

 SMITH—
WIGGLESWORTH
on
Spirit-Filled
Living

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— *Smith W*IGGLESWORTH



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Publisher's note:

This new edition from Whitaker House has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability. Although the more modern Bible translation quoted in this edition was not available to Smith Wigglesworth, it was prayerfully selected in order to make the language of the entire text readily understandable while maintaining his original premises and message.

SMITH WIGGLESWORTH ON SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING

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Contents

Introduction	7
1. Extraordinary	13
2. Divine Revelation	23
3. A Face-to-Face Encounter with God	31
4. The Living Word.....	39
5. Our Living Hope.....	45
6. Our Risen Christ	51
7. Pressing Through.....	59
8. Righteousness	65
9. Uttermost Salvation.....	75
10. Count It All Joy	83
11. A Living Faith.....	89
12. Keeping the Vision	95
13. The Incarnation of Man.....	109
14. Filled with God	117
15. Joint Heirs with Christ	123
16. Apprehend Your Apprehension	131
17. Sonship.....	137
18. That I May Know Him	153
19. Our Inheritance	161
20. A Living Sacrifice	177
21. Above All You Can Ask or Think	181
22. This Grace	189

Introduction



An encounter with Smith Wigglesworth was an unforgettable experience. This seems to be the universal reaction of all who knew him or heard him speak. Smith Wigglesworth was a simple yet remarkable man who was used in an extraordinary way by our extraordinary God. He had a contagious and inspiring faith. Under his ministry, thousands of people came to salvation, committed themselves to a deeper faith in Christ, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and were miraculously healed. The power that brought these kinds of results was the presence of the Holy Spirit, who filled Smith Wigglesworth and used him in bringing the good news of the Gospel to people all over the world. Wigglesworth gave glory to God for everything that was accomplished through his ministry, and he wanted people to understand his work only in this context, because his sole desire was that people would see Jesus and not himself.

Smith Wigglesworth was born in England in 1859. Immediately after his conversion as a boy, he had a concern for the salvation of others and won people to Christ, including his mother. Even so, as a young man, he could not express himself well enough to give a testimony in church, much less preach a sermon. Wigglesworth said that his mother had the same difficulty in expressing herself that he

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

did. This family trait, coupled with the fact that he had no formal education because he began working twelve hours a day at the age of seven to help support the family, contributed to Wigglesworth's awkward speaking style. He became a plumber by trade, yet he continued to devote himself to winning many people to Christ on an individual basis.

In 1882, he married Polly Featherstone, a vivacious young woman who loved God and had a gift of preaching and evangelism. It was she who taught him to read and who became his closest confidant and strongest supporter. They both had compassion for the poor and needy in their community, and they opened a mission, at which Polly preached. Significantly, people were miraculously healed when Wigglesworth prayed for them.

In 1907, Wigglesworth's circumstances changed dramatically when, at the age of forty-eight, he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, he had a new power that enabled him to preach, and even his wife was amazed at the transformation. This was the beginning of what became a worldwide evangelistic and healing ministry that reached thousands. He eventually ministered in the United States, Australia, South Africa, and all over Europe. His ministry extended up to the time of his death in 1947.

Several emphases in Smith Wigglesworth's life and ministry characterize him: a genuine, deep compassion for the unsaved and sick; an unflinching belief in the Word of God; a desire that Christ should increase and he should decrease (John 3:30); a belief that he was called to exhort people to enlarge their faith and trust in God; an emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of the gifts

Introduction

of the Spirit as in the early church; and a belief in complete healing for everyone of all sickness.

Smith Wigglesworth was called “The Apostle of Faith” because absolute trust in God was a constant theme of both his life and his messages. In his meetings, he would quote passages from the Word of God and lead lively singing to help build people’s faith and encourage them to act on it. He emphasized belief in the fact that God could do the impossible. He had great faith in what God could do, and God did great things through him.

Wigglesworth’s unorthodox methods were often questioned. As a person, Wigglesworth was reportedly courteous, kind, and gentle. However, he became forceful when dealing with the Devil, whom he believed caused all sickness. Wigglesworth said the reason he spoke bluntly and acted forcefully with people was that he knew he needed to get their attention so they could focus on God. He also had such anger toward the Devil and sickness that he acted in a seemingly rough way. When he prayed for people to be healed, he would often hit or punch them at the place of their problem or illness. Yet, no one was hurt by this startling treatment. Instead, they were remarkably healed. When he was asked why he treated people in this manner, he said that he was not hitting the people but that he was hitting the Devil. He believed that Satan should never be treated gently or allowed to get away with anything. About twenty people were reportedly raised from the dead after he prayed for them. Wigglesworth himself was healed of appendicitis and kidney stones, after which his personality softened and he was more gentle with those who came to

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

him for prayer for healing. His abrupt manner in ministering may be attributed to the fact that he was very serious about his calling and got down to business quickly.

Although Wigglesworth believed in complete healing, he encountered illnesses and deaths that were difficult to understand. These included the deaths of his wife and son, his daughter's lifelong deafness, and his own battles with kidney stones and sciatica.

He often seemed paradoxical: compassionate but forceful, blunt but gentle, a well-dressed gentleman whose speech was often ungrammatical or confusing. However, he loved God with everything he had, he was steadfastly committed to God and to His Word, and he didn't rest until he saw God move in the lives of those who needed Him.

In 1936, Smith Wigglesworth prophesied about what we now know as the charismatic movement. He accurately predicted that the established main-line denominations would experience revival and the gifts of the Spirit in a way that would surpass even the Pentecostal movement. Wigglesworth did not live to see the renewal, but as an evangelist and prophet with a remarkable healing ministry, he had a tremendous influence on both the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, and his example and influence on believers is felt to this day.

Without the power of God that was so obviously present in his life and ministry, we might not be reading transcripts of his sermons, for his spoken messages were often disjointed and ungrammatical. However, true gems of spiritual insight shine through them because of the revelation he received

Introduction

through the Holy Spirit. It was his life of complete devotion and belief in God and his reliance on the Holy Spirit that brought the life-changing power of God into his messages.

As you read this book, it is important to remember that Wigglesworth's works span a period of several decades, from the early 1900s to the 1940s. They were originally presented as spoken rather than written messages, and necessarily retain some of the flavor of a church service or prayer meeting. Some of the messages were Bible studies that Wigglesworth led at various conferences. At his meetings, he would often speak in tongues and give the interpretation, and these messages have been included as well. Because of Wigglesworth's unique style, the sermons and Bible studies in this book have been edited for clarity, and archaic expressions that would be unfamiliar to modern readers have been updated.

In conclusion, we hope that as you read these words of Smith Wigglesworth, you will truly sense his complete trust and unwavering faith in God and take to heart one of his favorite sayings: "Only believe!"

Extraordinary



he people in whom God delights are the ones who rest upon His Word without doubting. God has nothing for the man who wavers, “*for let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord*” (James 1:7). Therefore, I would like us to get this verse deep into our hearts until it penetrates every fiber of our being:

Only believe, only believe.

All things are possible; only believe.

God has a plan beyond anything that we have ever known. He has a plan for every individual life, and if we have any other plan in view, we miss the grandest plan of all. Nothing in the past is equal to the present, and nothing in the present can equal the things of tomorrow. Tomorrow should be so filled with holy expectations that we will be living flames for Him. God never intended His people to be ordinary or commonplace. His intentions were that they should be on fire for Him, conscious of His divine power, realizing the glory of the Cross that foreshadows the crown.

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

SANCTIFIED UNTO GOD

God has given us a very special Scripture:

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business...." And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip. (Acts 6:1-3, 5)

During the time of the inauguration of the church, the disciples were pressured by many responsibilities. The practical things of life could not be attended to, and many were complaining concerning the neglect of their widows. Therefore, the disciples decided upon a plan, which was to choose seven men to do the work of caring for the needs of these widows—men who were “*full of the Holy Spirit.*” What a divine thought. No matter what kind of work was to be done, however menial it may have been, the person chosen had to be “*full of the Holy Spirit.*” The plan of the church was that everything, even everyday routines, must be sanctified to God, for the church had to be a Holy Spirit church. Beloved, God has never ordained anything less.

Extraordinary

ENDUED WITH POWER

I want to stress one thing. First and foremost, I would emphasize these questions: Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? Are you filled with divine power?

The heritage of the church is to be so equipped with power that God can lay His hand upon any member at any time to do His perfect will. There is no stopping point in the Spirit-filled life. We begin at the Cross, the place of disgrace, shame, and death, and that very death brings the power of resurrection life. Then, being filled with the Holy Spirit, we go on "*from glory to glory*" (2 Cor. 3:18). Let us not forget that possessing the baptism in the Holy Spirit means that there must be an ever increasing holiness. How the church needs divine anointing. It needs to see God's presence and power so evidenced that the world will recognize it. People know when the tide is flowing; they also know when it is ebbing.

The necessity for seven men to be chosen for the position of serving tables was very evident. The disciples knew that these seven men were men ready for active service, and so they chose them. In Acts 6:5, we read: "*And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip.*"

There were others, but Stephen and Philip stand out most prominently in the Scriptures. Philip was a man so filled with the Holy Spirit that a revival always followed wherever he went. Stephen was a man so filled with divine power that although serving tables might have been all right in the minds of the other disciples, God had a greater vision for

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

him. God filled him with a baptism of fire, with power and divine anointing, that took him on to the climax of his life when he saw right into the open heavens (Acts 7:56).

Had we been there with the disciples at that time, I believe we would have heard them saying to each other, "Look here. Neither Stephen nor Philip are doing the work we called them to. If they do not attend to business, we will have to get someone else." That is the human way of thinking, but divine order is far above our finite planning. When we please God in our daily service, we will always find that everyone who is faithful in the little things, God will make ruler over much (Matt. 25:21).

Stephen is such an example to follow. He was a man chosen to serve tables, who had such a revelation of the mind of Christ and of the depth and height of God that there was no standing still in his experience. He went forward with leaps and bounds. Beloved, there is a race to be run, a crown to be won. We cannot stand still. I say to you, be vigilant. Be vigilant. Let no one "*take your crown*" (Rev. 3:11).

ABOVE THE ORDINARY

God has privileged us in Christ Jesus to live above the ordinary human plane of life. Those who want to be ordinary and live on a lower plane can do so, but as for me, I will not. The same unction, the same zeal, the same Holy Spirit power is at our command as it was at the command of Stephen and the apostles. We have the same God that Abraham and Elijah had, and we do not need to lag behind in receiving any gift or grace. We may not possess all

Extraordinary

the gifts as abiding gifts, but as we are full of the Holy Spirit and divine unction, it is possible, when there is a need, for God to make evident every gift of the Spirit through us as He may choose to use.

Stephen, an ordinary man, became extraordinary under the Holy Spirit's anointing until, in many ways, he stands supreme among the apostles. "*And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people*" (Acts 6:8). As we go deeper in God, He enlarges our capacity for understanding and places before us a wide-open door. I am not surprised that this man chosen to serve tables was afterwards called to a higher plane.

You may ask, "What do you mean? Did he stop taking care of his responsibilities?" No, but he was lost in the power of God. He lost sight of everything in the natural and steadfastly fixed his gaze upon Jesus, "*the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2), until he was transformed into a shining light in the kingdom of God. May we be awakened to believe His Word and to understand the mind of the Spirit, for there is an inner place of purity where we can see God. Stephen was just as ordinary a person as you and I, but he was in the place where God could move him so that he, in turn, could affect those around him. He began in a humble place and ended in a blaze of glory. Dare to believe Christ.

FACING THE OPPOSITION

As you go on in this life of the Spirit, you will find that the Devil will begin to get restless and will cause a dispute in the church; it was so with Stephen. Any number of people may be found in the church who are very proper in a worldly sense—

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

always correctly dressed, the elite of the city, welcoming everything into the church but the power of God. Let us read what God says about them:

Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. (Acts 6:9–10)

The Freedmen, or Libertines, could not stand the truth of God. With these opponents, Stephen found himself in the same predicament as the blind man whom Jesus healed. As soon as the blind man's eyes were opened, the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue. (See John 9:1–38.) They did not want anybody in the synagogue who had his eyes open. As soon as you receive spiritual eyesight, out you go! These Freedmen, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians rose up full of wrath in the very place where they should have been full of the power of God, full of love divine, and full of reverence for the Holy Spirit. They rose up against Stephen, this man "*full of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 6:3).

Beloved, if there is anything in your life that in any way resists the power of the Holy Spirit and the entrance of His Word into your heart and life, drop on your knees and cry aloud for mercy. When the Spirit of God is waiting at your heart's door, do not resist Him; instead, open your heart to the touch of God. Resistance is good if it is applied to fighting evil. For instance, there is a resisting to the point of "*bloodshed, striving against sin*" (Heb. 12:4), but

Extraordinary

resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51) will drive you into sin.

MIGHTY FOR GOD

Stephen spoke with remarkable wisdom, and things began to happen. You will find that there is always a moving when the Holy Spirit has control. Brought under conviction by the message of Stephen, his opponents resisted, they lied, they did anything and everything to stifle that conviction. Not only did they lie, but they got others to lie against Stephen, who would have laid down his life for any one of them. Stephen was used by God to heal the sick, perform miracles, and yet they brought false accusations against him (Acts 6:13–14). What effect did these false charges have on Stephen? *“And all who sat in the council, looking stedfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel”* (v. 15).

Something had happened in the life of this man. Chosen for menial service, he became mighty for God. How was it accomplished in him? It was because his aim was high. Stephen was faithful in little, and God brought him to full fruition. Under the inspiration of divine power by which he spoke, the council could not help but listen to his holy, prophetic words. Beginning with Abraham and Moses, Stephen continued unfolding the truth. What a marvelous exhortation! Take your Bible and read it. Listen in as the angels listened in. As light upon light, truth upon truth, revelation upon revelation, found its way into their hearts, they gazed at him in astonishment. Their hearts perhaps became warm at times, and they may have said, “Truly, this

Smith Wigglesworth on Spirit-Filled Living

man is sent by God”—but then he hurled the truth at them:

You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it. (Acts 7:51–53)

Then what happened? These men were moved; they were “*cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth*” (v. 54).

There are two occasions in the Scriptures where people were “*cut to the heart.*” After Peter had delivered that inspired sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the people were “*cut to the heart*” (Acts 2:37) with conviction, and there were added to the church 3,000 souls (v. 41). Here is Stephen, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the men of this council who were being “*cut to the heart*” rose up as one man to slay him. As you read Acts 7, beginning with verse fifty-five, what a picture you have before you. As I close my eyes, I have a vision of this scene in every detail: the howling mob with their vengeful, murderous spirits, ready to devour this holy man, and he “*being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God.*” What did he see there? From his place of helplessness, he looked up and said: “*I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!*” (v. 56).

Extraordinary

Is that the position that Jesus left earth to take? No. He went to *sit* at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 12:2); but in support of the first martyr, in behalf of the man with that burning flame of Holy Spirit power, God's Son *stood up* in honorary testimony of him who, called to serve tables, was faithful unto death.

But is that all? No, I am so glad that is not all. As the stones came flying at Stephen, pounding his body, crushing his bones, striking his temple, mangling his beautiful face, what happened? How did this scene end? With a sublime, upward look, this man, chosen for an ordinary task but filled with the Holy Spirit, was so moved upon by God that he finished his earthly work in a blaze of glory, magnifying God with his last breath. Looking up into the face of the Master, he said, "*Lord, do not charge them with this sin.*" And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60).

Friends, it is worth everything to gain the Holy Spirit. What a divine ending to the life and testimony of a man who was chosen to serve tables.