

Important Lessons from Acts – The Holy Spirit – Acts 1:1-11; 2:1-21

Today we are beginning a six-part series where we will look at portions of Luke's sequel to his gospel account. The book of Acts provides accurate historical documentation on the early Christians. Its pages contain information on the beginnings of the first church, the Holy Spirit's role in the church, explanations of how the church grew and spread, and personal testimonies from the likes of Peter, John, Philip, Paul, and Barnabas. Now, given that only six weeks will be dedicated to this series of messages, there is no way we'll cover all the information contained in this terrific book. Because of this, each week we will focus on an important lesson from Acts that will help us become better disciples and help us embrace the continued work of God among the church today.

To begin this series, it is important to first consider the significance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The Spirit of God has always been at work among His people. Numbers 11 records a story from the days when the Israelites were wandering around in the wilderness. Remember how Moses grew frustrated and tired of dealing with all the complaints from the Jews. He grew increasingly frustrated and told God that he couldn't lead the people anymore. Look at **Numbers 11:11-15**. Moses, in dealing with God's people, had himself a little pity party, didn't he? Look at God's response. **Read Numbers 11:16-17**. Then Moses did as the Lord commanded, and this happened. **Read Numbers 11:24-29**. You see, Joshua did not like what he witnessed in this moment, and true to form, complained to Moses about how God chose to work. Moses however, excited by what he had witnessed, said to Joshua, *"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"* Moses hoped for a day when all of God's people, not just the leaders, would experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Oh, if he had the benefit of hindsight like we do.

This brings me to the words of Joel. Some 800 years later, he predicted that Moses' wish would come true. **Read Joel 2:28-32**. Verse 28 is a direct promise from God. Through Joel, God said, *"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."* It is in this powerful promise from God that we can see how He uses His Spirit to inspire and ignite a kingdom mindset into the life of His people. Know this, when God "pours out" His Spirit, it is more than what most even realize. It's more than what we expect. The proof of this is found in the words of the promise. **I** – this is God speaking sovereignly. **Will** – God is determined to do what He says. **Pour Out** – this demonstrates the unbelievable generosity of God. **My Spirit** – God generously gives us all His personality. This promise is only something that God can do. I cannot teach or preach until God's Spirit pours out on you. Being a member of this church does not even guarantee the fulfillment of this promise. Each person must go to God for this outpouring. Each person must approach God through His Son Jesus Christ to receive this outpouring. Joel's predicted outpouring of the Spirit is God doing what only God can do. And when it happens, hang on! Because things will be different! Moses hoped that all of God's people would experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Joel informed the people that God would eventually do this. Not just for the Jews, but for *"all People."*

This brings us to Acts, where we will see how God fulfills this promise. We are about to look at the day of Pentecost. Guess what? Pentecost is about 800 years after Joel's prediction. So, we have Moses' wish, 800 years later is Joel's prediction, and then 800 years later, at Pentecost, we have the fulfillment. Let's read about the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Acts. **Read Acts 1:1-11 and 2:1-21.** Acts chapter 1 explains that the Holy Spirit is now available to every believer. We receive the Holy Spirit and are baptized by Him when we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord. In verse 8, we also learn that with the receiving of the Holy Spirit "power" comes from that relationship. Again, it is nothing we do, but something only God does. He gives us new strength that moves us beyond our ordinary abilities. His strength brings courage, confidence, boldness, understanding, discernment, and spiritual giftedness. Just like the early disciples, all these things are needed for the Kingdom work God has set before us.

Acts 2 describes the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Remember, Jesus told the Apostles to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Look what happened to this small group of Jesus lovers – Four things: (1) a violent, rushing wind filled the whole house, (2) Tongues of fire rested on each one of them, (3) They were then filled with the Holy Spirit, and (4) They began to speak other languages. Shortly after this, Peter delivered a gospel message and 3000 people were saved. It was on this day that the first Christian church was born. Look at the actions of God in this sequence of events. First there was a sudden, mighty, rushing of the Spirit. Next was fire. Why fire? It fulfilled Joel's prophecy as well as John the Baptist's words about being baptized with the Holy Spirit's fire. It is also a symbol of God's purifying fire, which clears the mind and heart of undesirable things. Then came the filling of the Holy Spirit. Remember, God is a generous God. They were filled with the fulness of God. Guess what? When you received the Holy Spirit, you were too! Finally, God used these men to deliver His message to people from differing nationalities. Why? First to show how powerful the Holy Spirit can be. But, also to leave no doubt about the validity of the things they had just heard about Jesus.

Would you agree with me that we need the wind of God to blow through this place today? We can meet, ponder, discuss, strategize, plan, and even implement all sorts of things in the name of ministry work, but it will all come to nothing without the involvement of the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to come in a new way because there is always more of God to experience. In **Ephesians 3:19** Paul prayed that his readers might be "*filled with all the fullness of God.*" This should be a goal of the Christian life. The word "filled" has the idea of being dominated by something. If you are filled with rage, rage will dominate your life. If you are filled with love, love will dominate your life. If you are filled with joy, then joy dominates your life. When you are filled with God, God dominates your life. It's a beautiful picture of the transformative process whereby God replaces our human personality with the presence of His personality in our life. What an amazing thought—to be filled up with "*all the fullness of God.*" Don't shy away from the implications of this truth. As believers we have been created to be the containers of God. He desires to pour his life into ours and to fill us until we're full. This will

never be completely answered in this life. And in eternity we will continue to experience more of the “fullness of God,” and we will never (not even in eternity) come to the end of who he is.

No one will ever come to the end of the Holy Spirit.

No one will ever come to the end of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one will ever come to the end of God the Father.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us continually into a deeper, more profound experience of who God is. Here’s the thing... We are not as prepared to receive God’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit as He is ready to pour it out. The problem is never with Him. It is always us. I believe God has more in store for us. I believe God has some important Kingdom work for Mt Freedom. Will you be prepared, will we be prepared, and ready for the pouring out of His Spirit when the time comes? It is God who ignites kingdom focused passion when the Holy Spirit is poured out, the result will be a church filled with passion, zeal, and enormous spiritual power. I want to be a part of that. I want to be a part of what God is doing in this community. I believe He is raising up an army in preparation for the evil things that are about to come. I want to be one of the believers who are Spirit-filled, bold, courageous, prepared, and ready to share Jesus with all who will listen.

In closing I want to offer up this plea... God, will you bless us by allowing your Spirit to blow through this place. Let your breath blow away our fears, our anxieties, our doubts, our worries, our excuses, and our hesitations. Replace those things by cleaning our hearts and filling them with your presence and your power. May your powerful wind blow through our midst, sweeping away the old and everything that hinders your work, freeing us to serve you and those around us with the greatest of joy. Amen.