

**Wind In My Sails:
Fresh Wind to Persevere in Trials
Sunday, June 29, 008
Pastor Bonita Wood**

Some of you who are golfers may be familiar with St. Andrews Golf Course in St. Andrews, Scotland. You may have seen it on television if you ever watch the “British Open.” It is one of the most beautiful golf courses in the world. It is also one of the most difficult. To shoot under 90 on this course is quite an accomplishment.

I understand it is also extremely difficult to get an opportunity to play the course. Some stand in lines for hours just waiting for a tee time. Some have to schedule a tee time six months in advance. Others, who are fortunate enough to have the right connections, can get a tee time that day. I have to admit that my Uncle lived in Scotland for 9 years and I was never able to play the course. I guess he didn’t have the right connections.

One golfer from the US however did have the right connections and was given a tee time with 3 old Scots. On one of the most difficult holes he surprised himself and his partners by shooting one under par. He was quite thrilled with his achievement, threw his putter in the air and shouted, “Wow this is life!”

One of the Scots warmly commented, “It is rather grand isn’t it? Tuck that one in your memory for when not just golf, but life, gets tedious.”

Last week I shared with you the grand experience I had sailing on Dale and Karen Katzfey’s sailboat. As the wind snapped open the sails and we started to sail forward, wind in my hair, sun on my face, God’s glorious creation around me, I too shouted my exhilaration, “I’m sailing, I’m sailing.”

I’ll bet each of you have known moments like that as well. Moments that filled you with joy, inspiration, power. Moments that took your breath away
Moments that filled your sails with wind so to speak.

Maybe it was the birth of your babies, your wedding day when you saw your bride walk down the aisle, that truck you always wanted and finally saved up enough to buy, your graduation day, the day you accepted Christ as your Lord, your baptism.

You get the idea.

So I can’t even imagine how the apostle Peter and the other apostles must have felt when they stood before the Sanhedrin, after being miraculously removed from jail by an angel of the Lord and boldly proclaimed to them that “We must obey God rather than human authority. We are witnesses to what the Holy Spirit of God can do.”

They certainly had been!

You see THOSE are the moments that get us through the other days when life is, as the Scotsman said, “tedious.”

Or when life is tiresome, difficult, sad, hard, messy.

We need that memory of those amazing times, so that when we get the wind knocked out of us, we can go on.

The homeless man from last week's sermon reminded us of this when he sang: Jesus blood never failed me yet.

As we have looked at some of these early chapters of Acts, we have encountered the apostles and the early church in many different circumstances.

Some were amazing moments:

when they saw the Holy Spirit in what appeared to be tongues of fire on each persons' head

when they spoke in different languages so all could understand the salvation acts of Christ

when they prayed together and the room they were in shook,

when Peter and John were miraculously removed from their jail cell and found preaching in the center of town

They needed these moments when the Holy Spirit filled their very being to overflowing, they needed to tuck away these memories for when life would become tedious and tiresome and difficult.

You see Peter and the apostles would be arrested many more times for preaching about Christ.

They would be flogged, imprisoned, beaten, criticized, and most of them, eventually killed.

The early church would be persecuted for proclaiming Christ as the Messiah.

And when THOSE moments came, they needed to remember that they were not alone, the Holy Spirit was right there with them.

Throughout the Gospels you will see verses where Christ told the disciples and others that to follow Him would be tough and difficult; He said it might mean that they would be laughed at, persecuted or even killed.

But that nevertheless they would find a thrill, a joy and a satisfaction in helping to build this Kingdom that would make them feel it had all been worth it.

That is why Christ told them that it was better for him to go to the Father so that He could send them the His Holy Spirit to be with them

And with us today.

Last week I pointed out to you that the Holy Spirit is a person – not a human being but a being who has a mind and a will, who communicates, who acts, and most of all, who loves.

I directed you to some characteristics of the Holy Spirit found in Scripture

Which I hope you found helpful.

Because I too want each of us who have accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to know that joy, that power, that abundant, victorious life that the Bible speaks about.

Today I want to talk to you about how we can know that we are filled with the Holy Spirit,

So that when those difficult times come, and my friends make no mistake they will come, you will be able to persevere – because the Holy Spirit is also with each one of you.

First we must desire to live a life that will please the Lord.

John 7:37-39 says, "...Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, 'If you are thirsty, come to me! If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within.' (When he said "living water" he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him...)

We receive Christ by faith and we receive the Holy Spirit by faith because we desire to please the Lord and want to take ourselves off our thrones and put Christ there.

WE know that Christ offers us a different life, but we also know that we can't live it on our own power.

We need an inner reinforcement, a new drive and power inside us and that is the Holy Spirit.

Second – Confess your sins.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, we confess that we are sinners and that Christ died for us.

There may be areas of sin in our life that we did not recognize before Christ came into our life or sins that we just weren't ready to give up –

But as we grow in Christ, walk in the Spirit, mature as Christians – we will want to give up those sins, confess them and be forgiven for them.

I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong."

Third, Present every area of your life to God.

Before you all say well of course we have given everything to the Lord,
let's stop and take a look at who is sitting on the throne of our lives today.

The more we desire to live a life that pleases the Lord - the more we trust Christ with every detail of our life.

You cannot be controlled by Self in some areas and the Holy Spirit in others.

If you do, you will live that roller coaster life – moments of experiencing joy – but not an abundant life, a victorious life, a Spirit-filled life.

We need to leave Christ permanently on the throne instead of our own self, in EVERY area.

Romans 12:1-2 reminds us, "Dear brothers and sisters, offer your bodies to Christ. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will accept....Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."

Fourth, Claim, by faith, the filling or fullness of the Holy Spirit.

When we accept Christ into our life, we are given the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to live in us, to work through us.

But to be filled to fullness of the Holy Spirit we need to remember day by day, moment by moment that the power of the Holy Spirit is ours.

We do this by remembering two very important words:

COMMAND- God commands us to filled with his Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 states clearly, “Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.”

We have taken ourselves off the throne of our lives, we have placed Christ on the throne and everything we now do is under His gracious, wise and loving control through the Holy Spirit – moment by moment – everyday.

The second word is **PROMISE**

The promise that makes the command possible is found in I John 5:14-15 –

“We can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.”

If you pray as an expression of your faith to be filled with God’s Spirit, He will hear and answer you. He will fill you and keep on filling you day by day.

Bill Bright –founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ says it this way in his book, “The Holy Spirit.”

“The Spirit filled Christian no longer thinks of Christ as his helper to do some kind of Christian task.

Rather he recognizes that Jesus Christ does the work through the Christian.

Jesus does not want us to work for Him; He wants us to let Him do His work in and through us.

The Christian’s body now becomes Christ’s body to use as He wills; the mind becomes His mind to think His thought; the heart now overflows with His love; the will is now controlled by His will; the total personality, time and talents are now completely yielded to His control.”

When you received Christ, you committed your will, intellect, and your emotions to Christ – the Bible says Love the Lord with all your heart, mind and soul.

So why is it that we feel like we don’t have the power of the Holy Spirit with us all the time?

I believe it is for a couple of reasons.

Our emotions make us often doubt that we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

We think we need to feel the earth shake every time we experience Holy Spirit power.

But that is not true.

We live by faith.

We trust in God and His Word.

The emotions we experience - are a result of living by faith and acting in obedience to God’s command and trusting Him to fulfill His promise.

Sometimes that may mean the earth shakes,

I am sure some of you have had moments that it felt like the earth shook or at least you knew your sails were filled with the powerful wind of the Spirit.

Just recently one of our custodians, Missy, felt that way.

She was involved in a horrible wreck.

And she escaped it with out hardly a scratch.
So did the others in the other vehicle, even though the vehicles themselves did not fare so well.

Missy could have just as easily been killed in that wreck.

It was a miracle and the Spirit was certainly watching over the whole experience.

We do have wonderful emotionally charged experiences, **but not always**.

The other reason we don't always feel this power I believe is because we get busy and forget that Christ is on the throne, we forget about the power available to us.

We do that because there are so many things we do throughout a day without giving God a thought.

Like bake a cake, ride a bike, feed the dog, read a book, carry on a conversation with someone.

And without knowing it we keep pushing Christ off the throne and putting us back on it and then a difficult experience comes along and we remember that we have forgotten God?

So how can we know everyday that we are filled with the Holy Spirit?

Days when life is going great, days when life is going along as usual and days when life is dark and difficult and we have had the wind taken from us.

I mean really know in our hearts.

If you are like me, all that theological talk is great, all those scriptures are helpful.

But I want to know the fullness of the Holy Spirit every day, I want to know deep in my being that God is with me.

Every time we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

We are really saying that we believe there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it.

So how do we know this?

We know day by day and moment by moment that we are continually living in the Spirit, when our lives reflect more of the fruit of the Spirit – **love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control.** Galatians 5:22

The apostle Paul wrote those words, and he ought to know.

He had seen many of the early Christians accept Christ and live different lives, Spirit-charged lives.

And some of them had been pretty shady characters, including Paul himself.

Peter, John, and the early church knew this kind of fruit,

They knew it when they prayed together and the room shook

They knew it when an angel released them from prison

They knew it when they stood before the Sanhedrin and boldly proclaimed Christ

They knew it when they healed a person

And they knew it when they were beaten, exiled and killed for their beliefs.

They also knew it when they were eating, talking, walking along in their every day happenings.

They knew the steady, living, transforming Spirit that made a difference in the direction of their lives and changed the quality of their lives.

We can know that same transforming Spirit each day of our life too.

And we will see the results in our lives by how much we are experiencing and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in our lives each day.

Then when those dark days do come, when those trials come along, when we have had the wind knocked out of us, we will still be able to stand strong and know that the Holy Spirit is with us.

We have seen evidence of his presence and we have God's promise that He will never leave or forsake us.

This past Thursday, I was privileged to see evidence of the Spirit alive and well in the lives of many of your staff and some of your congregation members during a dark valley. But because of the presence of the Spirit it was also a glorious valley.

We received a phone call requesting that I come, along with a few others, and pray at the bedside of one of our dear saints here at church.

As many of you know Neil Harbison has been very ill and growing weaker everyday. Neil requested that I come and pray with him, along with some others, for God to take him on home.

He had talked with his family and he was ready to leave and go home to God.

When we got to his house, we went to his room and there he talked with us.

He declared that he was ready to go home

But then in typical Neil fashion, servant of God that he is, he asked after me and how I was feeling.

Neil has continued to show the fruit of the Spirit in his life even in his last few days here on earth.

But not only did Neil show that fruit, but the dear souls who went with me and who quietly prayed and just made sure Neil felt their presence, showed that fruit.

And I have to tell you all – the Holy Spirit was in that room.

Oh the room did not shake but God was present and active and alive in His spirit in Neil and in those gathered together.

It was a holy moment and we were on holy ground, just ordinary Christians, in a room, in Tipp City, Ohio.

“You should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like family – calling him “Father, dear Father.” For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children. And since we are his children, we will share his treasures – for everything God gives to his Son, is ours too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.” Romans 8:15-17