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Miracles and the Supernatural Throughout Church History

21. Spirit-Empowered Evangelism (Spurgeon and Moody)

This chapter profiles two giants of preaching, Charles Spurgeon and D. L. Moody, arguing that their fruitfulness came not from talent but from dependence on the Holy Spirit and prayer. It also makes a case that genuine gifts of the Spirit can operate through people even when they don't label them that way, and that God equips different servants differently.

Key takeaways

- Spurgeon, the 'Prince of Preachers,' pastored a 5,600-seat London tabernacle and built orphanages and a pastors' school, but credited all fruit to God's Spirit and the congregation's prayer.
- Though Spurgeon believed some gifts had ceased, he repeatedly experienced what looks like the 'word of knowledge'—naming hidden sins of strangers in the crowd, leading to conversions. The author's point: the power behind a gift matters more than the label.
- Spurgeon prayed for the sick and saw recoveries, yet stayed humble, calling himself 'unworthy' of a gift of healing.

- Moody, poor and barely schooled, was converted as a teen shoe salesman and reached an estimated 100 million people. Two praying women sparked his hunger for 'the power,' which fell on him on a New York street.
- Moody taught that every believer has the Spirit within, but that being filled with the Spirit for service is a distinct, subsequent experience.
- Not every minister works miracles: John the Baptist, Timothy, Titus, and others are recorded without them. God distributes gifts—including 'lower-profile' ones like helps and mercy—as He wills. Don't compare yourself to the giants.

Passages worth keeping

“If we think to succeed without the Spirit, we are not after the Pentecostal order.”

Spurgeon's summary of the chapter's whole thesis—ministry is powerless without the Holy Spirit.

“God is a supernatural God, and you've got to have supernatural power to do His work.”

Moody's conviction that human effort alone cannot do God's work.

How it connects

The recurring thread is Pentecost: both men saw Acts as a pattern to be repeated, not a closed event, and both prayed for a fresh outpouring—reframing revival as ordinary dependence on the Spirit rather than reliance on gifted personalities.

Scripture referenced

- **1 Corinthians 12:8-11** -- The word of knowledge and the Spirit distributing gifts 'as He wills'—framework for the chapter's argument.
- **John 4:29** -- 'A man who told me all things'—the woman at the well, cited as the pattern for Spurgeon's revelatory insights.
- **Acts 1:8** -- Power to be witnesses—Moody's basis for a repeatable Pentecost.
- **Luke 1:15-17** -- John the Baptist filled with the Spirit yet working no miracles—shows anointing takes different forms.
- **1 Corinthians 12:28** -- Helps and administrations listed among the gifts—every gift is Spirit-given, not just spectacular ones.
- **Romans 12:6** -- Gifts differ according to grace given—God equips each believer differently.