts 2:16) He pointed to the phenomenal display of the supernatural, as men spoke in various languages in order to be understood by the varied mix of people who had come for the Feast in Jerusalem.

In Acts 10:38 we find Peter presenting Jesus of Nazareth as anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power and declaring how Jesus went about doing good and healing those who were oppressed by the devil.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. Acts 10:38 KJV

In Acts 15:8 Peter answered expressly that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, irrespective of all national distinctions; that God put no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles.

In his Letters, Peter has various titles applying to the Holy Spirit. Let's listen to some:

1. "the Spirit of Christ" (1 Peter 1:11)
2. "the Spirit of God" intimating God and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from God (1 Peter 4:14)

3. “the Spirit of glory” showing that the Spirit of glory rests like the Shekinah on persecuted Christians (1 Peter 4:14)

Let's dig deeper.

In 1 Peter 1:11, Peter says that as to the ancient prophets, the Spirit of Christ which was in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Essentially, this is saying that the prophet of old announced the cross and crown of the Redeemer. This verse also furnishes a convincing proof that Christ had a divine pre-existence and that His Spirit, prior to the incarnation, guided the writers, under the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in all their predictions. The Spirit of Christ was in the OT prophets and writers of the OT Scriptures and thus the OT Scriptures were and are inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus infallible, or without error in the autographs.

George Smeaton says, “The same Spirit that formed Christ's human body and gave it life in His mother's womb, gave to Him the restored life when He rose from the dead. He who raised up Christ from the dead, indeed, is frequently mentioned as one of the Father's memorable titles or designations; and to prove that it was the Spirit who performed this work, we have only to recall the fact that the Holy Ghost is the executive in every divine operation (Rom. iv. 24, vi. 4).” (George Smeaton)

To the Holy Spirit also is ascribed the Christian's sanctification. 1 Peter 1:2. The Holy Spirit, by the gospel, separates Christians, or sets them apart from the common mass of people in a peculiar way,. The blessings enjoyed are the fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying power. The OT prophets had the Holy Spirit and so did the apostles in like manner. They preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1:12).

The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. The coming of Christ focused and forever marked our understanding of God. Gordon Fee in his book, *God's Empowering Presence*, speaks of the transcendent God of the universe now to be known as “the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:3). This transcendent God sent His Son into the world to redeem. With the coming of Christ we also have greater definition to our understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ. He carries on the work of Christ following Christ's resurrection and subsequent assumption of the place of authority at God's right hand. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the new covenant, who brings freedom and transforms God's people into the “glory of the Lord.” Believers are “in Christ,” sanctified by the Spirit. (Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*)

True believers are kept by the power [dunamis] of God. We can only know what that power is, and the greatness of it, as we are spiritually enlightened concerning that power. (1 Peter 1:5) As A. W. Pink notes: “All is from the Father, through the Son, by the [Holy] Spirit. All proceeds from the foreordination of the Father; all that comes to the believer is through Christ, that is, on account of His infinite merits; all is actually wrought by the Spirit, for He is the Executive of the Godhead, the active Agent in all the works of redemption. The believer is as truly and directly preserved by the Spirit, as he was quickened by Him; and only as this is duly recognized by us will we be inclined to render Him that thanks and praise which is His distinctive due.” (A. W. Pink)

From what is the believer preserved? Mainly, we are delivered from apostasy and preserved not only from everlasting burnings, but from those things which would expose us thereto. It is dangerous, then, to make light of sin and to encourage careless living.

Pink exhorts: "It is not true that, if a man has once truly believed in Christ, no matter what enormities he may commit afterwards, nor what course of evil he follow, he cannot fail to reach Heaven...the Spirit does not preserve in a way of licentiousness, but only in the way of holiness. Nowhere has God promised his favor to dogs who go back to their vomit, nor to swine which return to their wallowing in the mire. The believer may indeed experience a fearful fall, yet he will not lie down content in his filth, any more than David did: **'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with His hand.'**" (Psalm 37:24)" (A. W. Pink)

Preserving power, a garrison. We need the preserving power of the Holy Spirit, that garrison around us. Jesus said, **"Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).** Paul said, **"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5).**"

Peter is telling us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the power of God will keep or garrison the true believer in holiness. But this is not like maintaining say, a tree or river. A river might dry up, and a tree might be uprooted. A new water supply might replenish the river and nourishment might replenish the displaced tree. That's using physical power, from without, and without the river or the tree concurring or helping in the process. With the true believer, God works from within, using moral suasion so that we come to concur in mind and will with the Holy Spirit in His work. God deals with us as moral agents and draws us **"with cords of a man" (Hosea 11:4)**, maintains our responsibility and bids us **"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."** (Phil 2:12, 13). (A.W. Pink)

The Greek word in 1 Pet. 1:5 concerning this garrison power is translated "Protected" in the NASB. It is a military term meaning to guard/protect/garrison (present participle). This happens by the dunamis of God.

Garrison is a strong military force or guard made up of troops/soldiers, officers and fortifying structures and equipment. (In this case, of the holy host of heaven.)

God the Sovereign First Cause; Man the Responsible Agent. So, the preserving power of the Holy Spirit working on behalf of true believers to keep them in holiness means God is doing a work in us as moral agents such that we come to co-operate with the mind and will of Christ in order to do the will of the Father by the power and with the heart of the Holy Spirit. Man is responsible before the Living God as a moral agent. God treats us as moral agents and rational creatures responsible for our choices and decisions. He sets before us weighty considerations and powerful motives. He gives solemn warnings. He promises rich rewards. He renews His grace and revives us by His Spirit in order to enable us to respond correctly; to make the right choice. We become conscious of the power and pollution of sin dwelling in us. We cry for help to resist and escape defilement. We are shown the need of faith and beg for increase. We become aware of the flesh that hinders us and drags us down, like gravity to the grave. We have our eyes opened to the obedience to which we are called. We want to be fruitful, to bear the fruit of the Spirit; to bear the fruit of righteousness in the kingdom of God.

We yearn to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We want to abound in spiritual things, like wisdom and works wrought in God. Basically, we learn to yield to

the Holy Spirit's operation in us because, "He which has begun a good work in you will finish it." (Phil. 1:6)

As much as we need regeneration by the Holy Spirit to be born-out-of-God ones, so we need preservation by the Holy Spirit. "Faithful is He who called you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. 5:24). God the Holy Spirit preserves. We can persevere because the Holy Spirit preserves. Thus what is reserved in heaven for us is worth suffering for, and because God is holy, we are to be holy, obeying the truth through the Spirit to the end that we might love one another with a pure heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

Peter reminds us that it was the Holy Spirit who was in the prophets of old, inspiring them to testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Holy Spirit came before us in the role of Christ's divine forerunner and prepared the way for Christ in prophecy, type, and symbol. Just as the Holy Spirit was at work preparing the way for the First Advent of Christ, so also in these last days, the Holy Spirit is preparing Christ's own and the world for the Second Advent. We do well to get it right!

1 Peter 1:3 speaks of the "lively hope." 1 Peter 1:23 speaks of the living word of God. 1 Peter 4:19 speaks of **committing the keeping** of our souls to God. [From [G3844](#) and [G5087](#); to **place alongside**, that is, **present** (food, truth); by implication to **deposit** (as a trust or for protection). The Holy Spirit has the ability to revive drooping saints and to support and maintain spiritual life in them in the process of "holying." We can trust the Lord to provide this preserving power that enables us to keep going and persevere. The Word of the Lord stands forever. Amen.

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