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# DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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## The Sea of Subjectivity

By Jewel Grewe

The “worship team” is in place and guitars quietly start to strum as each team member takes their place at a microphone. The guitars, drums, keyboard, and sometimes a variety of instruments, lead the audience, now standing, through the “worship service.” The audience is reading the words off a screen and dutifully following songs, all which seem to run together pretty much with the same notes and rhythm. Looking around there are older people sitting whose legs have gotten tired. As the music continues, I note a number of folk no longer singing. Studying the words on the screen, there is something very different about the content: it seems to be repetitious, e.g., “Cause me to come to Thy river, O Lord” 3 times, and “Cause me to drink, Cause me to live” over and over again.

Chuck Colson once wrote, “We’d been led through endless repetitions of a meaningless ditty called ‘Draw Me Close to you,’ which has zero theological content and could just as easily be sung in any nightclub.”

Recently I sat through a time of “worship” and noted that most of the songs were “subjective”. They were totally about me. But true worship should be objective – about the One whom we are worshipping.

When we leave the parameters of the Word of God, we drift out onto The **Sea of Subjectivity**. In this seductive sea, spirituality becomes relative to whatever new revelation or vision that comes forth.

When this trend started developing, it seemed that it was the “streams” of various Charismatic and then also “classical” Pentecostal persuasions were coming together to form what they called “the River”. These streams have flowed now for

a number of years, forming a momentum with multitudes of hungry souls looking for “more.” But they have left the Gibraltar of **Objective Truth** (the Word of God), to float upon leaky rafts into the blissful-appearing Sea of Subjectivity (that which is experienced). No longer can we even define the doctrines of the newest “stream” because their leaders state that doctrine has become an ugly word because “doctrine divides.” Thus so many are cast adrift in The Sea of Subjectivity!

It feels good. We hear so often, “I know, because I’ve experienced it.” And, “Don’t question my experience.” Or, “I’m having a ‘deep and intimate’ relationship with Jesus.” Experiences in abundance are available! Thus the Subjective has taken the place of the Objective Word of God.

### Swept Away By New Waves

Some years ago the false prophetess Carol Arnott spoke these words (supposedly God speaking) at a conference in Toronto. Notice how she disparages the old ways (the Word of God) and promotes the “new wave”:

*The way you have been using my weapons and the methods you have been using in the past - you are to throw them away, because I am giving you my sword now. The **old** ways of doing things will not do. The **old** methods will not be acceptable to me anymore, because I am doing a **new** thing. Do not look to the yesterdays, but look to the future, because I am doing a **new** thing. And this way is not the old. This way is **new** and you must **throw away the old ways** of doing things and take up my sword. Because my sword is made of pure gold and it is pure and it is mighty. If you wield it the captives will be set free, the chains will be broken and the healings will be manifest. Because it is not by might, nor by power, but by my wonderful Holy Spirit, it is by Him. It is by Him that this **New Wave** will be manifest. It is by Him, it is by Him, that this new wave will be brought forth. It is by Him that the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords will ride again. In this **next wave** I am requiring those to take*

*up this Golden Sword, to be refined, to be pure and to have all the dross refined in the fire. Because if you take this sword and there are secret sins in your life, the Sword will kill you. The next wave is not joke, it is not a laughing matter. [At this point everyone is falling down and moaning, ed.] Those who do not want to give up their sin and are fearful like Gideon's army – stand back (whoa!!) Because I am calling men and women in these days that will allow me to refine them and chasten them, but not with anger because I am a loving God.... Take up the Golden Sword for I will use you in ways that you cannot imagine. But I must purify you first."*

Her words are a prime example of The Sea of Subjectivity. Just ask yourself: What is this "golden sword" she is talking about? Where is this "golden sword" in the Scripture? Why must I go to one of the "rivers" to get this impartation? Where will this "new" or "next wave" take me?

How is there so much confusion in the church today? The confusion comes because of the lack of Objective Truth to support what is happening. When you are afloat on The Sea of Subjectivity, you feel great! The experiences are exhilarating and delightful. However, in the end, you will find that the leaks in your life-raft will take you to destruction.

What a picture of the church today! God has given us His Word. He has preserved His Word down through the generations. Instead of following God, according to that Word, man is making himself "shrines" to other gods. Yes, to gods of his own desires.

Jesus said, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it but the prophet Jonas.*" (Matt. 12:39)

## Why is the Church Powerless?

### Part 1: Missing the Connection

By Pastor Anton Bosch

Anyone who is half-honest will admit that the church of the 21st century is powerless when

compared to the church in the first century and at other times of great blessing. The problem is that making such a statement is akin to saying the emperor has no clothes since most feel quite content with their situation.

I know generalizations are exactly that, and I also freely admit that there are differences between the church in the West and other places where there still is a visible sense of God moving amongst His people. In broaching this topic we also have problems with terms, so allow me to define what I do, and do not, mean by power.

Power is not measured in noise, hype or even large numbers, just as the "anointing" is not measured in shouting, sweat and spit. Power cannot be measured in statistics, budgets, buildings or programs. A telling statement comes from a Third-World believer after visiting churches in the West: "It is amazing what the church in the West has been able to achieve without the Holy Spirit." [1]

Power must be defined by the Scripture itself, and the definitive text is Acts 1:8: "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" This promise of the Lord Jesus is made manifest by the disciples in the book of Acts as "*with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 4:33). This power is visible in sinners powerfully transformed, powerful preaching and, yes, powerful miracles. And yes, I am painfully aware that my own church and ministry fall into the category of the powerless!

The Greek word for "power" is *dunamis*. Many point out that the word "dynamite" stems from this word. While that is true, I do not believe that dynamite is what Jesus had in mind when He used this word, simply because dynamite results in a huge explosion, the release of great power, and then destruction and silence in its wake. The word "dynamo" also comes from the word *dunamis*. A dynamo generates a constant flow of (electrical) power. The *dunamis* of the Spirit should not result in a momentary

explosion (as in some questionable “revivals”) but in a constant empowering from within – driving the individual and the church forward in the face of difficulties and attacks, empowering lives that powerfully witness to the power of the Gospel and the power of the Cross.

This stands in stark contrast to modern conversions that seem to be more about joining, behavior modeling, and superficial assimilation; preaching that is clever, eloquent and impressive, but that leaves the sinner and the rebel unconverted; and a reliance on medical science, hype and advertising as a replacement for miracles.

The decline in the manifestation of God’s power amongst His people cannot be ascribed to Cessationism, or Hyper-Dispensationalism. That there is a decline is beyond dispute, but the weakening of the church cannot have been part of God’s original design since the power of Acts 1:8 is intimately connected with the Great Commission, which has not yet been fulfilled. If the *ḗdunamis* was specifically given to empower the witness of the church, and the Great Commission has not yet been withdrawn nor fulfilled, then the power must still be available.

Concerning the gifts, Harry Ironside said:

There are commentators who insist that some of these gifts have absolutely disappeared, but I do not know of any Scripture portion that tells us that. I do not know of any passage that says that the age of miracles has passed and I would not dare to say that the sign gifts all ended with Paul’s imprisonment. I know from early church history that this is not true... Therefore I do not think it is correct to take the position that these sign gifts have necessarily disappeared from the church. I do, however, believe that many of the gifts are not often seen today, and I think there is good reason for that. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the apostle wrote, “I have espoused you... as a chaste virgin to Christ.” Paul was writing to a separated company, the affianced bride of the Lamb, and it was the delight of the blessed risen Lord to lavish upon her gift after gift. The Corinthians “[came] behind in no gift,”... However, it seems to me that we can see in the book of Acts that as time went on and the church began to drift a little, and as dissension and other things that grieved the Lord arose, there was more

reserve on His part in bestowing gifts. That, I believe, explains the lack of many of these gifts today. The church has gotten so far away from what she should be and there is so much strife, division, worldliness, and carnality that the Lord no longer delights in lavishing His gifts as freely as He did in the beginning.[2]

Before I continue I also need to make it clear that while we are solely responsible for our anemic state, God remains sovereign, and we cannot manufacture a revival by applying a formula by which God then becomes obliged to fulfill our wishes. In a church I recently visited I was rebuked by an elder for not believing that we could absolutely bring about a revival as long as we simply prayed and believed hard enough![3] But we cannot control, manipulate or force God into doing anything. At best, we can simply obey Him and then trust Him to do what He alone wills. The revivalist who touts various formulas for revival is no different than the prosperity teacher, who believes we can bribe God to prosper him, or the Word of Faith evangelist, who believes that God is subject to his faith. To all these God simply becomes a puppet on a string that dances to the tunes of men.

But, at the same time, it is very evident that we can do much that would hinder the work of the Spirit and that would prevent the Lord from pouring out His blessings on us. One of the misconceptions taught during the last century is the idea that the Holy Spirit and the attendant power is a gift and, since a gift cannot be earned, God will pour His Spirit on anyone who asks, irrespective of the individual or church’s spiritual condition. Thus there have been accounts of unbelievers, drunkards, and other vile persons “filled with the Spirit”. This is not the truth. There are clear conditions set for the receipt of the power of God.

**Conditions to the Outpouring of the Spirit:** God does not give His Spirit to those who are disobedient to the Divine will. The Bible does not teach that God will bless and empower those who are disobedient but, on the contrary, there is

a clear connection between our obedience and God's blessings in general, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit in particular: "... *the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him*" (Acts 5:32). Obedience obviously covers a huge area and would include things like holiness, obedience in ministry, and obedience to any of the many commands contained in the New Testament. The prime reason for a lack of power in the lives of individuals and churches is clear when one looks at the general disobedience so prevalent in churches today.

In John 14:15-16, Jesus said: "*If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.*" Jesus Himself predicates the giving of the Spirit on loving Him, and the consequent obedience that flows from such love. Believers that love themselves, the world, pleasure, ease and comfort are clearly excluded from this promise, as are those who do not love Him sufficiently to obey Him.

These two principles – love and obedience – cover everything else. But under these main principles there are a number of other more specific conditions.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said: "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Notice again the conjunction "and" which indicates that receiving the Holy Spirit will happen once the conditions had been met. Baptism here is symbolic of obedience. However, repentance seems to be the first condition.

By repentance Peter was referring to two main areas in which repentance is necessary. We need to repent from religion void of the Cross. Peter was preaching to religious Jews but calls them to repent from their religiosity and to believe on the Lord Jesus. But clearly implied in the word "repent" is repentance from any form of sin and disobedience. It is interesting that all great and true revivals are always accompanied and preceded by deep sorrow for, and

repentance from, sin. The notion that the Lord will give His Spirit to a rebellious, sinful and unrepentant heart is utterly contrary to both Scripture and the holiness of God. Also, leaders cannot demand that their followers repent if they themselves are not truly broken before God.

The connection between obedience, sanctification, and the presence of God is illustrated in Exodus 40:18-38 where the Tabernacle is a type of the individual believer, and also of the church.[4] The text explains the final erection of the tabernacle and between verses 19-32; it says seven times that Moses did everything "*as the Lord commanded Moses.*" Repeating that many times that Moses did as He was commanded is highly significant. Following these seven repetitions, verse 33 says: "*So Moses finished the work.*" This statement is immediately followed by: "*Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*" (Exodus 40:34, emphasis mine). Note the clear connection between Moses' obedience, completing the work as he had been commanded, and the descent of the Glory of the Lord.

One of the very real reasons the believer and the church are powerless is because of our disobedience and sin. God will simply not anoint our disobedience, laziness and sin.

Many who desire the power of God in their lives, ministries, and churches also do not have it because they want it for the wrong reasons: "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (James 4:2-3). Some want God's power to make them look good, others want power over people, and others want power so their churches can grow for selfish reasons. While any reason other than the Lord's will is bad, nothing is worse than those who want God's power so they can make money out of it. This is not new. Simon the sorcerer seemed to be motivated by ego and money, and was even willing to offer money to purchase the gift of God (Acts 8).

Even without the real anointing of God, there is still good money to be made in selling books,

videos and conferences on revival. If the peddlers of such books were serious about wanting revival they would give the books away. Yet it is a lucrative segment of the Christian market. [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) lists over 1500 titles on “revival” and over 6200 on “renewal.”[5]

The Lord will never bless our greed, lust for power, or desire for the honor of men. The thousands of prayers going up every day for power for the sake of power are a stench in the nostrils of God and will forever go unanswered. Only the desire for more of Him, and not just His gifts, will be answered. Once again there is little difference between those who follow the Lord for financial riches and those who follow Him for spiritual gifts – both are rooted in selfishness, a lack of gratitude for the Cross, and lack of true love for the Lord.

Those who have a pure motive pray that they may be consumed, broken and humbled in order to gain more of the Lord. They understand that when God’s fire falls, all of the flesh must be consumed. They are not only willing to pay that price, but they desire the loss of all that they may gain Christ (Philippians 3:8). Only those with the right motive pray John’s prayer: *“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (John 3:30).

## Part 2: Blessed are the Thirsty

*“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...”*  
(Isaiah 55:1)

In addition to the need for obedience and holiness, our attitude also affects whether or not the Lord will pour His Spirit on us. The only attitude the Lord blesses and anoints is that of humility, brokenness and utter dependency on Him.

Just as those who are well do not need the physician, so are those who are self-sufficient. They feel they can make God do what they want and have no need the Lord’s power. Yes, they ask for the Lord’s blessing, but they do not really want it since deep down they feel quite adequate to do things for themselves. To make their

situation worse, not only does God not support them in their self-sufficiency, but He is actually opposed to them: *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble”* (1 Peter 5:5). The problem is that if you feel you are humble then, by definition, you are not! Only those who recognize their pride have any chance of finding true humility, and thus receive the Lord’s blessing.

In the Beatitudes Jesus said: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). The state of poverty of spirit is not only critical to receiving the Kingdom, but is vital to receiving anything from the Lord. Of course, all are poor, and there is no one who has anything to boast about (Romans 3:23). But the problem is that very few recognize their poverty and how much they need the Lord. This applies to every area of the Christian life, whether it is the sinner who recognizes his need for a Savior or the believer who understands that he has no strength in himself.

Sadly, the spirit of our age is that of the church of Laodicea which boasted, *“I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,”* but of which the Lord said, *“[You] do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”* (Revelation 3:17). It seems most believers and churches are quite content in their lukewarmness and, like Laodicea, “do not know” how spiritually bankrupt they really are. Like the blind person who compensates for his disability through attuned senses of hearing and feeling, so the church compensates for its spiritual poverty through programs and hype. Like the bankrupt businessman who distorts his accounts and spends lavishly to hide his poverty, the church changes the way it evaluates its spiritual state and embarks on propaganda campaigns to speak of the “great blessing”.

Living in a false state of security and comfort is an old scam of false prophets: *“For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ When there is no peace”* (Jeremiah 8:11). In like manner church leaders

assure their congregations that they can see when they are blind, that they are rich when they are poor and that they are healthy when they are sick unto death!

Paul had learned that the real secret to power was not becoming more charismatic but realizing his great need and utter dependence on the Lord: *“And He said to me... My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2Corinthians 12:9-10). May we, too, face our desperate need, and may it drive us to Him Who alone has any strength.

The first Beatitude (poor in spirit) inevitably leads to the second: *“Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted”* (Matthew 5:4). Once we see ourselves the way we really are (the way the Lord sees us) it must lead to a great sorrow over our emptiness and lack of power and blessing. But no church wants to be in mourning – we all want to be celebrating and speaking joyfully about the non-existent “move of God” amongst us. Yet there is nothing more inappropriate than being joyful when mourning is required, and I see no reason for cheerfulness amongst the vast majority of churches today.

The gross sin in the church of Corinth should have reduced them to tears and repentance but instead they felt quite good about themselves (1Corinthians 5:2). So, too, the powerlessness of modern Christians should bring them to a state of mourning over what has been lost, or never found. But rather there seems to be a general state of euphoria in spite of our utter poverty.

Mourning of a godly kind leads to comfort (Matthew 5:4). There is no better way to be comforted than through the comfort (strengthening) of the Comforter. Just as knowledge of our poverty leads to mourning, so mourning will inevitably lead to hungering and thirsting: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6).

This beatitude speaks of thirsting for righteousness but the principle also applies to the Holy Spirit. Jesus also said: *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive” (John 7:37-39).

It begins with thirsting. If there is no acknowledgement of our great thirst, no awareness of our poverty, no sorrow over our spiritual bankruptcy and sin, then there will be no drinking at the Living Fountain. Yet churches are kept artificially satisfied through endless programs, events, entertainment and feel-good pep talks. They are dying of thirst but don’t even know it. It seems that the leaders are in cahoots with the devil to keep people from being divinely dissatisfied, remaining unaware that they are spiritually hungry and thirsty, lest they turn to the Lord Jesus for satisfaction. In defense of leaders, many feel they must keep people happy to prevent them from going to the next church. Meanwhile the people don’t understand that the solutions are not in the church down the street, but in the Lord Jesus alone.

Oh, that we would just recognize that the void within cannot be filled with more meetings, mindless entertainment, or anything else the world, or a worldly church, has to offer, but that God through His Spirit alone can satisfy the deep longing within. *“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God”* (Psalms 42:1-2). *“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water”* (Psalms 63:1).

Thirsting must drive us to Christ. Jesus said, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink”* (John 7:37). Jesus, and not the pastor, conference or Internet, is the source. How often when we thirst do we inevitably run to the counselors so they can affirm us, assure us that everything is okay, and tell us that there is no

need to be stressed. When young Samuel first heard the Lord's call he ran to Eli who assured him that he was not being called and told him to return to sleep. Every day pastors just as spiritually blind as Eli shush believers to sleep, assuring them that there is indeed no voice from heaven.

Pastors, prophets and visiting evangelists are not dispensers of the Spirit. Jesus alone is, and it is to Him alone we must turn and cry to be filled to overflowing. *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts"* (Revelation 21:6).

In coming to the Lord Jesus there is a need to wait (tarry) until we receive what we need. In Luke 11 Jesus teaches on the need for persistence in prayer (the man asking bread from his neighbor). He then tells us to ask and keep on asking, to seek and keep on seeking, and to knock and keep on knocking, which He then relates to the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The message is clear; we need to ask until we receive. The problem is that most believers ask a few times, and maybe for a few minutes, and when they do not receive, they move onto the next thing on their agenda. Yet, it is clear from Luke 11 that we need to be persistent.

Jacob understood this principle when he wrestled with the Angel at the brook and said, *"I will not let You go unless You bless me!"* (Genesis 32:26). I do not see that kind of persistent wrestling with God anymore. Our instant religion has made us believe that if we don't get what we want immediately and easily then we just need to move on to the next fast-food place or item on the menu. But God is not into fast food nor is He into instant gratification. It is not because He does not want to bless us, but because He knows we are fickle and often not really serious about our need for His blessing. When He does not respond immediately, and we simply stop wrestling with Him, he says: "See, I did not give it to you because I knew you were not desperate and by giving up after five minutes

of prayer you have proven that you are not serious about this."

Just before Jesus ascended, *"He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father..."* (Acts 1:4). Previously, he had commanded them to go into the entire world, but now He told them not to move until they had received the Promise. They would wait for ten days and then, at the appointed time (when the day had fully come – Acts 2:1), the Promise was fulfilled. I have often wondered what would have happened had they given up after a week or nine days. Ten days is a long time to wait, and others have waited even longer. Yet most believers cannot wait ten minutes, let alone ten hours, ten days or ten years. Unfortunately many Christians are like King Saul, who could not wait for Samuel to offer the sacrifice and so resorted to taking matters into his own hands, thus incurring the wrath of the Lord (1 Samuel 13).

As we persist in prayer, as we wait on the Lord, He in due time, will hear us and will pour out His blessing. Even if He does not, the time waiting on Him is not wasted but is precious, refreshing and empowering:

*"He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."* (Isaiah 40:29-31)

#### Endnotes:

[1] The origin of this statement is unknown but is variously attributed to a Chinese and African believer.

[2] HA Ironside – *Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12* – 1938.

[3] In spite of these leaders regarding themselves as experts on revival this church is literally falling apart at the seams. The less than a dozen people are divided and bullied by the leaders who constantly berate them for their lack of prayer, faith and results. The leaders are directly responsible for this sad state of affairs, yet are arrogant and abusive as they blame the church for failure for which they are personally responsible.

[4] The Tabernacle is primarily a type of Jesus, but also of the church and the believer.

[5] Searched by "Christian revival" and "Christian renewal" in order to filter out secular books containing the terms "revival" or "renewal".

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Watch a Pastor Bosch speak on "Bankrupt Before God" at <https://youtu.be/7vYrsHxaccI>