

The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1-5

- I. The main agenda of the Holy Spirit.
 - A. The Holy Spirit's main agenda is transformation.
 - B. Christian transformation— *change or renewal from a life that no longer conforms to the ways of the world to one that pleases God.*
 - C. Evidence of transformation within us is seen in the way we increasingly reflect the likeness and glory of Christ.
 - D. A great example of being transformed by the Holy Spirit is the transformation of the twelve disciples.
 - 1. They are “ordinary men”.
 - a. Peter—Impulsive and overconfident.
 - b. John—initially intolerant and competitive.
 - c. Matthew—A socially unacceptable tax collector.
 - 2. Corporately they argued who was the greatest, misunderstood Jesus's teachings, insecure, full of anxiety.
- II. John 14
 - A. Jesus recognizes the disciple's struggle with His leaving them.
 - 1. They express anxiety.
 - 2. Their hearts are troubled.
 - 3. Jesus promises them a Helper.
- III. Acts 1.
 - A. “*Stay put don't do anything until you receive the Holy Spirit*”
 - B. Baptized in the Spirit.
 - 1. The moment one becomes a Christian, they are “baptized in the Holy Spirit”.
 - a. They are indwelt with the Holy Spirit.
 - b. They are brought into the body of Christ—the church.

- c. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a permanent one time indwelling of the Holy Spirit to the believer.

IV. Four examples of transformation

- A. Their very human frailties were transformed into supernatural gifts and abilities.
 - 1. Pentecost.
 - 2. “Not normative”.
 - 3. The disciples receive the Holy Spirit and are drastically transformed.
 - a. Acts 2— The Holy Spirit comes to Pentecost.
 - b. Foreign tongues understood.
 - c. Were given the gift of healing.
- B. Their fearful reluctance was transformed into bold confidence.
 - 1. Acts 4:7-10, 13 Peter and John in jail.
- C. Their fears and intimidation were transformed into a sense of invincibility.
 - 1. Acts 3:17-21—Peter’s boldness in preaching repentance.
 - 2. Acts 4:1-13—Peter’s tough words to tough people, the temple guard, Sadducees and Caiaphas.

**For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power
and love and self-discipline.**

2 Timothy 1:7

- 3. Acts 5:27-29—The apostles before the Sanhedrin.
- 4. Acts 5:33-42—Gamaliel’s counsel.

The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

Selected passages

Last week we began to look at the Holy Spirit...the plan is to continue doing so for several more weeks...I haven't met a Christian yet who doesn't have questions about the Holy Spirit... we spend a lot of time getting to know God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ... but we don't tend to spend time getting to know the Holy Spirit....

And that is really crazy... because if you are a Christian the Holy Spirit resides IN YOU!... He is the power source... **Last week we saw that He is our helper**.. our advocate, counselor... He is the member of the Trinity that literally comes *alongside us*... He's active in us, reliable, permanent... He's with us forever!... He will never leave you....no matter how rotten you are... if you've been saved by the blood of Jesus... HE IS THERE FOR YOU.

And yet He is often referred to as "**the forgotten God**"... well... we want to change that... the more we know about the Spirit, who He is, how He works, what He does... the greater our relationship with Him will be.... So He is our helper...

These first two weeks I want to pull from examples in the Bible ways the Holy Spirit works...you may get anxious to get to the "*how's this all work in my life*"... we'll get there...patience!

This morning I want us to see that His main agenda... He has several... **but His main agenda is transformation...**

To be a Christian is to be transformed... transformation for the Christian means "*change or renewal from a life that no longer conforms to the ways of the world to one that pleases God*" The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Evidence of transformation within us is seen in the way we increasingly reflect the likeness and glory of Christ... great! *How are we to do that?*...How do we reflect Christ more and more in our lives?... how are we to be transformed?... how do I renew my mind so as not to be conformed to this world but to Christ?

It's not through reading more books... having a positive mental attitude...trying harder... attending more Bible studies... all that is nice and helpful and good... but the only way you can have a renewed mind set on Christ... a transformed life that will become more and more like Christ is through the power of the Holy Spirit...you can't do it on your power.

Again Paul in Romans 8:9 **You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ**”

Wow!... you can't control your sinful nature without the Holy Spirit...you can't be transformed from your carnal life to a life pleasing to God without the Holy Spirit... **I think the greatest example in Scripture of transformation is the transformation of the disciples**...this is all I want to look at this morning.

The 12 men who were handpicked by Jesus Christ Himself to come alongside Him... to learn from Him...to live with Him...to prepare them take over the earthly ministry of spreading the gospel after He was gone...

12 ordinary men ...who were transformed by the Spirit of God...Lives radically changed into persons hardly recognizable from where they had been... had they not been transformed by the Holy Spirit... I am certain they would have made zero impact on this earth...

We wouldn't be taking a look at them this morning... there wouldn't be any evidence they ever lived on this earth just as millions and millions of other people have passed on to oblivion...it's important to emphasize that these 12 men were as I said “ordinary”... they were not of the elite in society.

None of them held prominent positions in the synagogue... none of them came from the priestly line of Levi or served in the Levitical priesthood... you might think Jesus would be looking for some religious standouts of the day... He did not.

As far as we know they were basically uneducated men...none of them were wealthy... maybe the sons of Zebedee came from families of some means... most of them were raised in Galilee...not really where the exclusive neighborhoods were...

Apparently the only one of the twelve who came from a more refined region of Judea was Judas Iscariot... all this to say... these men were all unlikely individuals to carry on the mission Jesus was selecting them to take on... not the kind of group one would expect to win the world for Christ...

Here are a few examples for each of the Twelve:

Simon Peter – Impulsive and overconfident... we could say a lot about Peter... he seems to be the most flawed, mainly because of his mouth...

John 13:36-28 **Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.”**³⁷ **Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.”**³⁸ **Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.**

Spoke before thinking (Matthew 16:22–23).

Walked on water but became afraid and began to sink (Matthew 14:28–31)

Boldly promised never to deny Jesus, then did... three times (Luke 22:54–62).

Andrew – Quiet and often overlooked... pretty mature guy

Peter's brother, usually introduced in relation to him.

Brought people to Jesus rather than seeking attention (John 1:40–42; John 6:8–9).

Demonstrates that faithful service doesn't require being in the spotlight.

James (son of Zebedee) – Ambitious and hot-tempered

Nicknamed, with John, a "Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17).

Wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54).

Asked for a position of honor in Jesus' kingdom (Mark 10:35–37).

John (son of Zebedee) – Competitive and initially intolerant

Joined James in asking for places of honor.

Tried to stop someone from casting out demons because he wasn't part of their group (Luke 9:49).

Philip – Practical but slow to understand

Wondered how enough food could be found for the crowd before the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:5–7).

Asked Jesus to "*show us the Father*," revealing he still struggled to grasp Jesus' identity (John 14:8–9).

Bartholomew (Nathanael) – Initially skeptical

Responded to hearing about Jesus with, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46).

Matthew (Levi) – A socially rejected tax collector

Worked for the Roman government collecting taxes.

Tax collectors were widely viewed as dishonest and traitorous.

Jesus called him despite his unpopular background (Matthew 9:9–13).

Thomas – doubter

Refused to believe the resurrection without seeing evidence (John 20:24–29).

James (son of Alphaeus) – Ordinary and obscure

Very little is recorded about him.

Thaddaeus (Judas son of James) – Asked lots of questions

Asked Jesus why He would reveal Himself to the disciples but not to the world (John 14:22).

Shows that disciples sometimes needed clarification and deeper understanding.

Simon the Zealot – Came with strong political convictions

Likely associated with a movement passionately opposed to Roman rule.

Had to learn to place loyalty to Jesus above political ideology.

Remarkably served alongside Matthew, a former tax collector who had worked with Rome.

Judas Iscariot – Greedy and unfaithful

Kept the money bag and was described as stealing from it (John 12:4–6).

Betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–16).

His life serves as a sobering reminder that outward association with Jesus does not guarantee inward faith....you put all these ordinary men in a group together....their flaws seemed to multiply...

They argued about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24 **And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.**)

They often misunderstood Jesus' teaching (Mark 8:14–21 **Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember,**)

They were afraid during storms (Mark 4:35–41 **And Jesus Himself was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion; and they got Him up and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”³⁹ And He woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.⁴⁰ And He said to them, “Why are you so cowardly? Do you still have no faith?”⁴¹ And they became very afraid**)

They repeatedly failed to grasp Jesus' own predictions of His death and resurrection (Mark 9:31–32 **For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later.”³² But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.**)

They fell asleep while Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36–46 **and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?”**

Most fled when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:50). **And they all left Him and fled.**

ordinary people... They were fishermen, a tax collector, a political activist, and otherwise unremarkable men...flawed men...sinful men... . They misunderstood, doubted, argued, feared, and failed. Yet Jesus patiently taught them...Their stories emphasize that God's work does not depend on flawless people but on people who are willing to follow Him and be changed... changed... transformed... by the Holy Spirit...

Last week we left these 12 disciples in John 14... actually it was eleven, Judas had gone to betray Jesus... it was the upper room... the last supper... the night before Jesus went to the cross... Jesus is telling them He's leaving them... they had spent 3 ½ years following Jesus with hopes centered on a new kingdom... those hopes seemed now to be hopeless...all their human frailties showed up.

Jesus tells Peter He's leaving and he can't come with him... Peter panics... *what do you mean you're leaving!? Why can't I follow You? I'll lay down my life for you!!!*

Peter, Peter... you will lay down your life for Me?... I say to you a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times!

Jesus knows they all have troubled hearts... He tells them **do not let your hearts be troubled.**

You're leaving us!.... I will not leave you as orphans...

Jesus promises them a helper just like Him... **I will ask the Father , and He will give you another advocate that He may be with you forever...** Jesus goes to the cross... dies, is buried... in three days resurrected... spends forty days with His disciples, instructing them a final time...

So we get to Acts chapter 1:4 (might have your Bibles to Acts)

Read Acts 1:4-5

Stay put and wait... don't do anything until you receive the Holy Spirit...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...what does it mean to be “baptized with the Holy Spirit”? Spirit baptism is synonymous...simultaneous... with salvation...1 Corinthians 12:12–13 is the central passage in the Bible regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit: **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink”**

If anyone thinks that you can be a Christian and not be a part of the church... you need to go back to reading the Bible...

Whenever someone believes on the Lord Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit sovereignly baptizes them into Christ simultaneously with the *indwelling of the Spirit*... This baptism adds the believer to the universal church, spiritually joining them to all believers, and to Christ their Head.

There are disagreements and differing views between the denominations...

- Some say the Baptism of the Holy Spirit comes after salvation
- Some say not everyone who becomes a Christian ever get Baptized in the Spirit... you have to seek after it... you have to ask for it from God...
- Some say Baptism of the Holy Spirit only refers to being brought into the church... the body of Christ... where the indwelling of the Holy Spirit happens to all Christians immediately when they become saved.

The baptism of the Spirit is a permanent one-time event that occurs at salvation.... we don't seek to be baptized in the Spirit... we automatically are when we are saved... nowhere in the Bible are believers told to be baptized with, in or by the Spirit, or in any sense to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.... It is a gift from God

When one comes to faith in Jesus Christ he is "baptized in the Holy spirit" BY the indwelling of the Holy Spirit... the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residency in the believer.

The disciples are getting close but they have not yet been baptized.

Read verse 6

They still don't understand! They can't get it straight... they lack understanding... I'm not trying to be mean regarding the disciples... I've gone into all of this to give us a good picture of just how radically the Holy Spirit transforms... AND... we are so very much like the disciples!

How many of you right now are troubled... confused... feeling abandoned... fearful... vacillating between loyalty to God or lying... how many of you feel very human? Devoted? Or denying? Lacking understanding?... we call all that human nature...

Watch what happens when the Holy Spirit transforms...

Read 1:8

Power... *dunamis*... "dynamic"... "dynamite"... the disciples had for the last three years experienced periods of time when the Holy Spirit helped them do the ministry Jesus wanted them to do... He "came alongside them".

They experienced the Holy Spirits "saving"... His guiding, teaching and miracle working... but now they are being promised the "**indwelling presence**" of the Holy Spirit... permanent residency.... this never had happened before.

This book of Acts from the very beginning shows us the contrast of the way the disciples were before they were indwelt by the Spirit and after... How life was for them before they received the Spirit... and how drastically different their lives were after they received Him.

Let's look at it.... Acts chapter 2...four examples of transformation:

1. Their very human frailties were transformed into supernatural gifts and abilities...all those frailties which we looked at are drastically transformed supernaturally... no effort on their part... The Holy Spirit did it all.

Let's look at the amazing, fantastic event that was the very moment of their transformation...

Read Acts 2:1-4

This took place during the feast of Pentecost... "*Pentecost*" is actually the Greek name for a festival known in the Old Testament as the *Feast of Weeks* (Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9). The Greek word means "fifty" and refers to the fifty days that have elapsed since the wave offering of Passover. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the end of the grain harvest.

The Jews would bring in their first fruits of the harvest as an offering to God.... Interesting... when you think about it... The Holy Spirit comes on this day...**the Holy Spirit is the first fruits of the believers inheritance...**

Our ultimate inheritance is heaven, eternity with the Trinity... Paul writes to the Ephesians, **"When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession"** (Ephesians 1:13–14)

The firstfruits of the Spirit are equivalent to a deposit or a down payment from God providing the certainty that one day we will be given of our complete spiritual inheritance as adopted sons and daughters of God.

So Pentecost arrives... the disciples...all of them were all together in one place...the upper room where they were staying...**what happens next is not normative [EXPOUND...some of the things that happen to the apostles probably won't happen to you...but the same power resides in you.]**... was not the normal operating procedure of the Holy Spirit... so if when you became a Christian you didn't all of a sudden find yourself in a massive storm with flames of fire... don't worry!

Concerning the Holy Spirit... **not much is normative until we get to Acts chapter 10**...this is unique to the disciples...in an instant in time the room was filled with THE SOUND... **LIKE a violent rushing wind**...it doesn't say there was any wind... just that there was a sound LIKE a rushing wind.

But that's not all... something that “**appeared like tongues of fire**” came in and “**rested on each of them**”...I can't even imagine what this must have been like... some think this is all symbolic... that the wind and tongues of fire are hyperbole Luke used to basically say the event was amazing... It doesn't say that... I think it was probably beyond words what happened.

What we can be sure of... the Holy Spirit had arrived, landed on the disciples and “filled them”... [we will be looking at the filling of the Holy Spirit in a few weeks]...I imagine the disciples didn't say much through all of this... they were in awe...

Jesus had promised this and it has happened... and in an instant their lives were completely revolutionized... Just a little over a month previous these men were “troubled” “fearful” “struggling with feelings of doubt”... they were frightened, unsure, insecure, and confused...

FROM THIS POINT ON SCRIPTURE NEVER MENTIONS THOSE INADEQUACIES!...from now on they are changed.... They are transformed... two days before this event they were troubled inadequate men... two days after... if you met them, you would have thought aliens had taken them over... completely changed... *are these the same men?*

Listen to what happens...

Read verses 2:5-6

The multitude are the common people in the street... all those who were not in the room...they heard the sound... they wondered what was going on... these changed men come down stairs and what do they do?

They spoke to these people in their own language!...you have to understand, there are thousands of foreigners in Jerusalem for Pentecost... who spoke in their native language... these disciples come out and speak to them in their own language!

They were amazed... *aren't these guys Galileans?...Galileans speak one language!...how come we hear them speak our language?*

Read verses 2:7-8

This wasn't the speaking in tongues as described in 1st Corinthians 12,14... these tongues are named...

Read verses 2:9-11

[When you're in a foreign country it is nice to hear your own language...there's comfort in that... When my daughter Christen and I went to Viet Nam in 2014... I assumed they would speak English over there like so many foreign countries do... I was wrong!... Nobody spoke English! And we couldn't speak Vietnamese.

We were in the massively populated city of Dalat in the central highlands... after we found a hotel we went for a walk on the crazy confusing streets of the city... we got lost... had no idea

where we were... no idea where our hotel was... we just stood on this busy downtown street corner... thousands of people swarming all around us... I was getting worried!... we can't even ask anyone for directions.

Across the busy boulevard, standing on the corner was a Vietnamese man looking at us... he signaled for me to cross the street to talk to him... what do I have to lose?... I went over and he spoke English!... I can't tell you how relieved I was... He asked me... *If you are lost here, how are you going to get around in Viet Nam?....]*

These people are amazed to hear their own language... how could the disciples do this?... they were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit....

Read verses 2:12-13

Peter in verse 15 explained *these men are not drunk as you suppose...*

These men were also given the supernatural ability to touch another life and restore physical health...this is the same Peter that denied Jesus three times after telling Jesus he would NEVER deny Him.

The same Peter who loses it and cut the ear off the soldier...

Read Acts 3:1-8

By the way... the sign it's a miracle is the word "immediately"... **immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened**... Only days ago... this same man Peter was vacillating...

Read Acts 3:11-12

Here is Peter with humility... *I'm not a miracle worker!...I didn't do that...* being transformed... Peter and John didn't take credit for the miracles that flowed through them... they could have made a spectacle... could have made a few bucks...

So the first thing we see is that *their human frailties were transformed into supernatural gifts and abilities*...the second thing

2. Their fearful reluctance was transformed into bold confidence.

These same men who earlier were afraid of being found out by the Jews... they hid from them...they didn't want anyone to put together that they were followers of Jesus Christ... it could have gotten them killed....but now with the Holy Spirit...

Turn back to chapter 2...Peter was finishing his first sermon... he says:

Read Acts 2:-36

Now listen to the new Peter...the bold Peter **Read 37-40**

3. Their fears and intimidation were transformed into a sense of invincibility

Just listen to Peter preach...no longer a denier! a good example is... Acts 3:17

Read Acts 3:17-18

Now listen to how unintimidated and fearless he preaches...

Read 19-21

Doesn't sound like a man who doesn't quite know his theology!...he doesn't sound ignorant... Doesn't sound like one who is embarrassed of the Gospel...remember last week in John 14 we saw that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth...

The Spirit indwelt Peter and Peter, being filled by the Spirit... empowered by the Spirit has been directed by the Spirit in all truth... what was perhaps a little vague before Christ died has been made very clear by the Spirit.

The disciples are no longer unclear about how the plan is unfolding... they are not wondering why Jesus left them and now what are they going to do... it all has become clear... supernaturally clear to them.

No fear to speak publicly and boldly about the plan of God... knowing they could get killed for it...

Read Chapter 4:1

I think this would have shut them down before Pentecost... a little intimidating... they're preaching when all of a sudden, the swat team shows up!...and they are mad!

Read 4:2-3

Jail back then was not where you want to spend the night...intimidating?... fear?...people don't usually find courage when they are thrown into jail...

Read 4:4-6

These are wicked men...notorious men... the same guys that put Jesus on the cross... intimidating?...they saw what happened to Jesus from these men.... These same men put Peter and John basically in a police line-up to interrogate them

Read 4:7-10

Tough words to very tough people!...Peter could have been killed for those words!... sounds invincible to me!... they had courage like they never had before!

Read verse 12

Intimidated or invincible?...I can go on and on...these men who were so “shakable” before Pentecost... are now “unshakable... one commentator said *they are like steers in a blizzard*” ...

2 Timothy 1:7

7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and self-discipline.

How does God give us that?... through the Holy Spirit.

Verse after verse shows Peter and John these “ordinary men” have gone through some massive change in their boldness, self-security, confidence... and these men who have arrested them noticed it

Read verse 13

I know this is a lot but one more...over one more chapter.. chapter 5... they’re back in jail...I noticed since they got the Holy Spirit they’ve been in jail a lot!...

Read 5:27

The Sanhedrin is the supreme court of the Jews...70 men...two ordinary men in front of seventy powerful judges that never smile...

Read verse 28

See I told you they don’t smile but they like to scold!...listen to their response...

Read verse 29

Basically Peter was saying “*we’re not the ones in the wrong...YOU ARE!*”... remember they had huge feelings of abandonment and concern about their future... when they were in that upper room with Jesus... *Don’t leave us Jesus! We’re scared what is going to happen to us!*

I so want to go into the details of Gamaliel’s counsel beginning in verse 33... suffice it to say... Peter and the apostles were beaten by the court... physically flogged for continuing to preach Jesus Christ...then they were released

Read verse 40

They are dripping in blood, flesh had been torn open... I’m sure their entire bodies were in agony and pain... but listen to this...while their clothes are stuck to their backs with blood...

Read verse 41

Rejoicing?...joyful?...intimidated?

Read verse 42

Amplified Bible says **they were dignified by the indignity...**

They are transformed men!... not through some special training they got from a seminar.... Not because they decided to have a positive mental attitude... not because they learned brain control from some guru... not through a Tony Robbins *Unleash the Power Within* Seminar...

There is no power in the world that can transform a person like this other than the Holy Spirit.

Quickly...

1. **While the examples of the Holy Spirit working in the apostles is not normative... that same power is available to every believer to equip them for God's program for their lives.**

2.. **Pentecost was a unique event in God's program... there won't be another Pentecost... but God is still mightily at work within every believer....**

3. **The Holy Spirit is the source of power to do whatever God wants us to do...it is through the Holy Spirit that we are transformed into the image of Christ...**

God had a specific ministry for the apostles and the early disciples of Jesus Christ...we will not have another Pentecost... but God will empower us to do whatever ministry He wants us to do.