



The real power runs deep

Don't confuse 'spillway Christianity' with the power of the Holy Spirit

Not too long ago my family and I spent some time with our friends, Larry and Devi Titus, in Washington state. (That was just before they moved to Amarillo, Texas, and when Devi was still editor/publisher of *Virtue* magazine.)

One afternoon Larry took me through one of those big dams on the Columbia River where so much of the electric power for the northwest is produced.

I had heard of such things as turbines, power plants and generators. But for some reason I had always thought the power from those big dams was provided by the water which roared over the spillway.

It never occurred to me—a flatlander from Florida—that the real power was not in the froth which splattered over the top of the dam, but was produced in the hidden machines far below the surface.

We took an elevator deep into the mysterious innards of the dam. Stepping out into a huge room—as long as the dam was wide, I was suddenly in the middle of more power than I ever dreamed possible.

It wasn't noisy, or spectacular. In fact, the room was almost empty except for the huge cranes overhead on their tracks. The power seemed to be contained in a deep "hummm" that literally vibrated into the marrow of my bones.

I could almost imagine myself stepping into that room mentioned in Acts 4 where all the believers (earlier it says there were 5,000 of them) were in deep prayer. The Bible says as they prayed the building itself actually began to vibrate.

Deep in the floor of the dam, with only the tip of the spindles showing, were the mighty turbines. That afternoon only five of the nine turbines were in operation. But that was enough to provide power for half the state of Washington and part of Oregon.

We stayed for a long time, walking slowly, almost reverently, the length of the room—feeling the sound of those mighty turbines turning ever so slowly beneath our feet.

Hundreds of feet above us, and for many miles behind us, the huge lake pushed against the propellers of the machines. The pressure of that water—millions of pounds of pressure—turned the turbines to generate hundreds of thousands of kilowatt hours of electricity. Neither of us did

much talking. It was an awesome feeling, just to be in the middle of such power.

We took the elevator back to the top of the dam. Walking out on the catwalk we watched the water from the spillway splash in a spectacular waterfall. It, too, was part of the process. When the pressure on the dam became too great, caused by high-water in the lake, the spillways would be opened. If the water in the lake was low—there was no waterfall over the dam.

But it was those silent, hidden turbines which produced the power—even though there was no outer display of their might. (Unless you consider the power to run an entire state a display.)

It is so easy to get enchanted by the spectacular—the outer manifestations.

Occasionally we will have visitors stop by our church on a Sunday. If that happens to be a service in which there are no spectacular gifts in operation—no tongues, no prophecy, no healings—they sometimes leave disappointed. They thought the power of the Holy Spirit was in the outward signs.

I thank God for continued Pentecost: tongues, prophecies, healings and miracles. These were normal in the New Testament church, they should be present in the church of today.

But I am convinced we must never confuse spillway Christianity with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The water over the dam plays a vital purpose. It is something of a release for the rising tide of spirituality. In fact, if the lake is low there will be no outward signs. If the lake is high, you can expect an overflow whenever the body gets together.

The reason there has been such a mighty display of the gifts of the Spirit over the last several years has to do with the latter rain which has been falling in the mountains.

Now, even denominational lakes are filling up—and spillways are merrily splashing all over the place.

I pray our lakes will remain high. I love it when I meet with a group of people who are "prayed up," "payed up" and "praised up." Folks like this are going to overflow. There's no way to stop them—unless you want to run the risk of a broken dam.

But I hope we will never equate the

power of the Holy Spirit with outward signs.

Regardless of whether a church displays the spectacular (and they will if the water is high), the Holy Spirit is still turning the turbines. Unless, that is, the lake has gone dry.

However, it is possible for a church—or an individual Christian—to never have any display of the spectacular and still be used by God to accomplish great things.

In other words, it is possible to have your water level far below the spillway crest, and your turbines will still turn.

Some of my finest sermons were preached when my lake was at its lowest level.

In fact, there have been times when I felt completely drained, only to find when I laid my hand on some sick person he was instantly healed.

The absence of outward signs does not mean God is not generating power through your life. It simply means your lake is probably low.

The power that runs the Kingdom is not limited to the overflow. Indeed, most of that is not power at all, but merely evidence of a high level of enthusiasm. In fact, it is possible to have a huge spillway display, and produce no power whatsoever—because your turbines are clogged with debris.

The power that runs the Kingdom is found in the dynamos of men's hearts as they love one another, as they serve one another, as they give to one another, as they pray for one another.

Granted, God says He loves our praise. He loves our enthusiasm. He loves it when we clap our hands and shout for joy. He goes so far as to say He abides in the praises of His people.

But it is possible to heal the sick, deliver the possessed, even raise the dead and still be outside the will of God.

God does not judge us on the basis of charisma—but on the basis of character.

Do we keep our word? Do we hold grudges? Are we generous? Are we loyal to each other? Are we full of love for our Heavenly Father? And for His children?

I thank God for spillway Christians—those who make a big splash.

But those who provide the real power are often hidden, seldom noticed. On such does the Kingdom of God depend. ↵