



Acts 1:1-9

CANDID CAMERA SKETCH.

Here's a classic piece of TV from Candid Camera in the mid-60s. The car in question couldn't work; it didn't have an engine. However nice a car may look, if it doesn't have an engine, it doesn't have the power to do anything useful like going from A to B

LIGHT SWITCH

Similarly, you might have the finest designed lights in Felixstowe, but they will never be any use unless you switch them on. The need electric power.

The Christian faith is a power faith. We are human beings, and in our own natures re powerless t please God, powerless to do His will, powerless to change our lives or anyone else's in regards to spiritual things. However impressive we are personally, however impressive our church may seem, we are absolutely powerless to do anything worthwhile for God. It may be worthwhile to us. It may be worthwhile to the community. But we are powerless to change lives spiritually, and powerless to change the spiritual climate of our community or even our nation.

We are in the part of the church year that is post resurrection. What did the human race see demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus? The power of God. God has power over death and raised Jesus from the dead. VERSE *Rom 1:4 Jesus...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.*

We have no power, but God is full of power and that power He has imparted yo His people. How? Because He's given us the same Spirit to be part of our lives The Spirit is the power and therefore the proof that anyone who accepts Jesus belongs to Him. He's in us, part of us. Here's what Paul says of Him and us: VERSE

Romans 8:9 Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.10 But if Christ lives in you, the Spirit is life for you because you have been put right with God, even though your bodies are going to die because of sin.11 If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you.

Christian faith is life-changing, nation-changing, world-changing: when the Holy Spirit works through His people. Because He's powerful, very very powerful. Powerful beyond imagination.

Do we really believe that? When God's people grasp it and believe it – then it makes a difference. The Holy Spirit of God does make a difference in people's lives today. It's not a Bible thing – a past thing. It's happening now.

Testimony

So the Christian faith is a power faith. In a few weeks we are going to celebrate Pentecost. It was time when the power of the Holy Spirit was manifested in the lives of the disciples that stepped them from the private to the public.

But the dealings with the Holy Spirit started much earlier than that for the disciples. It actually started when they witness the words and miracles of Jesus. It started when God worked through them as disciples when they went out, haled people, cast our demons and proclaimed Good News. Nothing that happened in Acts was unfamiliar to them.

But what had happened after the resurrection was that the Holy Spirit became an inseparable part of them

and in the process He changed and empowered them. How did that happen and what form did that take?

To examine this, let's go to the account in the Acts we read earlier.

VERSES

Acts 1:1 Dear Theophilus: In my first book I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles.

3 For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God.

– INSTRUCTED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

When did the disciples receive the Holy Spirit? Many say Pentecost; the Bible says different. Here it is.

VERSE *John 20: The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." 22 Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

Some theologians see it as symbolic of Jesus. But something changed in them. They started to get the plot. Something that hadn't happened before.

VERSE

Luke 24:44 Then he said to them, "These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Whereas people may witness the power of the Holy Spirit, say by seeing someone healed or something that amazes them about God, their first experience of the Holy Spirit is that He turns the lights on and we understand. Understanding the things of God is the most basic thing the Spirit imparts to people.

VERSE

1 Cor 2:12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

I was interested in the phrase we read from Acts that *Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles.* How did He manage that in 40 days? The disciples already knew the teachings of Jesus. They had been with Him for three years. They knew his teachings. What was the missing ingredient that changed their lives in relation to this teaching? The understanding that comes through the Holy Spirit. Jesus only needed 40 days because all they had to do was to make sense of 3 years teaching – not learn it from scratch. I found both as a student and a teacher, that it's possible to be taught stuff and make no sense of it. I can remember as an undergraduate doing a source on Sociology. It might as well have been gobbledygook. It made no sense. I understood the words but they seemed to have no relevance or sense. In the second term, I did an essay on a particular aspect of this course and suddenly, everything clicked. It made sense – it all made sense.

The Holy Spirit makes sense of the things of God. If we want to see the power of God manifested in our lives and our church, then we must first allow God to open up our minds to what He wants to teach us. As I've said before, there's a danger, particularly with older Christians that they think they have heard it all before and know their stuff. Not so. God is so vast and deep, that it takes a lifetime and the Holy Spirit to learn of Him.

So today, allow Jesus, through the Holy Spirit to speak life into the Word that He has planted in our lives – that the Holy Spirit will make us understand. But there's more to this story than opened minds.

VERSE

4 And when they came together, he gave them this order: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. 5 John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

The disciples didn't just allow themselves to soak up the teachings of Jesus. They had a command to obey and that was to wait for a time until they were baptised in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit isn't an agent of knowing, but an agent of change in our lives.

– IMMERSSED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

So here were the disciples, waiting in obedience. Their lives were about to change from being passive –

meditating on the Word; to being dynamic. What they were to receive at Pentecost was a much more significant manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It's what today we'd call a big power manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

I've used the word immersed in the title because that's what baptism is – immersion. They had experience of the Spirit in one way, now they were to experience Him in another. There were all sorts of big power manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. There are other big instances of the power of the Spirit manifested all through the Bible. I haven't got time to go through them today, but they're all different and people responded to them in different ways. And of course, there are plenty of big power manifestations of the Spirit throughout church history and of our land. They are designed to give the people of God a jolt. They precipitate change usually, for individuals or churches. They can be history-changing.

The only commonality they have is that they are of God's grace and there's nothing anyone can do to actually precipitate a big power experience of the Spirit. There's no level of spirituality that attracts Him. It's all of God's grace. And big power manifestations that make big impacts on people's lives don't happen every day – but they do happen. Have I seen this sort of thing in my own Christian life? Yes. Am I going to tell you about it? No. Did I deserve to be a witness to things and experience them myself. Definitely not. But I was ready, waiting – and surprised!

The only thing I would say is that most Christians come across a big work of the Spirit in power one, twice, a few times, more, in their lives. The question is, what change is it going to make to you? Be watchful, be expectant, be prayerful – we do have a God who wants to immerse us in His Spirit. All He wants us to be is like those disciples, ready, available, desiring more of Him.

Let's read on in Acts 1: 8 .. *when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

– EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Big power manifestations are one thing, but seeing the power of God, experiencing the power of God and moving in the power of God are not occasional, they can and should be daily. There's a danger of saying that if we don't see pentecost type stuff, then God isn't working in power. That just isn't true and what I want us to get out of today is what the disciples got out of this. And that is to see the power of God working in every facet of our lives every day.

The day of Pentecost was extraordinary. But after that, we see the power of the Spirit at work in them in less spectacular but equally significant ways. I mentioned electric lights earlier. They are obvious, but it's remarkable how electric power runs things that we barely ever see, here or experience but if there was a power cut we'd soon miss them.

In the past few months we have prayed as a church and we've seen God work in different ways. We heard a testimony this morning. There are others like it. We've seen God provide financially for the church. They are not necessarily spectacular, but they are all works of God. Why not something more amazing? Because when we learn about God and His power, learning to appreciate the smaller things helps us to start to pray more extravagantly in faith and look to see what the Spirit is expecting us to pray for as we extend our faith. Let me end by giving you the one that Jesus gives us here. We learn that the Holy Spirit changes the scope of how we understand the world.

VERSE

Acts 1: 8 .. *when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

The power of the Spirit makes us into witnesses. One of the biggest brick walls faced by church leaders is often a lack of desire by the church to do mission – to share Jesus with their friends, neighbours etc. Not so in Acts 1. The Spirit transformed them into being a small group of people praying in a house in Jerusalem, to being driven by an irresistible force to tell people about Jesus.

MOVED BY AN IRRISISTIBLE FORCE

My desire from this learning about the Spirit we are having at the moment is that firstly we will identify the Spirit's work in power in our lives and church, that we will be inspired to pray more earnestly but most of all, that the Spirit will thrill us so much, that we can't contain Him any longer.

Why this, because we have a Saviour who is mighty to save, who wants to save our families, friends,

neighbours, community, nation. And He's appointed us and empowers us by His Spirit to do it.

Let's start to embrace the amazing, not just the amazing days we'll witness as the Spirit manifests Himself in big ways, but that we'll recognise His power and presence in our lives day by day, praise Him for Him and be thrilled by it into sharing the Good News.

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid
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