




Theme: A Better Life in the Holy Spirit


"The Power and Presence of the Holy Spirit"


 You also can get these Meditation Moments each day directly on your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

Weekly Memory Verse:

8a But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. – Acts 1:8a

Meditation Moments for Monday, September 8 – Read Acts 1:1-8. Scholar N.T. Wright says in his commentary *Acts for Everyone* that this book, "is all about what Jesus is continuing to do and to teach.... [Jesus] is announced as King and Lord, not as an increasingly distant memory but as a living and powerful reality, a person who can be known and loved, obeyed and followed, a person who continues to act within the real world." These eight verses said three times that the way his followers would experience the living, powerful reality of the risen Jesus was through the impact of the Holy Spirit.


 Verses 4 and 5 highlight Jesus' instruction to wait for the Holy Spirit's arrival. We Americans are often impatient and driven—we don't like the word "wait." Is there an area you feel in a hurry, eager to do God's work on your own, without God's power? How could "going it alone" hinder, not advance, God's mission? Hinder your spiritual growth?


 In verse 7, Jesus said God's authority (which Jesus shared in Mark 1:22 and Luke 5:24), not us, sets the "times or seasons." It's the "when" we wonder about. God would give them power in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word is *dunamis*, the root of our word "dynamite." The promise is that it **WOULD** come, hence the "wait" in verse 4. Jesus sent them (and us) to "the end of the earth" as witnesses to his kingship. In preacher Emil Brunner's words in his book, *The*

Word and the World, "The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning." In what ways are you gifted to join in the church's God-given mission?

Prayer: *Loving Lord, as you called your first followers to an urgent, world-changing mission, you first said, "Wait." Help me to work with you, not ahead of you, in building your eternal kingdom on earth. Amen.*


Tuesday, September 9 – Read **Acts 2:1-6, 15-18, 32-33 and 37-38**. Shavuot, was the "Festival of the Weeks." It marked the beginning of the wheat harvest each fall. During rabbinic times, the festival became associated with the giving of the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai. It was customary during Shavuot to study the Torah and to read the Book of Ruth. Celebration of Shavuot occurs on the 50th day, or seven weeks, after the sheaf offering of the harvest celebrated during Passover. The holiday is therefore also called Pentecost from the Greek *pentēkostē*, meaning "50th." Just seven weeks after the Passover when Jesus died on the cross, the Holy Spirit came to his disciples in a highly visible way. Some Jerusalem skeptics claimed the Spirit-filled Christians had started drinking early. Peter forcefully told them this was God pouring out the Spirit and quoted the promise of Joel 2:28 which we read last week. They did not always experience those exact signs afterward, nor do we. But the Holy Spirit remained active in their lives and in ours as well.


 In John 15:26, Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will testify about me." That's exactly what the Spirit did at Pentecost. Peter's Spirit-filled sermon said, "This Jesus God raised up. We are all witnesses to that fact. He was exalted to God's right side and received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit." How has the Spirit testified about Jesus to you? When you have a chance to share your experience with Jesus, how can you rely on the Spirit to make your sharing effective?

 Surely the creator God could have thundered the news of Jesus from the skies if that were desirable. Instead, God's main way of carrying out the mission worked through Spirit-filled, and Spirit powered people. What made it more effective, in the end, for God to use people as witnesses? Whose witness has shaped your life? In what ways have you been able to live out Jesus' calling for you to be one of his witnesses?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, you kept your prophetic promise on Pentecost, as in the end, you keep all your promises. I claim your promise today and call on the name of the Lord for my salvation. Amen.*


Wednesday, September 10 – Read **Acts 4:24-31 and 5:27-32**. Today's reading showed how Jesus' first followers dealt with opposition. The very same people who asked Pilate to kill Jesus arrested them and ordered them to stop preaching. But they didn't cower in fear. They prayed, not asking for God to stop their opponents, but for strength "to speak your word with complete confidence." God answered their prayer. The Holy Spirit filled them, not with the outer signs from Acts 2, but with the same results, and they kept on preaching despite the religious leaders' threats.


 After Jesus' crucifixion, his disciples understandably feared the Jerusalem authorities based on what happens in John 20:19. Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit replaced their fear with earth-shaking boldness. When the council and the high priest ordered them NOT to preach, they had no doubt who they needed to obey. Have you ever had to decide whether to obey God or some human authority? If so, what did you decide to do?

 We saw last week that the Hebrew Scriptures hardly ever spoke specifically about the "Holy Spirit." But in Acts 4:25, Acts 28:25 and 2 Peter 1:21, the apostles clearly attributed the "Old" Testament writings to the Holy Spirit's influence in the writers' lives. Guided by Jesus' example, it's clear that the New Testament Christians accepted those Scriptures as their "Bible," not a discardable relic. What has helped you see the value of the whole Bible, not just parts of it?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I like it when people praise my church or some act of service I do. Make me willing to also face ridicule or scorn, if that's what it takes for me to live loyally to you. Amen.*

Thursday, September 11 – Read **Acts 9:10-20**. You're probably familiar with the story of Saul's encounter with Jesus, which changed him into the apostle Paul. If not, you can read three versions of it in the book of Acts—Acts 9:1-9, Acts 22:1-16, and Acts 26:12-20. Much less well-known was Ananias, a believer understandably nervous about meeting Saul. But God had big plans! The Holy Spirit worked in unexpected ways through an unexpected person, turning enemies into friends and equipping Saul for a world changing mission.


 The Holy Spirit empowered Ananias to overcome his fear and obey God's surprising call to help Saul. What kind of courage must it have taken for Ananias to confront Paul? Later, on trial, Paul remembered that Ananias was eager to get him baptized, despite his track record of violently opposing Christians. Has God ever called you to do something good that scared you and called for some courage? How did you respond, and what was the outcome?


 We don't hear about Ananias any more than this one story in the Bible. He courageously stepped up when called. His willingness to go to Paul, an enemy of the Christ, and share the Gospel changed the world. Have you ever struggled with a feeling that it's kind of pointless to follow Jesus unless you get to play a prominent, "starring" role in God's Kingdom work? How can remembering the impact of Ananias' one moment "in the spotlight" encourage you to do whatever tasks God lays before you?

Prayer: *Lord, if Ananias had said "no" to the Holy Spirit's call, he would have missed the chance to be part of a pivotal moment in history, even as brief as it was. Help me not to miss your call, or to fail to answer small movements of your Spirit. Amen.*

Friday, September 12 – Read **Acts 13:2-5 and 16:6-10**. Before leaving Earth, Jesus pictured an ever-growing mission in Acts 1:7-8. Antioch, in Syria, was a large city, with a growing Christian community. But it had to be a launching pad, not a stopping point. The Holy Spirit moved that church to send Paul and Barnabas into the wider world.


Later, in some way (Luke didn't say how), the Holy Spirit limited Paul's work in Asia Minor. A vivid vision of a man from Macedonia asked Paul to come there, moving the apostle and his team to take the gospel into Europe for the first time.

 The Holy Spirit actively guided the early church's mission. Sometimes, the Spirit redirected their plans, a reminder that God's wisdom may differ from our own plans or wishes. How open are you to unexpected changes in your life? Can you think of a time when an interruption or detour led to you to a worthwhile contact or experience? How might you become more attentive to the Spirit's guidance in your daily decisions?

 There's a key detail in this reading. In Acts 16:7-8, the writer spoke of Paul and his companions as "they." But verse 10 said, "WE prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia." With no great fanfare, Luke told his readers that he had joined Paul's group in Troas. How did the use of "we" highlight the trust we can have in the eyewitness quality of Acts? How did the writer's use of "we" only when it was accurate underscore the writing's integrity?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you may not call me to sail to Macedonia. But nearly every day you let me meet someone who doesn't know you. Keep me as ready to share you in new "territory" as Paul was. Amen.*

Saturday, September 13 – Read **Acts 13:49-52, 20:22-28 and 37-38**. God doesn't leave us on our own after we believe. God provides the Holy Spirit to comfort, guide, and strengthen us. We read today about violent opposition forcing the apostles Paul and Barnabas to leave another Antioch, this one in the Roman province of Pisidia. Depressing, right? It's actually inspiring as we read in verse 52 the disciples shook the dust off their feet and went on their way, "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." The rejection moved them from the lesser emotion of happiness towards the deeper place of joy and an inner experience of grace. The joy they knew and felt was not just given by the Lord's Spirit. It was the Lord's Spirit welling up within them. We learn that the reactions of people—acceptance or rejection—should never be the basis of joy. In Acts 20 there were tears about separation, but not hopeless separation. Paul had been a dynamic teacher and preacher, but he had also been a caring friend. When he had to leave for the ship, the elders tenderly kissed the apostle on the neck amid tears and hugs.

 God's Kingdom has never depended solely on one individual, no matter how gifted. Even the great apostle Paul knew his time and his reach were limited and told the elders of the church in Ephesus that they needed to depend not mainly on him, but on the Holy Spirit's presence with them. Have you ever felt prompted by the Spirit to take a specific action or make a choice? How can you, like Paul and the Ephesian elders, become more attuned to the Spirit's leading in your daily life?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you didn't promise that life will always be easy, but you did say I can have your peace and joy even when things are hard. Help me keep attuning my mind to your Spirit, to make that more and more a reality. Amen*