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Miracles and the Supernatural Throughout Church History

18. Faith Gets Personal and Powerful (Fox, Spener, and Zinzendorf)

This chapter shifts from the Reformation's focus on correct doctrine to the experiential, heart side of faith. It profiles three figures who insisted that a living relationship with God and the work of the Holy Spirit matter as much as right belief: George Fox (Quakers), Philipp Jacob Spener (German Pietism), and Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (the Moravians).

Key takeaways

- George Fox founded the Quakers ('Friends'), stressing a personal 'inner light' over external forms like set sermons, creeds, baptism, and communion. His ministry reported healings, deliverances, prophecy, and deep conviction, all credited to God's power confirming the gospel, not his own.
- Fox always insisted the power was God's, given to confirm the preaching of the gospel, not to exalt the minister. The movement grew explosively, tens of thousands within a generation.

- Spener, the 'Father of German Pietism,' taught that faith is a matter of the heart, not just intellectual assent to doctrine. Even preachers, he warned, could hold correct doctrine yet lack real faith.
- Spener's book *Pia Desideria* called for more Bible use, an active priesthood of all believers, practical love, civility in disputes, godly (not just academic) training of ministers, and plain, edifying preaching.
- Zinzendorf, Spener's godson, sheltered persecuted Moravians (heirs of John Hus) at Herrnhut ('The Lord's Watch'). Their unity and prayer led to the 'Moravian Pentecost' of August 13, 1727.
- The Moravians launched a round-the-clock prayer vigil lasting over 100 years and became the most dedicated missionaries of the 18th century (a 60:1 laity-to-missionary ratio versus 5000:1 elsewhere).
- Like Fox, Zinzendorf saw healings and supernatural gifts but refused to make them the focus, teaching gifts are for use, not display, and serve unbelievers more than believers.
- Spener and Zinzendorf's influence set the stage for John Wesley and Methodism; the church was recovering its first-century traits.

Passages worth keeping

"It is not enough that we hear the Word with our outward ear, but we must let it penetrate to our heart... with vibrant emotion and comfort feel the sealing of the Spirit and the power of the Word."

Spener's core point: real faith is heart-deep, not just intellectual.

"I have but one passion; it is the love of Him, nothing but Him!"

Zinzendorf keeping Christ, not miracles, as the center.

How it connects

The chapter frames all three movements as recovering the book of Acts pattern: divided people brought into unity, giving themselves to prayer, receiving the Spirit, and being sent out with signs following.

Scripture referenced

- **Psalm 34:8** -- 'taste and see that the Lord is good' — experiential knowing of God, the chapter's theme.
- **Acts 2** -- The apostles' Pentecost, the pattern the Moravian outpouring is compared to.