

What does the power of the Holy Spirit feel like? By Thailer Jimerson

I was talking to a member recently and they asked about the actual “power” of the Holy Spirit. We know that he empowers us towards holiness and evangelism, but what is it like to have him and to feel empowered, functionally speaking, in our ordinary, day-to-day lives? Of course, it’s difficult to explain because there is room for ebb and flow, but let’s see what the Bible says about it.

From my studies, I have to conclude that, of all things, having the Holy Spirit’s power and enablement in your life feels like having **a will captivated for God**. Let me explain. When the Hebrew writer rehashes the unique promises of a New Covenant for God’s people (originally found in **Jeremiah 31**), included in that promise is not only the forgiveness of our sins – but, *“I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.”* (**He.8.10**)

So what does it mean to have God’s law no longer as a threatening judgment outside of you, engraved on stone, but instead as something internalized – a power within you? Let’s first understand the state of your heart before the Spirit. Jeremiah contrasts his New Covenant promise with the natural state of the Jews in chapter **17.1**: *“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart.”* At the heart level, we’re naturally bent toward rebellion and our desires aren’t truly captivated for God – we don’t love him. But after the overpowering desire for sin is removed and replaced with the law written on the heart, then you possess a Spirit-enabled obedience. Then the righteous demands of the law has been “vividly impressed on the will”. Then arises in you a desire for the glory of God more than the desire for sin.

Something else Paul wrote bolsters this conclusion. In the second chapter of Romans, he is talking about circumcision at the heart level, rather than remaining a mere ritual in the flesh. There are many allusions to Moses’ speech about the circumcision of the heart demanded by God in Deuteronomy (**Ro.2.29**; see also **De.10**). But Paul specifically says something interesting for our understanding in **Ro.2.14-15**: “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **by nature do what the law requires**, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the **work of the law is written on their hearts...**” Question: What does it mean for the law to be written on the heart? Answer: to – **by nature** – do what the law requires. The law requires that we love God and love others, and after the Spirit it is in your nature to do so – though imperfectly.

You know your will is captivated for God because you feel:

- **Love.** You genuinely feel that love and longing for God now, all because he first loved you. You see God sending the Christ to pay for your sins and you’re moved by this man you’ve never met. And you love him. Just as Paul says, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (**Ro.5.5**)
- **Conviction.** You’re a person of conviction now, no longer apathetic to God’s holiness and his will. You fear him. You will do his will. Anytime you sin against him, you’re convicted to repent and change and grow. “And when [the Spirit] comes, he will convict” (**Jn.16.8**)

- **Assurance.** You also possess a captivated will for God because you're thoroughly assured that God is for you! The Holy Spirit seals you for your inheritance (**Ep.1.13**), and he bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (**Ro.8.16**). Since you belong to him, could you do otherwise than perform his holy will?
- **Sensitivity.** All these promises stem from the original promise given by God leading to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant: God is going to circumcise your hearts (**De.30.6, 10.16**). Our hard, impenitent hearts have received divine surgery and the calloused, stubborn insensitivity has been moved and now we are sensitive to and searching for the will of God.

You won't always feel this perfectly. It depends on how "in the Spirit" you are. But what I've pointed out should not be an exceptional experience – but the norm of the Christian life. God has given his Spirit to those who obey him (**Ac.5.32**). Have you received him? (**Ac.2.38**) Do you seek him? (**Lk.11.13**).