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Four Elements of Transformation

Power

By Rev. Edgar F Solís

Intro: One New Year's Day, during the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas. No gas, no power.

In today's Bible passage Jesus promises his disciples that they will receive power. Why do you think he made that promise?

Bible Context. A Bible commentary states that the resurrection and the ascension mark a turning point as Jesus leaves the Holy Spirit (Mentioned 78 times in Acts) to guide the disciples.

What an intriguing and challenging time for Jesus' followers. During Jesus' ministry everything was exciting, His powerful words and signs raised the expectation of his disciples. They were hopeful that finally their community would reach God's promises, a new life, a new kingdom. Maybe they thought "The Messiah is come and our enemies will finally be defeated!" But then, Jesus is captured and killed. What must they have thought? They experienced fear and uncertainty; they fled and hid, but then something extraordinary happens; Jesus returned from the dead and now their dreams have new possibilities! Now with the resurrected Christ, all things could be possible! They must have believed that this was their moment. Jesus had returned and appeared to many of his followers. They even had the opportunity to speak with him. Now, let us pay attention to the question in 1:6 "So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is

this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel? Scholars say that the disciple's questions reflect an expectation of the restoration of political autonomy to Israel.

Imagine the disciples saying, " We have accomplished our goal! We will enjoy the reality of God's kingdom now and once and for all!" Their expectations are almost complete, and then, Jesus replies, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that God has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Now, I didn't include verse nine in today's reading but it is fantastic. It reads "when he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." What??? After waiting all of this time and anticipating the best time of our lives and now he is gone? We were on the very edge of fulfilling our best dreams, and Jesus says, wait for "Power"... how this could be possible? How can we have any hope without Jesus' presence? They could have said: He is leaving us again? He doesn't even answer our question! We don't need this! What is going on here?

Theological reflection

Why does Jesus leave the disciples and promise the presence and power of the Holy Spirit?

Let's consider the concept of power as it related to physics. I believe that this concept could be very helpful when trying to understand why Jesus promised power from the Holy Spirit.

Physics says that; *Power is a force causing a displacement, it is the amount of energy transferred or converted per unit time. Energy is the quantitative property that must be transferred to an object in order to perform work on, or to heat the object.*

We all know that everything created needs power to produce change, move, or experience transformation. Jesus knew that his followers had the word he had given and his disciples had

experienced first-hand the character of God incarnated in him and yet in order to produce a transformative inner experience, the church needed to receive the real presence of God in their souls and in their hearts. How many times have we experienced frustration and feel like the disciples? It often happens when our expectations are not met, when all seems to fall apart, when we believe that Jesus is leaving us. Sometimes we think that our hope is becoming a palpable reality but in the end it just disappears.

In Acts chapter 1:8 we can see that while the disciples wanted Jesus to stay in order to fulfill their agendas and expectations, he offered them something even better, the transformative presence and power of the Holy Spirit!

I believe we all are wondering how we can experience the power of God during these uncertain times. As Christian author Matthew Mayer says “In an age of pandemic, when we have to stay at home, maintain social distancing, and wait for this difficult time to pass before we can go back into the world, all we can do is stand looking up toward heaven,” open our hearts and souls to receive the power of God.” When we receive the power of the Holy Spirit the church can become the most powerful transformative force in the world.

Cookie Majors Transformative Experience

“I will talk about my two FUMC mission trips that were led by Christine Anders. First mission trip in 2015 to Palestine/Israel where we worked on service projects, visited with people who shared our faith, learned so much about the people, the culture, and the history of this land. In the Bible we read about the life of Jesus from his birth to his death, but to visit the places Jesus walked, I will cherish those memories for the rest of my life. The second mission trip was to Eastern Tennessee in 2017 where 29% of families' income is less than needed to secure the necessities of life. Our team made needed home repairs for the elderly, low income, and the

unemployed. We also unloaded trucks full of donated items and sorted clothing for their resale store. During both mission trips, I was deeply moved to see how people lived and survived in oppressive societies and see their real hardships and undisputed needs. I believe the mission trips taught me to see life differently by focusing my heart on God. I believe these mission trips were part of my spiritual transformation? God's plan for me as I continue my lifelong journey of intentionally walking with Him.”

Application. Christian author Matthew Mayer Bolton also says that especially during this time of isolation the phrase "social distancing" is a misnomer: what we actually need is increased "physical distancing" and, at the same time, increased "social connectedness." There are all kinds of ways to connect with the wider world and support our neighbors, from making masks to donating money to supporting communal policies that protect the most vulnerable to electing wise political leadership.

God's power in us produces an active and transformative presence in the world, to heal and fight for justice, proclaiming the dawn of God's joyous Jubilee that empowers our lives to be the manifestation of Jesus' character among people.

Let us remember that to ignite the metamorphosis process of becoming a butterfly, all the caterpillar does is eat and after a week or two, it is ready to begin its transformation. We all know that to have energy we must eat, and the food gives us the elements and energy to have a good life, no food no energy, no energy no power, no power no life, and no life...death!

At the beginning of my message, I shared a story about the float that suddenly sputtered and quit because it was out of gas. Even though we as Christians have access to God's power, if we do not avail ourselves of it, we will run out of power. The power of God is at hand when we surrender our lives to his presence and purpose, the power of God is accessible to those who are willing to

offer their lives, times and will to the Holy Spirit! Only by God's power can we experience the inner transformation that will manifest a fruitful and prosperous life! Christian author and magazine editor A. W . Tozer once said: *"God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible. What a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves."*(Slide 7) Our Church needs the power of God! I need the power of God; we all need the spiritual energy that comes from Jesus by receiving the Holy Spirit that resides in the power of the Church! Today is the day, and here is the place to open our lives, hearts, and minds in order to experience a new transformation process. People that live in complacency will never find a way to get out of all spiritual stagnation because only humble Christians willing to accept the necessity of God's presence will experience new paths of transformation. It can be challenging, it can be painful, but brothers and sisters, the result is glorious! Let us experience a transformation by opening our lives, hearts and minds to receive the presence and power of God. Let us receive the Holy Spirit so we can experience Jesus' transformative power! Amen!