

The Need For The Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. So last week, we began a journey into the book of Acts with the intention of seeing how the early church went about the process of making disciples.

Living in a society where the success of a church is gauged by how many people attend and how much money comes in, it's easy to lose the biblical focus of the church.

For instance, we can think that a church's success is dependent on the programs that we offer. And as that idol takes up residence in our heart, we begin to bow down to it by pouring ourselves into ministry programs, believing that the more varied and wide-reaching programs we have, the more successful our church will become.

We can think that a church's hope is dependent on the amount of fellowship events that we host. And as that idol takes up residence in our heart, we begin to bow down to it by creating and facilitating more and more church events to promote mutual growth and fellowship.

Now, these are merely two of many views that exist in churches by people who believe they know exactly what must be done to grow the church.

[1 : 27] And while neither of these things are wrong in and of themselves, it's not bad to have church programs, it's not bad to have church fellowship, what is problematic is that we become so convinced of their truthfulness that we throw ourselves and our trust fully behind them, praying that God will bless our efforts to do the right thing rather than stepping back to ask if it should be done at all.

And thus, out of the best of intentions, we effectively erect an idol in our hearts that we seek to serve and obey rather than the clear teaching of Scripture and the gospel message.

The truth, when it comes to the growth of the church, is found in Matthew 16, verse 18, where it says, Jesus saying, I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

That rock that Jesus is referring to is the confession that Peter makes about Jesus being the Christ, about Jesus being the Son of God.

And Jesus says, hey, if flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you, my Father revealed this to you, and it is on this rock I will build my church, Jesus will build his church.

[3 : 02] John MacArthur, in commenting on that, says, Christ declared that he alone builds the church, and no matter how well-intentioned he may be, anyone else who attempts to build it is competing with and not serving the Lord.

So ultimately, it comes down to the heart issue of, you know, what is our focus? What is our belief? Is it a belief that Jesus builds the church?

Or is it a belief that our programs are what builds the church? Or our fellowships is what builds the church? Is it our efforts in and of themselves that build the church?

Or is it Jesus through the gospel message and the work of the Holy Spirit that builds the church?

And again, I'm not saying that doing these things, having programs and fellowships and all that are bad in and of themselves.

But if it becomes the driving force, if it becomes the tip of the arrow, so to speak, that's when it's problematic. And that's when it becomes an issue of who are we serving and whom do we belong to.

[4 : 22] My hope and prayer through this study in Acts is that we will loosely hold on to preconceived notions and ideas of what makes a church successful or grow. And we will learn from the ones who got the whole thing going in the first place.

I want to be willing to make changes as the Spirit may lead us to do. I want to be ready to repent as the Spirit may lead us to do.

I want to be ready to live obediently to what the Word of God clearly teaches about what we ought to be doing as a church. And I hope that you as well will come along with me in that thinking. Be willing to make changes, be willing to repent, be ready to live obediently. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for keeping your throne accessible to us this morning in every moment of every day. It's always a fearful thing to open your Word and to allow your Spirit to teach and convict us. And I pray, Lord, that we will be clay in the potter's hand.

[5 : 45] Mold us as you see fit and help us to rejoice in what you make us to be for your glory. In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Amen. Kicking off our study last week, Acts 1 verses 1 through 3 make clear the centrality of the resurrection as it relates to our mission and our confidence.

The risen Jesus had made clear that there is more work to be done related to His story. He said that we're to go and make disciples. Luke mentions in Acts 1, excuse me, verse 1, that His gospel account dealt with that, dealt with what Jesus began to do and teach.

There was more to be done and the resurrection makes that clear. And the fact that Jesus has indeed risen on to provide us with the confidence to believe and preach the gospel message. Yet a risen Christ was still not enough for some of the disciples who saw Him. Consider what Matthew records at the end of the account of the life of Jesus.

Matthew 28, 16, and 17 says, Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted.

[7 : 12] It's very likely that the some doubted was probably Thomas. And it's possible that there were others, but we definitely know that Thomas was the doubter, right?

In fact, when we refer to Him, we call Him Doubting Thomas. Not particularly a name I'd want to be known by 2,000 years from now, Doubting Ken. But such is the case for Thomas.

And so here, the risen Lord in their presence and still some are doubting that it's even Him. Some are doubting that He was even raised.

But notice what Jesus says to him in John 20, verse 29, to Thomas. Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you have seen Me? Remember, Thomas said, I won't believe unless I can touch the holes in His hand and His side.

Like, I won't believe unless this. And He said, Have you believed Me because you have seen blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. The risen Jesus is the confidence that we have for salvation.

[8 : 22] He's the confidence we have for our ministry. Consider the testimony of Paul. I told you to turn to Acts. I'm going to make you turn to, keep your finger there in Acts 1.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15. This was, for me, I tried not to put this in.

Not because it's not important, but because it's lengthy. But I couldn't get around it. I had to come to it. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 12 through 22.

Paul writes, Now, if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

[9 : 32] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For as by a man came death, by a man also came, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

I love this text in 1 Corinthians 15 that Paul is saying, look, if the dead are not raised, Christ is not raised, your faith is in vain, you're still in your sins and we're all doomed.

Basically the rundown of it. But he doesn't just leave it there. He doesn't say, well, if the dead aren't raised then that's it. He says, but no, in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.

[10 : 41] And this is coming from somebody who saw him himself. Acts 9. I know we're not there in Acts, but I assume you understand that reference. The Damascus road, Saul, before he was Paul, met the risen Christ.

He saw him. He can say, he can testify, without a doubt, he is raised. And that's what gives us hope. And that's what gives us confidence in our salvation, confidence in our ministry.

Let's go back to Acts. Now that I've covered the introduction, got fired up about that. Let's get to Acts 1, verses 4 through 11. It says, we continue in our study in the book of Acts, we see that it's the risen Jesus who makes known the need for the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1, verse 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.

For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

[12:03] And he said to them, it is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father is fixed by his own authority. 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.

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. In this text here, there are two very clear expectations that Jesus gives to his disciples. First in verses 4 and 5, he says, to wait for the Holy Spirit. Wait for the Holy Spirit. What a whirlwind experience the disciples have had over the past couple months in their life.

They saw Jesus perform tremendous miracles among the people, which were indicators that he is the Messiah. They saw one of their own, Judas Iscariot, betray the Messiah to Jewish leaders for 30 pieces of silver.

[13:30] They saw Jesus be wrongfully tried and convicted, beaten, and crucified. They saw Jesus be wrapped in burial cloths and placed in a tomb.

And they saw Jesus risen again three days after he was killed. Now they're about to witness one more amazing event related to Jesus, and that's his ascension.

But before he ascends, he tells them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Wait for the Holy Spirit. Now, if you're like me, and not many are, thank the Lord, we don't need more of me in this world, you might be wondering a couple things.

I was, as I was studying and reading through this. First, why couldn't the Holy Spirit come upon the disciples right away? And what particularly did they have to wait for?

I mean, if God is omnipresent, we teach that and believe that, that's taught in Scripture, surely the Holy Spirit could just come right then and there. Well, the first thing they had to wait for was for Jesus to present his blood on the heavenly altar.

[14:44] I love, like, as we have just gone through the book of Hebrews, that this was so ready that the Spirit was ready to reveal this and remind me of this.

Hebrews 9, verses 11 and 12. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is not of this creation, remember we're talking about the heavenly temple, we're talking about the heavenly tabernacle, I don't need to go through that with you again, we covered that last year, he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

The primary purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry was to manifest the Father to the world, John 1, 18, and to lay down his life for the sheep, John 10, 14 through 18.

Primary purpose, manifest the Father, give his life for the sheep. And it's best summed up in the summary statement of the Gospel of John, 20 verse 31, Nancy.

These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. It's through the sacrificial death of Jesus that we have been forgiven, we've been ransomed, we've been redeemed, we've been bought by God through the blood of Christ.

[16:07] And that death has been anticipated since before the foundation of the world. I'm going to go back to 1 Peter chapter 1 real quick.

I should have been good and had this ready for you in a printout. 1 Peter 1, verses 17 through 21. Peter writes, if I get to the right verse, and if you call on him as Father who judges impartially,

according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

I'll tell you just one more observation that I just realized now. Peter mentions the resurrection, central to his letter and his theology, the resurrection of Christ and how it points and gives glory to God.

But we're bought. We're ransomed with the precious blood of Christ. And because of what was shown in Hebrews that, you know, Jesus had to enter that heavenly tabernacle.

[17:42] So he needed time to do it. Right? There he is with the disciples and now he's ascending and he's ascending to present his blood on the altar to be received and accepted by God as a sacrifice that is worthy and acceptable.

So they had to wait for him to do that. Then they had to wait for the Spirit to be sent. Luke 24, 49, Jesus says, Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Jesus has to send the Spirit. They have to wait. John 16, 7, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away.

For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. So there it is again. Jesus' ascension is crucial because when he ascends and leaves, he can then send the Holy Spirit.

And the disciples are told, Wait. Wait for the Spirit. Got to present the blood? Then I got to send him. It shows that there is a process in these things.

[18:52] So before the Holy Spirit could be sent, Jesus had to leave. Thus it was not until the ascension, not many days from now, verse 5, it was not until after the ascension, he says in verse 5, not many days from now, that the Holy Spirit came on the scene.

And that's Acts 2, verses 1 through 4, which is like a couple weeks down the line. So the arrival of the Holy Spirit, it's a fulfillment of prophecy. Joel chapter 2, verses 28 through 32 is the primary passage that is alluded to by Peter in his sermon that we're going to get to in a few weeks.

I wasn't going to, I'm not going to turn there. Just note that. Joel 2, no, turn there. Turn to Joel. I just can't make up my own mind, trying to stay out of my own way.

There we go. Joel is before Amos, before Revelation, and after Genesis. Got it.

Joel 2, 28 through 32. And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

[20:20] Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

So this prophecy, not fully fulfilled, by the way, you may have noticed that, the wonders in heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke and the sun being turned to darkness, the moon to blood.

We don't see that. Haven't seen that. Hasn't come yet. Is yet to come if you get to the book of Revelation. But the pouring out of the Spirit of God on the people, that's what's taking place in Acts. That's what they're waiting for. That's what we see in Acts 2 as coming down and we see the effect of that. The way that the Spirit is poured out is also consistent with Ezekiel 11 verses 19 and 20.

[21:35] God says, and I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them and they shall be my people and I will be their God.

In Ezekiel 36, 25 and 27, God says, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

What is the purpose? The purpose of the Holy Spirit's presence in God's people according to Ezekiel to enable them to walk in his statutes, to walk in his commands and according to his word. The Holy Spirit indwelt the disciples so that they could keep the commandments of the Lord as they went about proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. A major ministry of the Spirit is to teach believers and to remind them of God's word.

That's John 14, verse 26. But the helper of the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[23 : 09] They had to wait for the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit was being sent for this tremendous purpose and task. So what? It's an event in church history, big whoop.

It's in our Bibles. Why does that matter? Well, the disciples had to wait for the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower them to begin carrying out the gospel ministry so that they would do so in obedience to God's word.

Thus, we must wait for the Holy Spirit to clearly lead us in our endeavors for the gospel ministry so that we do so in obedience to God's word. God's word. It's not about just going and saying Jesus. It's not about just talking about the man, the individual and what a good guy he was. But it's about walking in obedience to the word of God before the world, before people that we engage with day in and day out.

And it's about telling them about this guy who died for their sins and rose from the dead. And it's about living consistently and obediently to the word of God while we do it so as not to profane our testimony or to drag the Lord's name through the mud.

[24 : 33] People are looking at Christians, by the way. They judge you very well. You know, they're paying attention to the words you say. They're paying attention to the things you do in your life.

and the way you're living your life. I'm sure I'm not the only one who's heard the, oh, you call yourself a Christian? Well, you know, a Christian won't blah, blah, blah.

From an unbeliever who can tell me exactly what a Christian will or will not do because they read their Bible every day. But the fact is that they are paying attention to the lives we live, the words we say, and the things we do.

And that's why it is important that we are led by the Spirit through the Word of God and are living in obedience. So wait for the Holy Spirit. The second thing they were to do is to work through the Holy Spirit.

These are verses 6 through 11. All of the special care and attention, especially as it relates to the coming of the Holy Spirit, must have made the disciples giddy with the possibility of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom.

[25 : 45] That was a big deal of them. The kingdom, when's it coming? When's it going to be restored? We know promises have been made. And so, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

We see the Holy Spirit being poured out and we know what God said that's going to do for us. Surely it must mean the kingdom's coming. But Jesus turned the disciples' focus from wondering about how God is going to work in the future to being concerned with the mission at hand.

He's telling them, do not worry about what is not given to you to worry about. God knows, the Father knows, it's in His time, but it's not for you to know or worry.

He promised that the Holy Spirit would provide power to carry out the mission. But why? What power is needed to tell people about Jesus?

The word power here is literally the word that's used for ability. So what kind of ability must be given for us to tell people about Jesus? Because we do that all the time.

[27 : 04] We can do that any way we want. We can send a text, a call, send a link to somebody with the gospel being presented. I mean, it doesn't take much, right, to talk to people about Jesus.

Jesus? Well, first I really believe for the disciples is that the message was hard to preach.

It had to be very hard to preach. Now the message itself is the same throughout all time and to all people. Repent and call on Jesus for forgiveness of sin. That is the message.

Anyone can do that. So easy, right? But, depending on who they're speaking to, it can communicate more than just repent and call.

Consider this. Consider these difficulties that would be present as it relates to the geographical context that's mentioned here. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the islands of the earth.

[28 : 08] For Jerusalem, the message would have been to the priests. And the message to the priests pretty much would have been that Jesus has fulfilled the law, their system is outdated, and their power is vanquished.

They must repent and call on the one they crucified for deliverance from their sins. Yeah, that's going to go over like a lead balloon, right? What about Judea?

The message to Jews as a whole was that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and they crucified him.

Now they need to repent and call on him for salvation. That's exactly what Peter says in Acts 2.

That can be hard. Yeah, you guys messed up. You crucified your Messiah. You crucified the Savior. Now you need to call him. Samaria.

The message to the Samaritans was basically that their commitment to Mount Gerizim was in vain and that salvation is offered through the Jews in Jerusalem. They need to repent and call on Jesus the Jew for salvation.

[29 : 13] Now if you remember back to John chapter 4 when Jesus and the woman at the well were having a conversation, she's a Samaritan woman, right? They were talking about, you know, they were discussing religious things and topics and oh, you say Jerusalem is where you worship and we say on this mountain and you know, all this and that.

This would have been a big deal to Samaritans to hear that, oh, I've been wrong all this time, our people have been wrong all these years and now you want me to change.

What about the end of the earth? The message primarily to those in the end of the earth would be in the Roman Empire where 10 to 20% of the population were slaves and the message was that they needed to become as slaves to Jesus in order to be saved.

Repent from the lives they know and call on Jesus to save them from their sin. So basically we're telling slave owners that they need to become as slaves in order to be saved.

That message is going to go over well. So you can see the difficulty in this message. The message is hard to preach because of who you're preaching it to and the context in which they're understanding what you're saying.

[30 : 31] Let me go after one more time on this issue. He says the worst possible invitation imaginable was to say to somebody you need to become a slave. A permanent slave of a master who will be your only master.

And this master was a crucified Jew from Israel. This is a very hard sell. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah it is. And this is the message they were given to go into the world with.

You can see why the spirit would need to give them power. Would have to enable them. The Greek word for witness is martis which is where we get our word martyr from.

And that makes sense because many of God's people have sealed their witness by laying down their lives. I have a book in the office called Fox's Book of Martyrs. Voice of the Martyrs has a bunch of books about people who have given their lives for the gospel message.

They've laid down their lives. Not only was the message hard to preach but the global intent of the mission was hard to follow through with. Can you imagine being a poor fisherman?

[31 : 46] Let's just leave fishermen out. You're just a poor individual. You don't make a whole lot of money and you're being told that you're to take this message to be in Jerusalem and then you need to go to Judea and Samaria and then to the ends of the earth.

Okay. I don't really have a big bank account, Lord. How is this going to happen? How is this going to work? All my people are here. My business is here. I mean, you're talking about asking people to give up their lives and maybe even their livelihood with this message.

So in order for the message to be preached in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth, the Holy Spirit would need to work directly in the lives of the saints and he does just that. Just give you a taste, foretaste of the book of Acts here.

So the church starts in Jerusalem at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit indwells the apostles and Peter preaches the first recorded sermon in church history. Stephen, who witnessed concerning Jesus, was martyred for his faith in Acts 7 and this led to a great persecution starting in Jerusalem which scattered believers throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria according to Acts 8.1.

In Acts 13 we see the Holy Spirit calls out Barnabas and Saul for the work of taking the gospel ministry to the Gentiles to the end of the earth in Acts 13 and Acts 1.8.

[33 : 08] The only hope the disciples had in fulfilling the Great Commission was by carrying it out through the Holy Spirit. The message was hard to preach and the global intent was hard to follow through on.

Both things are accomplished through the Holy Spirit's empowerment. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said Matthew 5.14-16 You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand. And it gives light to all in the house in the same way let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

The disciples had to carry out the work of the gospel ministry through the Holy Spirit because the message related to each person differently and the global aspect of the mission was so hard to follow through with.

The Holy Spirit had to work directly in the life of the saints to make it happen. In Jerusalem he came upon the apostles. at the martyrdom of Stephen he enabled him to preach and witness for the gospel but then led the people to kill Stephen which led to a persecution which led to the gospel being spread abroad to Judea and Samaria.

[34 : 30] In Acts 13 he calls specifically Paul and Barnabas to go to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit had to work directly in the lives of the saints to make it happen. Thus we must depend on the Holy Spirit to work in the life of each individual we engage with because their context will cause them to relate to the gospel in a unique way.

You don't know what repent and believe in Jesus might sound like to somebody. You don't know their background most likely. You don't know where they're coming from.

You don't know how it's going to hit them. So we need the Holy Spirit to guide us and direct us and give us opportunity clarity of when that's appropriate.

And he will work directly in our lives to cause us to encounter those he desires us to reach. I think too often we focus on where are we not serving God?

Where do we need to go? Where does he want me to go? What does he want me to do? Well first and foremost he wants you to be where you're at. Faithful in Jerusalem. And then you can be faithful in going out in other places.

[35 : 41] But you need to be where you're at. That's the context that you get to minister for the sake of the gospel. But Shapley's not that great.

It's not that big. I don't know anybody. Well you're going to have that problem no matter where you go. You got to start somewhere. Get to know people.

And realize that Jesus died for the people of Shapley as much as he died for people in San Francisco. Like Warren Wiersbe end on this quote.

He says the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury. It is an absolute necessity. What we're talking about this morning in Sunday school about the Christian mind and living in a way that we are loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and we're loving our neighbor as ourself.

Nancy made the comment she said we can't do it alone. And I said you're absolutely right we can't do it alone. That's why God gave us the Holy Spirit.

[36 : 56] He's given the Holy Spirit a job to work in our lives and to direct us. He's given us a job and a mission to go and make disciples of all nations. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this time in your word. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you make clear what you're calling us to, what you're calling us for. We thank you, Lord, that you sent your Spirit to indwell us, to empower us, to enable us.

Lord, we thank you for the apostles in the book of Acts as they are providing an example for us.

They're providing a model for us to follow. Lord, they're showing us the way because really we don't know what to do.

We're trusting in you. We pray that your Spirit would guide and direct us and help us to understand our ministry in light of the book of Acts and in light of our circumstance and where we're at here in Shapley.

We want to serve you and give glory. In Jesus' name, amen.