

# Relying on the Holy Spirit, The Holy Spirit at Work in the Believer

## Week 4

*Warm-up question: Think of a time when you were strongly influenced by another person in either a positive or a negative way. What qualities about that person influenced you?*

The Welsh Revival in 1904-1906 started with a group of young people that were thirsty for a deeper experience and a deeper knowledge of God. Evan Roberts, the prime catalyst used of God in this revival, was virtually unknown when this great work of the Spirit started. His education was limited, since he had to leave school at the tender age of 11 to work in the coal mine with his father. Upon his conversion to Christ at the age of 13 he began to pray that God would visit his country of Wales in revival. At the age of 26, he was challenged to be a minister but in the early stages of his ministry, God interrupted his formal training when revival came to a small church in South Wales. It began during a Sunday morning meeting after the main service among some of the young people in the congregation of the church in New Quay, South Wales.<sup>1</sup> Young Florrie Evans was just a teenager at the time. At this youth meeting in February 1904, she declared publicly that she loved the Lord Jesus with all her heart. The Spirit descended on the meeting and the young people were reduced to tears. After this meeting, the Spirit of God quickly spread to other young people in the Cardiganshire area. Young people 16-18 years old began traveling with an evangelist, Seth Joshua, who had been praying for revival for some time. His prayer was that the Lord would call a person not from the university or college but from the working classes. Evan Roberts was the answer to his prayer. In the spring of 1904 Evan experienced a great awareness of God's presence. One night he was awakened from his sleep and led into a deep communion with God for hours. This experience was to continue every evening for the next few months until he went away to a preparatory school for ministry at Newcastle Emlyn. He was there 2½ weeks before he heard of the Spirit descending on the youth in New Quay. He had to return and receive something himself.

In a meeting that Evan was attending, Seth Joshua, the evangelist, challenged the congregation to allow the Spirit of God to "bend" all those that were attending. Evan had been prepared by his evenings of prayer; the Spirit descended on him and filled him. It was a life-changing experience for Evan Roberts. Oswald J. Smith in his book, *The Passion for Souls*, records Evan Roberts as writing:

"For eleven years I had prayed for the Spirit; and this is the way I was led to pray. William Davies, the deacon at the church where he grew up in Christ, said one night in the society: 'Remember to be faithful. What if the Spirit descended and you were absent? Remember Thomas, Jesus' disciple, what a loss he had by not being there when Jesus turned up after the resurrection!' "I said to myself: I will have the Spirit'; and through every kind of weather and in spite of difficulties, I went to the meetings. Many times, on seeing other boys with the boats on the tide, I was tempted to turn back and join them. But, no. I said to myself: 'remember your resolve,' and on I went. I went faithfully to the meetings for prayer throughout the ten to eleven years I prayed for a Revival. It was the Spirit that moved me thus to think." At a certain morning meeting which Evan Roberts attended, the evangelist in one of his petitions besought that the Lord would "bend us." The Spirit seemed to say to Roberts: "That's what you need, to be bent." And thus he describes his experience: "I felt a living force coming into my bosom. This grew and grew, and I was almost bursting. I fell on my knees with my arms over the seat in front of me; the tears and perspiration flowed freely. I thought blood was gushing forth." Certain friends approached to wipe his face. Meanwhile he was crying out, "O Lord, bend me! Bend me!" Then suddenly the glory broke. Mr. Roberts adds: "After I was bent, a wave of peace came over me, and the audience sang, 'I hear your welcome voice.' And as they sang I thought about the bending at the Judgment Day, and I was filled with compassion for those that would have to bend on that day, and I wept."<sup>2</sup>

Evan Roberts was given a vision for 100,000 people to be won to the Lord. He went at his task within

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.evangelical-times.org/Articles/Aug%2004/Aug04a05.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Oswald J. Smith, *The Passion For Souls*, Welch Publishing Company, Burlington, Canada, Page 42.

the month, holding meetings all over Wales. There was very little preaching, many of his critics saying that this was the reason that the Revival petered out within three years. His emphasis was on four things as he went around Wales:

1. Confess all known sin
2. Deal with and get rid of anything 'doubtful' in your life
3. Be ready to obey the Holy Spirit instantly
4. Confess Christ publicly

From the beginning, Roberts emphasized the importance of reliance on the Holy Spirit. "I never prepare the words I shall speak," he noted. "I leave all that to Him. . . . Why should I teach when the Spirit is teaching? . . . Why should I control the meetings? The Spirit that is in them controls them."<sup>3</sup>

He believed in giving free reign to the Spirit of God who was leading the meetings. There was a humble broken spirit in the Welsh people at this time, with many praying often and then sharing publicly in the meetings what God was doing. Another aspect of the meetings was much heart felt worship by the congregation, the choir being all the people. Even young people of 10-14 years of age were seeking God and involved in their own prayer meetings, such was the spiritual atmosphere in Wales at that time. People were changed in so many ways. The crime rate dropped, drunkards were reformed, and pubs reported losses in trade. Bad language disappeared and never returned to the lips of many. It was reported that the pit ponies failed to understand their born again colliers who seemed to speak the new language of Zion, without curse and blasphemy. For many, even football and rugby became uninteresting in the light of new joy and direction received by the converts.<sup>4</sup> Over 100,000 people were added to the churches of Wales, just as the Spirit had told Evan Roberts.

Again we see in the history of the Welsh Revival that the Spirit fell when a body of people began to pray and be open and thirsty for more of God. They also were ready to lay down sin and be obedient to the Spirit's working in them and through them. I notice that there was a resolve in Evan Robert's heart that he would have the Spirit while he kept faithfully praying

and waiting upon God and attending Church. We see that his faith would not let God go until he was blessed of God and received what he needed, to be filled with the Spirit.

*God used Florrie Evans, a young girl, to start this move of the Spirit. Why will God often choose to use virtually unknown people when He wants to move in power?*

### ***The Spirit often uses unknown people.***

In the first session we talked about the fact that God used a man that was in training to be a lawyer, Charles Finney, to lead over a million people to Christ, filling him with the Spirit before using him in a powerful evangelistic ministry. In the Hebrides revival, God used two 80 year olds to pray the revival into being. Last week we talked about Tommy Hicks, who was virtually unknown before the Argentine Revival. Evan Roberts only had a few days of training before he was thrust out to win over 100,000 people to Christ in a three year period, transforming the Welsh church in his time. God will use people who have a desire to see His glory. He often comes to His people in unexpected ways, and in ways which no man could explain or reproduce through human effort or intellect. Are we small enough for God to use us? God sees every heart. Some people cannot be used of God because they don't have the character base to support a Spirit led ministry. He knows the tendency within us as human beings to make shipwrecks of our lives if we were to suddenly be approached or sought out by others as the 'man or woman of God.' Pride in our accomplishments and the accolade of man can ruin our character completely. We have all read of men of God who shipwrecked their service to God by giving way to temptation. If you are thirsty for more of God, get rid of everything in your life that displeases Him, and begin to walk a disciplined life of devotion to Him. Jesus talked about doing spiritual surgery on anything in our lives that hinders us from living in relationship with God. He said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29). Jesus is using a very strong word picture here to show the urgency of getting rid of anything that can damage our relationship with the Father. Confess your faults to Him. If there is restitution that must be made, leave your spiritual act of

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.joyfulministry.com/welsh.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.welshrevival.com/>

worship and go and get right with others and then come back to worship.

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14-15).

### ***What was the difference in the lives of the early disciples when they were filled with the Spirit?***

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

*How were the lives of these early disciples of Christ different than what we see today in the average Christian lifestyle in the Western world?*

*Where did they meet and what did they do at those meetings?*

They met in large gatherings of 3-5 thousand up on the Temple Mount (v.46), which is where Peter and John were going when the crippled beggar was healed in Acts 3:1. They also gathered in home groups where they shared their food with one another and broke bread celebrating the Lord’s Supper; Jude in his letter calls them love feasts (Jude, verse 12). I personally don’t believe that the Lord’s Supper was ever led by a priest or a full-time Christian leader. I picture it happening at these early meetings in a very simple way; the leader of a group of people would break the bread just as the owner or head of the household used to do on the Shabbat (Sabbath) on Friday evening, proclaiming the blessing over the bread. We tend to look at the New Testament and see the 12 apostles as supermen. That

certainly was not the view of the residents of Jerusalem in the early days after the Resurrection of Jesus. After they were filled with the Spirit and Peter and John were used in the healing of the crippled beggar sitting at the gate called Beautiful, the people were baffled as they considered these two fishermen:

<sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

The leaders of Israel believed that spiritual power came as a result of intellect and head knowledge, but in God’s economy those things are not as impressive to Him as they are to us. God is looking for faith. I’m not decrying seminary training and Bible school; we need men that have been well trained and who can teach the scriptures with clarity and understanding. But it is significant to me that Jesus did not go to the seminaries of his day, the best yeshivas of Jerusalem. He could have looked in those places when he chose the 12 to be with him in His ministry. Instead, He found his 12 disciples in fishing boats, toll booths and other normal occupations. When the leaders of Jerusalem heard of the miracle of the crippled man being healed, they couldn’t believe that these things were happening at the hands of ordinary, unschooled men. They had checked out the “local Bible Schools and Seminaries” of their day and found that the 12 apostles were not listed! They were not among the “Who’s who” in the synagogue. These early disciples would have been voted the least likely to succeed by the religious authorities of their day. However, in spite of their lack of background and education, these men were so transformed simply by being with Jesus that their acts reminded the people of Christ. The people took note that these men had been with Jesus. In the same way, when we live our lives in relationship with Christ, relying on His abilities at work in us, people will also take note that we have been with Jesus. I love to be amongst people that walk with Jesus, it shows on their faces and in their character too. Acts 17:6, in the King James Version, says that these men “turned the world upside down.” Such was the testimony of those that were filled and were being led and empowered by the Spirit of God, even their enemies acknowledged the fact that they were world changers. With this in mind, none of us have any reason to think that we cannot be used of God, whether we have deep Biblical knowledge and education, or just a simple faith. We all need simple

faith, regardless of what other gifts and talents we present to God and surrender for Him to use. Without faith, it is impossible for us to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

### *How is one led by the Spirit?*

<sup>1</sup> One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. <sup>4</sup> Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” <sup>5</sup> So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. <sup>6</sup> Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” <sup>7</sup> Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. <sup>9</sup> When all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him (Acts 3:1-10).

*How is a person led and guided by the Spirit of God? What does that look like, practically speaking? How do you think Peter and John were led by the Spirit in the healing of the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-10)?*

I can tell you about a modern day miracle which was very similar to this story we have just read in the book of Acts. It happened right in front of my eyes and it did not happen in Jerusalem, or in a church, but in someone’s living room in my hometown of Dovercourt, Harwich in Essex, England where I was helping to lead a small church. We had just returned from a baptism and were having a celebration at someone’s house which was close to the seacoast. Just a few people had been baptized, all of them adults. At that time we felt that God wanted us to make our baptisms very public occasions in order to be a witness to others in our town. After all, we figured, if baptism was supposed to be a public declaration, let’s really declare it! This drew the attention of others including the local newspaper reporters. (It was a small town, after all and this was not something that one would see every day; people going into the cold North Sea fully clothed.) There were about 35-40 people present afterwards at the house where we gathered to celebrate and it was not a formal meeting.

Some people were in a corner with a guitar singing worship songs, some were talking and laughing, and others were just eating together. Tony Tiller, one of the men who had been baptized had dried off and changed clothes but was experiencing some pain from the cold. We had been worried about Tony and had asked him if he wanted us to find another indoor venue and baptize him separately, due to the fact that he had an injury and we knew that this could be uncomfortable for him. Tony would not hear of it, he wanted to be baptized in the sea with the rest of the group. Tony was partially crippled due to an accident he had years before. He was injured when falling from a crane where he worked at the docks at Harwich Parkeston Quay. Tony’s harness had not been strapped correctly, and when it came loose, Tony fell from quite a height from the crane to the hard pavement below, jarring his neck and spine. The doctor did not give Tony much hope for recovery, and told him that his mobility would probably decrease. He put Tony on a steady regime of strong pain medication. Tony used a wheelchair most of the time, but could get around with a cane, although he needed assistance. His wife Mary, had dutifully tended to him, having to take care of many of his personal needs. Tony had wanted to be healed, but had not asked for prayer for healing up to this point. Roger, the pastor of the church, wanted to pray for Tony. After we had spent a great deal of time just socializing, worshipping and eating, Roger gathered people around Tony and said a simple prayer. Many at that meeting joined together and extended their hands and agreed in prayer. Then Tony was asked to do something he normally could not do. Tony bent over and untied and took off his shoes, with some difficulty but said he could still feel pain. Then we prayed again. After praying the second time, Roger asked if he felt anything different. Tony seemed to notice that something had changed and felt he wanted to take a leap of faith, literally. From a standing position, Tony leapt over a stool in front of him. He then started running down the hallway and jumping up to touch the ceiling. He was shouting his thanks to God, and it was an incredible and instantaneous healing. Everyone in the room was in tears, among them, Tony’s son Mark, who had never seen his father even walk without assistance. Tony was healed from that day of his spine injury and was able to return his wheelchair to the doctor, who was astounded at the instantaneous recovery. His doctor stopped prescribing the pain medication because Tony did not need it, but was very confused as to how this happened. Although the doctor did not profess belief,

it caused him to question and he admitted that he was amazed at Tony's recovery. Tony's workmates stopped us at times on the street when they saw us to thank us for healing their friend. This led to opportunities to talk about the One who had healed Tony. The newspaper reporters came and talked to Tony about his experience and ran an article on the front page. The headline was "My healing." This experience took us all wonderfully by surprise. God responded to simple faith. None of us had ever witnessed anything that sudden and miraculous in regard to healing before.

Faith is like a muscle that can only get bigger as it is exercised. Only by use will you see your faith grow. Begin by praying for small things in your life to be answered by God. Our problem is that many of us do not see our own needs. We may be pretty comfortable, having all our financial needs met by our pay checks and not be pressed by need in any area. It is great to be blessed and God wants us to prosper. However, we all have needs and should get into the habit of looking to God as our provider and begin to trust Him, even for the little things. Think of what joy you could be experiencing in response to specific answers to prayer! Very few of us in this country have the kind of needs that most people in other countries have. Dependency on God for financial need is rare in America and Europe; we are not trained to learn how to wait on God to provide our needs. Being led by the Spirit can result in a life of blessing and joy and can bring glory to God by telling others of His goodness and provision. Wherever you are at, in whatever circumstances, you have needs that God wants you to present to Him, whether they be your needs or the needs of a friend or family member. The Bible tells us that we do not have simply because we do not ask (James 4:2). If we knew how much God desires to answer, we would be asking more often for ourselves and others. God wants to be your provider.

One such story of provision is that of a young mother by the name of Christene who lived in Jerusalem. She is a very good friend of mine, and at this time, she and her husband were living on a very limited income. She had two small children and really wanted to get bunk beds for them, but at that time they could not afford to buy any furniture. Christene went shopping anyway to find out how much the bunk beds would cost to the penny (or at that time, to the lire.) She then started making her need known only to God in prayer. A short time afterward, someone who did not know about her

needs sent her the exact amount she needed for the bunk beds. Christene was so happy, because not only was it an answer to her prayer, (the amount which she did not disclose to anyone was exact to the lire, the smallest measure of currency at that time,) it was also a miracle of provision that she was able to share with her children to build their faith. Christene had many such answers to prayer, little miracles as she trusted God while raising her children in Jerusalem.

*Has there been a time in your life when you received a specific answer to any prayer; whether it was big or small? How did this impact your faith?*

*Can you think of any thing you can ask God for now, whether it is a small thing or a big thing? Start by asking God for something you can believe for, no matter how small. God will build your faith as you take this step.*

If we want to be full and controlled by the Spirit we must be obedient to the Spirit's promptings. What do I mean by promptings?

Let me give you an example: Sandy had gone to visit the United States to see her parents for two weeks; it was after the first denial of my US Residency Visa. I was at home in England and not able to accompany her. On the trip back to England she had called me from the airport in Chicago to let me know that she would be boarding her flight in an hour and it would be an eight hour flight. The flight was due to arrive into Heathrow airport at 6am in the morning. We lived at that time 2 hours away from Heathrow, the other side of London from where we were living. I got up at 3.30 in the morning to go pick her up and while I was dashing around getting my things together for the drive, the thought popped into my head, "take your passport!" When that thought came, I processed the thought thinking that this would be unnecessary. Why on earth would I need a passport, I wasn't going anywhere! I wouldn't need my passport to get into the airport and wait for Sandy, so I carried on rushing around and continuing to get ready. I had my keys in my hand, and just as I had my jacket on ready to go out the door, the thought came to me again, "take your passport!" Again I thought it was weird but decided to obey that impulse because by now I had a little bit of experience at listening to those promptings, so I dashed upstairs, found my passport and ran out of the door to the car. I got to Heathrow

on time and as I went into the arrivals hall I looked up on the monitor and saw that Sandy's flight had arrived on time. However, after two hours of waiting in the arrivals lobby I began to get really worried. The time to wait is usually only around half an hour. Then over the public address system came a message for me; "Would Mr. Keith Thomas come to the Information booth?" I was even more worried when I did not see Sandy there. A uniformed Immigration officer was waiting for me. "Mr. Thomas?" he said, "All this mess can be resolved if you happen to have your passport on you!" With a big smile from ear to ear I pulled my passport out of my pocket, while he told me that British Immigration just needed to know that Sandy's husband was a British citizen. Only the Passport would prove it! I got to take my wife home, and she was quite relieved after having waited for at least a couple of hours being detained in a small room at the airport. When she had left the U.K., it had not been noticed that she had overstayed her visa and her residency status was not evident. Without proof that she was my wife, she would have been sent home on the next plane.

God was gracious with me in prompting me the second time to take my passport. I wonder how many other times the Lord has prompted me like that and I haven't listened. If we would only listen to Him how many victories and how many little miracles of provision could we be receiving? God longs to be gracious to us and speak specific things to our hearts if only we would quiet our spirit enough to listen:

<sup>13</sup> "If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, <sup>14</sup> how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! (Psalm 81:13-14).

*What obstacles in your day to day life keep you from being receptive or quiet enough to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit? What changes could you make in your lifestyle in order to be more receptive to those promptings?*

If there is a secret to being filled and controlled by the Spirit it is in learning to obey those inner promptings of the Spirit. One way that I have found to be helpful in distinguishing the prompting of the Holy Spirit from my own mind is to process over the thought that comes, to see if there was a chain of successive thoughts or if the thought popped out of nowhere. It is a good

chance that if there is no link of thoughts and it was like a light bulb suddenly was turned on; it could be the Spirit's prompting. The next thing to do is to ask yourself is; what would be the likely outcome of being obedient to that thought? Is there a chance that God would get glory out of this step of obedience? Would it be in accordance with the scriptures? Is there possible blessing that would come out of it? What is the worst case scenario if all you are hearing is your own thoughts or a result of indigestion, and it's not the Spirit's prompting? If the only thing to risk is possible embarrassment, then go for it! Let's look at an example from scripture of this kind of situation:

Imagine what it was like to be Phillip. We are told that he was chosen for an administrative job waiting on tables (Acts 6:2). He was faithful in the small things that he was given to do, he wasn't one of the apostles. Some ministers teaching the scriptures today say that the Spiritual gifts, miracles and healing finished with the ministry of the Apostles. However, as this passage points out, Phillip was not one of the 12 apostles and yet he was used in many miraculous ways including miracles of healing. From what we can read about Phillip, he was a regular guy just like you and me (he may have been a volunteer and not paid for what he was doing, we are not told). God promoted him after a persecution broke out and he left for a city in Samaria to share the gospel with the people there. It took some courage to go to the Samaritans and preach! The Samaritans and the Jews did not get along, and there was no reason to expect a warm reception, being a Jewish visitor to the region. Nevertheless, the most wonderful things began to happen; God began healing people and miraculous signs started happening (8:7). Paralytics and cripples were being healed, and demons were cast out (v.13). Phillip was laying hands on people and they were being filled with the Spirit (v.18). It must have been confusing to Philip when an angel showed up telling him to leave this wonderful revival and go to a desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza and wait (Acts 8:26).

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." <sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.

<sup>29</sup> **The Spirit told Philip**, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” <sup>30</sup> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. <sup>31</sup> “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>33</sup> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” <sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him (Acts 8:26-38 Emphasis mine).

The voice of the Spirit spoke to Phillip to run alongside the chariot. Don’t you think he wondered what he was doing as he was running alongside a chariot asking a guy what he was reading? He obeyed the Spirit’s promptings and tradition has it that after Phillip sat with this man in his chariot and explained the message of the gospel to him, this man carried the gospel to Ethiopia and won many to the Lord. We are often unaware of the full impact that our obedience to God can have in a situation. For Phillip, one act of simple obedience in speaking to this Ethiopian man was reported to have a far reaching effect in the lives of many in another country. If we will learn to be sensitive to the Spirit, how many lives will you impact? Learn to listen and obey and you will see God answer. As you see Him answer prayer, your faith muscle will grow.

What about Ananias and the conversion of Saul who became Paul the apostle? Ananias had an argument with the Lord after he was told to go and pray for the healing of Saul, and for him to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 9:10-18). Ananias did not want this job! After all, Saul had been very zealous about persecuting the new group of believers called Christians. He may have even reasoned that it could be a trap. Was it really safe to go and pray for this man that had so recently breathed threats against Christians, even rounding some of them

up and publicly approving of their deaths? (Acts 8:1 and 9:1) If Ananias had not been obedient to the voice of the Lord, God would have used someone else to go and pray for Saul and lead him to Christ, but Ananias would have missed out on the chance to be used of God and what a personal loss that would have been! Fortunately for him, he was obedient to the Spirit’s promptings even though initially, he did not want to speak to Saul. He was instrumental in the conversion of Saul who became Paul, and in so doing had a part in the formation of the early church. Paul, as we know was just as zealous in his new found Christian faith and responsible for the birth and growth of many of the early Christian churches. His letters to these churches contain valuable teaching which is still being taught from the scriptures in our churches today. What a far reaching impact one act of obedience had when Ananias decided to go and visit this man that had been such a rebel against the cause of Christ before his conversion.

Lastly, let’s look at Peter being led and prompted by the Spirit.

<sup>32</sup> As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. <sup>34</sup> “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. <sup>35</sup> All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32-35).

Peter had an itinerant ministry of visiting believers and small groups and small young churches in various parts of the land of Israel. We are not told whether Peter had any prompting at all, although we can assume that this was in obedience to the Spirit. He simply called the man by name, exercising his faith by commanding him to get up and take care of his mat, just as he had seen Jesus do (Luke 5:24). Look at the result of his simple obedience to the Spirit. Verse 35 says that all the people who lived in the two towns of Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord. They knew Aeneas, as they had seen him bedridden for eight years and they were convinced by seeing the supernatural power that was at work when one man obeyed his God.

You may feel that God would never use you in such a remarkable way, and yet it is impossible to tell what can happen from one act of obedience. Small things done with great love really can change the world. Even if

God gives you a small task, such as simply talking to someone or performing a small act of kindness, it may be a big thing in the economy of heaven and lead to great rewards.

Prayer: “Father, help me to still every distraction that

would keep me from hearing and obeying your Holy Spirit’s promptings. Help me to trust you in the small things. I pray you would lead me one step at a time to greater faith so that my relationship with you will deepen and so that you may be glorified in my life and in the lives of others.”

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