

The Holy Spirit's Power In Sharing Jesus

Acts 1:1-11

Key Verse: 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Once I read a quote by William Arnot, a preacher and an author from Scotland. He said, “To every true Christian these two things may be said: You have need of Christ and Christ has need of you. The simple fact that a Christian is on earth and not in heaven, is proof that there is something for him here to do; and if he is not doing it, the neglect shows either that he is not yet a Christian or that he is a Christian who grieves Christ.” I think I am a Christian who grieves Christ. What is that “something” I, as a Christian, should do on earth? What is that “something” I can do on earth, but not in heaven? It is witnessing who Jesus is. The question is how can we do it well? I pray that through the study of this passage God will make it clear to us.

Acts was written by Luke, the gospel writer. In his former book, Luke's Gospel, he wrote about all that Jesus had done and taught up to his ascension. Remember the conversation between the two disciples and Jesus on the road to Emmaus? How about the story about Jesus appearing to the disciples and showing his hands and feet, and eating broiled fish in front of them? Here again, at the start of Acts, he briefly mentioned what Jesus had done between his resurrection and the ascension. Let's read verse 3, “after his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” 40 days! Didn't Jesus want to go into his ivory palace right the next day? Why did he linger on earth for 40 days? From my perspective, I understand that Jesus had re-teaching to do. As a teacher, I cannot move on to the next unit if my students do not get important concepts. I cannot tell myself, “Well, I have done my best. We should move on.” Rather, I linger and re-teach until they get it. Verse 3 tells us that Jesus took 40 days to re-teach two things; his resurrection and the kingdom of God. Jesus' resurrection and the kingdom of God were such important topics that he could not just move on. To Christians, resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith and our existence. To us the kingdom of God is our ultimate hope and our reason for living as strangers on earth. There are many other things they needed to relearn. But the resurrection faith and the hope in the kingdom of God are the two essentials they needed to carry on as the apostles of Jesus Christ. Resurrection is such an unbelievable event that giving one or two proofs did not get it through the disciples' head. They saw Jesus eating broiled fish, and they were convinced that Jesus was alive. Then they would turn around and scratch their heads and questioned if they saw a ghost. It took many convincing proofs over 40 days to help them overcome their common sense and doubt and finally believe that Jesus was alive. When Jesus started his ministry, his first message was the kingdom of God. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, and proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. He said, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:15) Since then Jesus taught about the kingdom of God numerous times until he was killed. But still the disciples didn't get it. Jesus needed to teach again about the kingdom of God for 40 days.

On one occasion, Jesus gave them this command, let's read verses 4 and 5. “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Before they could be

involved in the work of God, they had to obey the command of waiting for the gift. Jesus told them to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of John was a symbol of washing away one's sins. The water baptism was a Jewish tradition practiced in a river or a lake. A person was dunked in water as a ceremonial cleansing or as a sign of conversion to Judaism. John used this commonly practiced tradition for people who wanted to show their change by repenting of their sins.(Ac 19:4) It was a sign or a symbol of change and of being a believer. But Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It means to be dunked in the Holy Spirit. It means a true change of a person from inside by the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit.(Ro 2:29) It means that we are united with Jesus. We are one with Jesus. (1Co 12:12,13) The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the gift from God to everyone who believes.

How did the disciples respond? Verse 6 says, "So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" They were right on to think of the restoration of the kingdom. From the Old Testament days, God related the pouring of the Spirit on his people to the end of the times. That is the establishment of God's kingdom when everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The end time is when there will be deliverance on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. It is the time of the restoration of Israel, the coming of the kingdom of God in Jerusalem. (Ez 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-31) Since they had been retaught about it for 40 days, it was natural to think of the coming of the kingdom of God. However, they were wrong about time. They thought this was the time. Jesus said to them in verse 7, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." Even Jesus did not know the time. It should not be their concern to know the times or dates.

Jesus continued in verse 8. Let's read it together. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jesus said that they didn't need to know the time. There was more important thing they should do. It was to receive power through the Holy Spirit so that they could be Jesus' witnesses. A witness tells what he saw or heard. He tells nothing but the truth. He tells what he knows only or what he has experienced. The Greek word for martyr bears the meaning of witness. A martyr is someone who suffers persecution or death for his beliefs. The times the disciples were living in were not kind to Jesus' followers. Jesus was hated by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law as a law breaker and a blasphemer. Romans condemned Jesus as a criminal and crucified him. And yet the disciples were to witness to this Jesus, as the Son of God who was alive. Crucifixion could well be in their future. It could be a very unpopular message not to mention being in danger for their lives. Witnessing about Jesus meant severe persecution or death. A witness has to embrace death so that he can declare the truth about Jesus. Jesus knew fully their predicament. Jesus also knew that what they needed to witness was not more bible knowledge or training in speech. It was the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes on them, they would be equipped with power. Then they would be Jesus' witnesses starting from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was where the disciples were huddled together. Judea and Samaria were neighboring regions. Next the ends of the earth. The territory of our witnessing will expand until the gospel of Jesus Christ reaches the Muslim countries, North Korea and China. However, advancing the kingdom of God starts in Jerusalem, the place where we are. We must be Jesus' witnesses to our spouse and children. Then we can be good witnesses to IIT students and our work places, and we can go to the ends of the earth. Witnessing to Jesus is the work left for us to do. If we do not do it, one of the situations must be true of us that either we are not a Christian or we are the Christians who grieve Christ.

Who is the Holy Spirit that gives men such power? He is known as the forgotten God, a popular term first used by the pastor Francis Chan. We do not deny his existence. But many of us have not experienced his presence or action in our lives. First, The Holy Spirit is God, one of the Trinity; God the Father, Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:2 and 26 tell about the presence of the Spirit at the creation. Jesus placed the Holy Spirit as God in Matthew 28:19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Second, The Holy Spirit is the Lord. Apostle Paul called the Spirit "the Lord" in 2Corinthians 3:17,18, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." We call Jesus "the Lord" because he is the Owner and Sovereign of our lives. The Holy Spirit is the Lord. He is the Owner and sovereign of our lives. Third, the Holy Spirit is a Person, not in a sense of human. Jesus said of the Spirit, "He," in John 15:26, "When the Counselor comes whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." The Spirit is not a thing or power. We should not call the Spirit, "it." Also the Holy Spirit speaks as He spoke to the churches in Revelation.(Rev.2:7) He has emotions.(Eph 4:30) He can be grieved or hurt.

What does the Holy Spirit do specifically? According to John 14:17 and 26, He lives with us and in us, and He counsels and teaches us the word of God. John 15:36 says that He testifies about Jesus. John 16:8 says that he convicts us of our sins. Romans 8:26 says that He intercedes for us. He gives us gifts and helps us to bear fruits of the Spirit. These are only a few of the jobs the Holy Spirit does. When we accept Jesus as our Savior and believe him, we belong to Christ so we are called Christians. Then the Spirit comes and lives in us.(Acts 19:2, Ro 8:9)

Then why do many of us feel powerless when it comes to witnessing? It is because we have damaged the relationship with the Spirit. We grieve Him when we doubt God's word, his love, or when we let our sinful nature rule over our hearts.(Eph 4:30) We grieve Him when we do not give proper honor and respect to the Spirit as God, but ignore him. We end up putting out the Spirit's fire.(1Th 5:19) He removes himself from us. I have such experiences. I put out the Spirit's fire by watching many Korean programs on the internet; dramas, game shows, talk shows, documentaries and news programs. The more I indulged myself in watching TV, the less desire did I have for prayer. My prayer became more and more dry and habitual. In another time, I grieved the Holy Spirit by bragging about myself. Instead of honoring God, I elevated myself before other people. I knew and sensed that the Spirit left. But the Holy Spirit is humble. I repented of my sins and cut off all the programs but two a week. The Lord restored my prayer. When we repent and desire Him, he comes to us. Jesus told the disciples to wait for the gift. The disciples must have waited for the gift as children await for Christmas gifts with eager expectation and excitement. We should repent, ask and wait for the gift. Our Lord Jesus wants to give good gifts to those who ask him. (Mt 7:11)

I read an article from 2007 in ChristianityToday. It said that the growth rate of Korean church is 9% that is four times greater than the population growth in South Korea. The static church of Asia and West asked, "What makes the church in Korea grow?" Many answers were based on one explanation by Dr. Moffett. He said, "For years, we have simply held up before these people the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit has done the rest."

Once in my dream, I was driving a car, but it wasn't going anywhere. I pressed on the pedal harder and jerked my body forward to help the car move forward. But it didn't go anywhere. I

was so frustrated. Just then I remembered. The engine was not on. I turned the engine on, and my car smoothly moved forward. I felt the breeze over my hair from the speed of the car. It described what I had been like spiritually. I tried very hard to teach the Bible and serve the ministry. But I did not see much progress. I came to teach the Bible at IIT 26 years ago in 1985. None of the students whom I cared for personally through bible study remained in the work. I was deeply frustrated. I could not go on like this anymore. God had mercy on me and visited me through his Spirit. He explained my condition through the dream and gave me Ephesians 1:13, 14 which reads, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory." Without the Holy Spirit, witnessing about Jesus will be like driving a car with the engine turned off. No power. We can try hard and give our best effort, and get frustrated at the lack of progress. We need the power to overcome our ever present sinful nature, the power to overcome our shyness, the power to deny our laziness, the power to crush many excuses. We need the power to silence doubt and fear within us.

Without the Lord, the Holy Spirit, we have no power to witness about Jesus. We may be able to speak the words and teach the Bible, but we will have no power to witness through our changed lives. The difference between the Pharisees' teaching and Jesus' teaching was that Jesus taught as one with authority. Without the Spirit, we will have no power in the words we preach because our lives do not back it up. We will have no power to risk our lives and to bear the cost in order to witness about our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome our sinful nature and inner fear. His power enables us to endure hardship and persevere in persecution. His power brings unbelieving people to the obedience that comes from faith. The power of the Holy Spirit makes us courageous to hold up the moral authority of our God in this perverse generation. The Holy Spirit gives us His wisdom, counseling and teaching us with his truth. Without his help we cannot repent and testify about Jesus. Let's read verse 8 again. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After Jesus had said this in verse 8, he was taken up to heaven. His work on earth was done. Jesus will come back at the time only God knows. Jesus' second coming is our glorious hope. Until our Lord Jesus comes back, we must do our part by witnessing about Jesus. But first, we must repent of our sins of grieving Christ. We must ask and wait for the Holy Spirit's coming on us. We must testify about Jesus and share the gospel with our family members, coworkers at our job and IIT students. I sincerely pray for all of us to be found doing our Lord's business when he comes again. With this glorious hope, let us lift up our prayers to God for IIT this fall semester that we may be bold witnesses of Jesus to the students. Let's pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in us, among us and through us for IIT ministry. Let's shout verse 8 together.