

Acts 29 Series

The Holy Spirit Still Empowers

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Today we begin a five-part series on the book of Acts. The book is called Acts because it refers to the Acts of the Holy Spirit through God's people in the early church.

Acts begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the book and ends with the Apostle Paul still preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit at the end of the book.

- In between are amazing stories of the Holy Spirit working through God's people.

The book of Acts gives the history of the Christian church and the spread of the gospel, as well as the mounting opposition to it.

Acts is written by Luke who is a doctor and a disciple of the Apostle Paul. He also wrote the gospel of Luke.

There are 28 chapters to the book of Acts but we have entitled this series **Acts 29** because the empowering work of the Holy Spirit continues through God's people.

It did not end in Chapter 28. The works of the Holy Spirit continue from generation to generation. The kingdom of God on earth continues to expand.

We are now living in the days of Acts 29. There are two overriding themes in the book of Acts.

FIRST: God does amazing things through ordinary people like you and me.

- In this book, we see God taking a group of fishermen and using them to turn the world upside down.
- God takes Paul, a Christian-hating murderer, and changes him into the greatest evangelist and the author of almost half the books of the New Testament.
- God takes young people like Timothy and both men and women and uses them in powerful ways.
- We see God using persecution to spread Christianity. He is still doing this today all around the world through ordinary people being persecuted for their faith.

THE SECOND THEME IN THE BOOK OF ACTS IS: The Holy Spirit empowers people to love like Jesus and do the works of Jesus.

The encouragement for us this morning is that **God still is** empowering his people with the same Holy Spirit as he did in the early church.

- He is the same today as he was 2000 years ago. He is still doing the same acts through people today.

God wants us to be Acts 29 Christians as he changes our hearts, empowers us by the Holy Spirit, and gives us a passion to spread the good news of salvation.

- Acts teaches us **not to rely** on our own strength but to rely on the Spirit's power in our everyday lives.

Let's start in the beginning of Acts. Luke addresses his writing to a man named Theophilus. No one knows who he was but evidently, he was a high-ranking official.

Luke ends his earlier Gospel and begins the book of Acts with the ending of Jesus' earthly ministry and with the birth of the church at Pentecost where they are filled with the Holy Spirit to carry on the ministry of Jesus.

Read Acts 1:1-11

Our First Takeaway is:

- 1. We are to stay focused on reaching more people for Jesus.**

We are to stay engaged and not get sidetracked with peripheral issues.

The disciples wanted to focus on when Jesus was going to restore Israel as a nation. Jesus told them not to focus on that, - instead to focus on the people in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and people all over the earth who still had not heard about him.

Then as Jesus ascended to heaven they just kept standing around looking at the sky. Two angels had to tell them to stop wasting their time looking for him in the sky.

The church continues to have this problem on spending a lot of time talking about pie in the sky ideas and engaging in fruitless debates about the end times and other issues.

We need to keep the main thing the main thing. The good news of Jesus!

It's ok to build buildings, feed the poor, have exciting ministries, preach inspiring messages but if we are not seeing souls saved by the investment of our time, energy and finances I would question the value of what we are doing.

I can thankfully say we are seeing people saved, delivered, set free and filled by the Spirit. However, we are never satisfied with the 99 in the fold when there are still others lost outside.

That's why we challenged ourselves to pray and believe for 200 more decision for Christ in the next two years here at Petra.

The reason I so appreciated the **Power and Love Conference with Todd White** was the emphasis and encouragement he gave to take the gifts of the Spirit and what we have received from Christ and **turn it outward to those outside** the walls of the church.

I sometimes get weary of some of the discussion that goes on among Christian leaders. As I listen, *I find myself asking the question – “How is this discussion going to help us reach more people for Jesus”?*

I do enjoy talking at times about end time events or the latest flavor in church growth strategy *but are we just as passionate about the lost as we are these things?*

We can say we are but does the fruit show it in our lives? **Have I told anyone about Jesus and my faith this past year?** I'm not asking if you led anyone to the Lord, although that would be great. **I am just asking, have you planted any seed in someone's life for the Holy Spirit to water and use.**

Examples of seed planting:

- **An act of kindness in Jesus name**
- **Praying for someone on the spot**
- **Sharing how you rely on Jesus and how he has helped you**
- **Dropping Jesus name into a conversation**
- **There are many ways and opportunities to drop seed with people**

I don't just want people to think I am a nice person. I want them to know that it was Jesus who changed my life and helps me.

Our Second Takeaway is:

- 2. We are to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to help us.**

Jesus said - wait for the power. Jesus knew the disciples would turn tail and run as soon as things got tough because they did before. He knew they needed to be infused with something supernatural. – Something beyond human will power...

They needed the same power he had, so, he said I am going to give it to you – wait for it. (Acts 1:4)

He was saying to them **and us** - don't run off trying to do evangelism and build the church or your ministry **in your own strength**. You will find yourself spinning your wheels and being frustrated.

- **It is like the difference between trying to build a house with hand tools instead of power tools.**

Jesus said he was going to Baptize them with the Holy Spirit. So, they listened to his counsel and decided to pray and wait for God to fill them with His Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit transformed them from a bunch of winey wimps into bold world changing men and women of God. It gave them the strength to endure whippings, stoning, mockery, imprisonment and for many death for the sake of Christ.

This baptism of the Holy Spirit is still happening today. We need it just as much today, if not more, then they did 2000 years ago. If you have never prayed to receive the empowering Baptism of the Holy Spirit you will have opportunity today after the service.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit has changed my life. It has taken me beyond my own limitations and human strength and has enabled me to live a victorious life.

Jesus wants to do the same in your life. Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes like a gentle rain and sometimes like a mighty outpouring. But it's always good and refreshing.

Let's check in on the disciples as they are waiting for this promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. They are gathered in an upper room praying and waiting.

Power Point Acts 2:1-4, 12-18

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Acts 2:12-18 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the

crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

As they waited and sought God for more of his Spirit, God did what he promised he would do. He baptized them in the Holy Spirit. Not everyone understood or appreciated this new work of the Spirit. It is the same today. But

3. Everyone is invited into the river of the Holy Spirit.

When you became a Christian, you received the Holy Spirit's and his saving work in your life. But Jesus said there is also an empowering work available to us.

We simply need to ask Jesus for this in our lives. Jesus said it is available for anyone who is thirsty for it.

Power Point John 7:37-39

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Joel and Peter explain that this river or Spirit Baptism is for everyone.

- **Every race (all people)**
- **Children (sons and daughters)**
- **Youth (young men)**
- **Old people**
- **Common ordinary people**
- **Both men and women**

What does this mean for us this morning?

- **Joel and Peter said everyone can hear the voice of God's Spirit within them – even children**
- **They said we can all operate in the supernatural – we can all pray and see people healed, we can prophesy, have visions and dreams**

- **It means we can all be used of God to do amazing things.**
- **It means we are living in Acts 29's ongoing story of Spirit empowered people impacting our world and our generation.**

In this Acts series, we will see how the Holy Spirit impacts how we share our lives with each other and how to live and share our faith in a world that is often hostile to our message about Jesus.

Another thing we see throughout the book of Acts is that:

4. Holy Spirit empowered prayer shakes things up.

When the Holy Spirit empowers our prayers, we pray differently. No longer selfish prayers, no longer complaining prayers, no longer just bless me prayers, but kingdom advancement prayers.

Notice how the apostles prayed after they were arrested and threatened for talking about Jesus.

Power Point Acts 4:23-31

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: " 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. ' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'" After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

It is amazing to me that they didn't ask God to stop the persecution or destroy their persecutors but instead they prayed for more boldness to keep speaking about Jesus.

- **They felt it was an honor to suffer for Jesus.**

They ask for more healings and more miracles so the skeptics would be convinced of Jesus. No wonder the place was shaken..... People shaking with power...?

We hear the same thing today of people who are being persecuted for their faith.

- Their number one request is for strength to remain faithful to Jesus.

In the book of Acts, we see:

5. The Holy Spirit helps us grow as a caring family of believers.

After the Holy Spirit came upon them, they began to enjoy meeting together, eating together, praying together, worshiping together, and sharing together.

Power Point Acts 2:42-47

(4:32-36)

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is much more than the exercise of spiritual gifts **but also the desire** to share life together with fellow believers.

When the Holy Spirit works in our heart **we become less me centered and more other centered.**

We become less possessive of our possessions and more willing to share and bless others with what we have. They gladly sold things so they could help each other.

I discovered when I get dry spiritually I tend to become more self-centered. When I am filled I become more other centered. I think that is true for most all of us.

The more the river of God flows here at Petra the more community we will experience together. It's what the Holy Spirit does. And it attracts others....

I look forward to continuing to grow with you as we embrace the work of the Holy Spirit among us.

Conclusion:

The book of Acts is much more than a history of the early church. It is instructive for how we are to live our lives today.

The acts of the Holy Spirit continue through us. We are Acts 29 people.

- Continuing the story
- Continuing the message
- Continuing the works of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I like the song **Build Your Kingdom Here**. It gives me that book of Acts feeling when I sing it. It is a song of Acts 29 people. God is still doing his thing in us.

Blessing:

Lord thank you for empowering and using common ordinary people like us.

Thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit we are thirsty for more of you. Let your river continue to flow in and thru us.

Help us to plant seeds and release your love to the broken around us.

May we grow in our sense of community that the world would may see how we love each other and be drawn to you.

May our prayers and lives continue to shake our world for Jesus!