

Empowered by the Spirit Acts 1:8

Introduction

The Crossroads Chapel theme for 2023 is "Empowered by the Spirit" from Acts 1:8, where Jesus says to his disciples, "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."
(Acts 1:8 NKJV)

The Book of Acts is the fifth New Testament book that follows the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Luke wrote it as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. He records the founding of the Church and how the Church spread the message of Christ throughout the Roman Empire. Luke begins the book of Acts by referring to the Gospel of Luke.

He writes, "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:1-5 NKJV)

The period of waiting was the ten days between the Ascension of Jesus and the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover. The word Pentecost comes from the Greek, which means fifty days. The Church adopted the term Pentecost because it also celebrates the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit Baptism recorded in Acts 2 marks the birth of the Church.

In Chapter 2 Luke writes, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our

own tongues the wonderful works of God." So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." (Acts 2:1-13 NKJV)

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS. AND ON MY MENSERVANTS AND ON MY MAIDSERVANTS I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY. I WILL SHOW WONDERS IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND SIGNS IN THE EARTH BENEATH: BLOOD AND FIRE AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.' (Acts 2:14-21 NKJV)

During the Feast of Pentecost," the followers of Jesus were waiting for the promise of "power from on high" when they heard a mighty rushing wind and saw tongues of fire upon them. As Spirit descended upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they had not learned. Many of them spoke in tongues, others prophesied, and later some even performed healings and miracles.

Without a doubt, the Book of Acts is a book of action! It links the life and ministry of Christ revealed in the Gospels to the mission of the Church. Luke describes Christ as leading the Church from His exalted position at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit becomes the delegated authority of the Godhead on earth, who empowers, equips, and energizes the Church.

Christ is the head of the Church. But we are the body of Christ. And we are connected in life, power, and strength to Christ by the Holy Spirit. What Jesus taught and did as He walked the earth in a physical body, He continues to teach and do through his body the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who unites and unifies us in love and service to Christ and the World.

Luke demonstrates this throughout the book of Acts:

- Peter, who was once a coward and denied even knowing Christ, becomes a bold communicator of the gospel after Pentecost.
- Ananias and Sapphira are struck down after lying before God to Peter about how much they were giving
- Stephen radiates with the presence of Christ and Holy Spirit courage as the Jewish leaders stone him, and "his face was as it had been the face of an angel."
- Phillip preaches a mighty revival in Samaria until the Holy Spirit transports him to meet up with an Ethiopian treasurer.

- And, of course, Paul, the persecutor and destroyer of the early Church encounters Christ on the road to Damascus and, after Holy Spirit training, becomes one of the greatest champions of the Christian faith and writer of over half of the New Testament.

The book of Acts reveals the very foundational days of the first-century Church. There are three important truths that Luke reveals to us in the Book of Acts.

1. First, He teaches us that Christ is Lord of the Church
2. Secondly, He teaches that the Holy Spirit unifies and equips the Church as Christ's body.
3. Thirdly, He teaches that every believer has a unique place and part in the plan of God.

Luke says that Jesus continued to do and to teach after His Ascension what He taught and did while he was on this earth. These two words, "do" and "teach," sum up the whole book of Acts and the early Church's ministry. The early disciples were both doers and teachers. They not only knew what they were doing but also how to train and teach others to do what they were doing.

I. Jesus is Lord of the Church

According to Luke, as Lord of the Church, Jesus is doing a three-fold work:

1. He is equipping his workers
2. He is extending his kingdom
3. He is establishing his Church

The Holy Spirit is overseeing the work of Christ.

Luke also reveals that the teaching of Jesus focused upon four central areas:

1. His Messiahship
2. His Death and Resurrection
3. Forgiveness of sins
4. The Return of Christ

We live in a world of relativism and change. But the Bible says in Hebrews 13:8 that "Jesus Christ is the same Yesterday, Today and Forever." He is the absolute, unchanging Word of God. And He is the Head and Lord of the Church.

II. The Holy Spirit unifies and equips the Church.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit unifies and equips the Church Acts 1:8 is the key verse of the Book of Acts. But the central point is Acts 2:4. It is the Holy Spirit who works in conviction to bring us to salvation and guide us to the absolute truth.

The Holy Spirit also unifies and equips us to be the Church, the body of Christ. The Book of Acts refers to the Holy Spirit over 60 times. Throughout the book, the Holy Spirit is the revealer of truth and an active agent in the redemptive work of Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is one of Illumination, Conviction, Repentance, Regeneration, Assurance, and Sanctification.

The Holy Spirit is like the central nervous system, sending impulses from the mind of Christ to his body, the Church. Without the Holy Spirit, we would have no feeling whatsoever about God. We would be spiritually paralyzed, unable to do anything to respond to God's loving grace.

The Holy Spirit directs and equips the Church. He is the one who connects the Church to Christ. The Old Testament emphasizes God as **for** His people. The Gospels emphasize God **with** His people. But the Book of Acts emphasizes God **in and upon** His people. Jesus refers to this in John 14:17 when he says that the Holy Spirit "dwells with you and shall be in you."

In the Old Testament, God revealed himself through miraculous interventions in human events. In the Gospels, God reveals himself as the Saviour through Jesus, His Son. (John 14:9-11) But in the Book of Acts, God reveals himself through the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The message has always been the same: The divine is always greater than the human. Through Jesus Christ, we are able to live a fulfilling and rewarding life in grace and come to know the love of God in astounding ways.

III. Every believer has a unique place.

And finally, The Book of Acts reveals that every believer has a unique place and part in the plan of God. Christ calls us to be a witness. God is counting on you to share your story with others. Every believer can be a bold witness when we draw upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

A Spirit-filled Church actively represents Christ by doing and teaching the way of Christ to the world. A Spirit-filled Church lives and teaches the Christ life. The Christ life is the way of Truth and Life. People come together from various backgrounds and abilities and different races and vocations to join together in Christ by the Holy Spirit of God to become the Church, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world celebrates its independence and diversity, but the Church celebrates its uniqueness and unity.

Over 75 different individuals appear in the Book of Acts in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit?

- Peter is transformed from someone who caves in under pressure to a dynamic personality who preaches until men tremble in his presence.
- Paul, who once was a hater and persecutor of Christians, became a dynamic and prolific writer and communicator of Christian doctrine.

- There's Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and Timothy, Paul's protege; Lydia, Dorcas, John Mark, and Barnabas, whom God calls each of them by name!
- And He knows your name.

Each of us is a work in progress. Many people have contributed to our lives. But the most significant work of all is God's work in us in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. God has a purpose and a plan for your life. You have a personal destiny to fulfill. And that destiny is for you to forever enjoy a wonderful relationship with God!

Conclusion

In every case recorded in the Book of Acts, it is the personal testimony of people that the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish God's purpose. The disciples said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And that's all there is to it! When you tell your story; when you give witness to your own personal relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit empowers you, convicts, and draws those who will listen and want their own relationship with God.

Are you doing your part? Are you taking your place in the body of Christ so that the finished product of your life is something of enduring quality?

The Great Commandment is Love. "Thou shalt LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and "Thou shalt LOVE your neighbor as yourself." The Way of Christ is the Way of LOVE. It's a powerful love. It's a motivating love. It's a transforming love. It's an unselfish and sacrificing love. It is the Holy Spirit that connects you to this Divine Love's power source.

Will you allow the presence of the Holy Spirit to energize and unify you with power from on High today and reconnect you to Christ in a new and dynamic relationship and revelation?