

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

No matter what kind of reader you are, if you sat down to read the book of Acts at a normal pace, you could read the entire book in about 2 ½ hours. It's just 28 chapters written by Luke who also wrote the Gospel of Luke.

Early on in Acts, Luke gives us the theme for the entire book; in fact, Acts 1:8 serves as a sort of summary and table of contents for the rest of the book. Notice v. 8 "You shall be my witnesses" in 1. Jerusalem (Chapters 1-7) 2. Judea & Samaria (Chapters 8-11) 3. remotest parts of the world (chapter 12-the end).

It's what this book is about – living a life that is so marked by the Gospel of Jesus Christ – that it becomes obvious to all that you know Jesus Christ. And so often, where we prove the Gospel is in the most difficult, pressurized, trying times of life and it really could be that what you are in right now was given to you by God as an opportunity to live out, in a dramatic way, everything you have claimed to believe all these years.

Look, I'm certain that committed Christians are going to be genuinely tested, sifted, and found out. Just ask the deposed fire chief in Atlanta. The truth is, in some form or fashion, we are all going to find out whether or not we really do believe what is written in the Book. DO you believe it? If so, there is a certain logic that follows:

To Believe the Gospel, You Gotta Know the Gospel – But If You Know the Gospel , You Live the Gospel

Living the Gospel means several things – from this passage...

You need a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ

That sounds a little ridiculous, but the truth is, there are many people walking around today calling themselves Christians who do not know Jesus Christ and it's a tragic thing. When Luke writes in the prologue of Acts and also his Gospel, he tells of his personal knowledge of Jesus. Listen to Luke 1:3-4: "it seemed good to me also having followed all things closely for sometime past to write an orderly account for you, excellent Theophilus, so that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."

Luke had a first-hand knowledge of Christ and His saving power. Luke's life had been changed and now he writes to his Greek friend to tell him the story because he is a different man through Jesus Christ. It scares me to death to think of the young men and women in this congregation who claim Christianity as their religion and yet have no real personal first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. How I wish that some of you would quit playing religious games with God and give your life to Christ. Knowing the Gospel means living the Gospel, but you can't live the Gospel if you don't have a personal walk with Christ.

You Need the Power of God in Your Lives

In v. 4-5, Luke records what Jesus told the disciples before He ascended into Heaven. *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* Jesus commands His followers to wait on the Spirit – the πνεῦμα (pneuma). In the New Testament and the Old Testament, one word is used for windy breath – spirit – one word - πνεῦμα.

In John 3, when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus – born again – born of the πνεῦμα. In Ezekiel 37, when God told Ezekiel to preach to the bones, he did and bones came together but the army was an army of dead men until God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the πνεῦμα and wind, breath Spirit and the Spirit of God made them come alive.

It's not enough for us to have knowledge. Knowledge without the Spirit's power is prideful and dead inside. I think one of the great tragedies of the Baptist Church is that we have forgotten our need for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been shoplifted from our theological framework. The Holy Spirit has been high jacked so that if we hear talk of "Spirit-filled worship" we think of eccentric or bizarre behavior, and that is simply not the Biblical model. As New Testament believers, the Holy Spirit does two primary things: 1. Empowers Worship – In John 4:23-24, Jesus told the woman at the well, "But an hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The Holy Spirit makes what we do in here *mean* something. He empowers worship. He also (2.) Empowers Gospel living. Take a look at v. 8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you."

Let's talk about that word *power*. Paul could have chosen several words for *power* in the Greek language:

Energes – active power like what pulsates through the electric lines that keep the lights on – energy

Ischuros – Forceful and mighty like Hurricane Katrina that hit the Gulf coast a few years back.

Kratos – Muscular strength – like what it took for me to carry Gerald on the mud run

– authority – like what a ruler has

But he did not use any of those – instead he used the word δύνάμις (dunamis) – it's where we get the word "dynamite." That word "dunamis" means "divine power," power that comes from God. V. 8 says "you will receive power." If you are receiving, someone is giving, namely God. We are operating off of God's power.

Listen, as a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit in you and that Holy Spirit gives you the ability to do those things that God calls you into. How do you handle the death of a child? You receive power! How do you deal with the shifting sands of your career? You have received power! How do you plow through the stress of being a single parent? You have received power! Philippians 4:13 is a verse that has been misquoted so much it has become a cliché. Let me read it in context: "I know how to get along with humble means and I also know how to live in prosperity in any and every circumstance. I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

If you are going to live the Gospel, we need to continue to operate Gospel ministries and we need the power of God in our lives.

We Need to Fight Distractions

In v. 6 & 7, Luke gives us the scene of the resurrected Jesus meeting with the disciples. Notice the question and then Jesus keeping their focus. V. 6 & 7 says *So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* 7 *He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."* – The disciples then wanted what so many want now: the hidden secrets. They wanted to peek behind the veil! They wanted to know "What's going to happen? How does everything turn out?" It's easy to get distracted by good but secondary issues. Satan doesn't have to get you to sin to be ineffective. He just needs to distract you.

Good things can distract you from living the Gospel. How do we live the Gospel? "Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

1. We need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
2. We need the power of God in our lives
3. We need to fight distractions

We Need to Stand For What You Believe

In V. 8, *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" "My witnesses." A witness is somebody who sees something and then tells others. John describes this in John 1:1-2: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have touched with our hands

concerning the word of life.” John was talking about being a witness. He got that from Jesus.

The word witness comes from the word *martures*. It’s where we get the word *martyr*. But it didn’t originally mean *martyr*. So many Christian witnesses died for their faith, the word came to mean a person who dies for his faith. Tertullian, the Second Century theologian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” because as the crowds watched the early Christians going calmly and joyously to their deaths, people came to faith.

Many times the martyred Christians would sing a hymn or preach the Gospel as they flamed out. But the truth of the matter is, believers don’t really choose whether or not to be witnesses. You *are* a witness to *something*. Your life testifies to what you believe about Jesus Christ. Part of your call is to witness, to stand for your faith in the tough times, when it counts.

1. We need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
2. We need the power of God in our lives
3. We need to fight distractions
4. We need to stand for what we believe

We Need to Overcome Prejudice

Tucked inside this little verse, verse 8, is a call to get over your prejudice.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Jewish people, for the most part, hated Samaritans. They thought they were a mongrel race with inferior worship practices. Jesus called the disciples to get over that. Later in Acts, the Lord would call Paul to go to the Gentiles and he will declare in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus!”

It used to be said that 11 o’clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. Let that never be said of Hickory Grove Baptist Church. We are seeking to believe the Gospel, to share it and live it.

We need:

1. a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
2. the power of God in our lives
3. to fight distractions
4. to stand for what we believe
5. to overcome prejudice

You Need to Stay Focused on the Mission

I mean the mission of the church and the mission for your life. You read v. 8 and you realize *here* is our mission. *Here* is our “Exalt Christ, Make Disciples, Pass the Torch.” If you're looking for the purpose of your life, it's in Acts 1:8. You exist to share the Gospel; but to share the Gospel, you must know the Gospel and live the Gospel.

Believe on Jesus – Be saved.

(Pastor shares the Gospel message and prays)