

Wind In My Sails: Fresh Wind for Earth-Shaking Prayer

Acts 4:23-31

Pastor Bonita

I know a young Christian lady who seems to always be full of joy and power. She was diagnosed over 3 years ago with cancer. While she was pregnant I might add. She has been healed of the disease only to learn at her next check up that it has returned. She delivered a healthy beautiful boy in the midst of treatment. She has been bald for a good amount of those 3 years. She has often been in quite a bit of pain. And yet her joy is still uncontainable. I recently saw this young woman and as we talked, I learned that her latest treatment has stopped working and they are going to try something different. I told her I would keep praying for her because we both know that there is power in prayer.

I knew another young Christian woman who had been in church all of her life. She took her children to church. She served the church in different ways. Yet she was very timid, and didn't want others to notice her too much. She tried to just blend into the background. She seemed to only experience moments of joy that were far and few between. She wanted to serve God as best she could yet she didn't seem to find much joy or power in it.

What made the difference between these women's lives?

They both were Christians.

Both were mothers.

Both had grown up in the church.

Both had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

So why did one seem to live victoriously and the other not. Why did one seem to know the joy and power of the Lord and the other just want to know it? Why could one experience power, perhaps earth-shaking power, in prayer and the other feel like her prayers just hit the ceiling?

I believe the difference was the Holy Spirit.

Oh don't misunderstand me, they both had the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Bible tells us that when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior 3 things will happen:

We will be forgiven of our sins

We will inherit eternal life

And we will have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Then why didn't both women experience the joy and power of the Holy Spirit?

I suggest to you it is because we are not sure of who or what the Holy Spirit is.

I have spent the last few weeks asking people, "Who is the Holy Spirit?"

I have gotten a multitude of answers.

He is the voice inside of me telling me right from wrong.

He is the warm feeling I get inside

He is God's brain

He is part of the Trinity

Many Christians today "get" the idea of God the Father, and the idea of Jesus as the Son of God. But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, we often experience confusion, uncertainty, and even fear. For many Christians, the Holy Spirit is an "it," a vague blob of church talk.

But the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is God--the active, dynamic presence of God with us.

The book of Common Prayer says this about the Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the Church even now. Jesus even told his disciples it was better for them that he went away, because then he could send the Spirit--and the Spirit did not have the same physical time-and-space limitations that Jesus had in his incarnation. Jesus was only here physically at one time in history and geographically in one area.

So 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.

The Holy Spirit is the guiding, directing, comforting, healing and loving presence of God with us.

On your sermon notes I have included some **characteristics of the Holy Spirit** to help you understand a little more about the power you have available to you.

I think part of our confusion sometimes comes because we don't know where to look in the Bible to find verses on the Holy Spirit or sadly we don't bother looking in our Bibles at all. I won't go into all of those characteristics today because that would be another whole sermon but you can look them up for yourself later this week and let God through the Holy Spirit speak into your life through these verses.

Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit **thinks**: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us..."(Acts 15:28)

The Holy Spirit **speaks**: "...the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago..." (Acts 1:16)

The Holy Spirit **leads**: "...because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:15)

The Holy Spirit **grieves**: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

The Holy Spirit can be **quenched**: "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt." (I Thessaonians 5:19)

The Holy Spirit **prays**: "...the Holy Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." (Romans 8:26)

Through the centuries, there have been many followers of Christ who were just ordinary Christians.

Nothing spectacular ever happened to them or through them.

Than, as we see in Acts with Peter and John and the early church, their lives are dramatically changed.

No longer ordinary or average, they became men and women of God.

They were bold in the faith and they became instruments of God's power.

Their defeat became victories.

Doubts and fear were turned to assurance and joy.

Their prayers became earth shaking.

They were the ones that Acts 17:6 claimed, "turned the world upside down."

So how come some people seem to experience this power and others do not?

The Bible says there is one God, one baptism, one Spirit.

If there is one Spirit - it is the same Spirit - and He is available to us today.

Then why aren't we all turning our world upside down?

I suggest to you today that it is because we have not invited Jesus to sit on the throne of our lives and therefore release the power of the Holy Spirit to blow in our lives.

Let me explain what I mean.

Recently Kevin and I went sailing with Dale and Karen Katzfey.

We had never been sailing before or at least I had not and Kevin hasn't for years.

Dale and Karen have a wonderful large sailboat.

We took the boat out into the bay and Dale was at the helm – giving us the "crew" our orders to help raise the sails so we could catch the wind.

It was marvelous.

The wind snapped the sails open as we raised them.

The boat started to move forward as the wind filled the sails and we were sailing.

It was a glorious experience for me.

Now what do you think would have happened if Dale had said to me, "Bonita, you go ahead and just sail the boat today, you be the skipper. Here take the helm."

We would not have gone too far or we would have found ourselves in a lot of trouble.

You see Dale and I both had the same wind available to us.

But the difference was who was at the helm.

One of us knew how to release the power of the wind to fill our sails and sail smoothly and the other one of us only knew that the power was there but didn't use it.

I find the same thing happens in my life as well.

I have the power of the Holy Spirit available in my life but so often I do things on my own power.

It is like this.

Before I accepted Christ, I sat at the helm of my life, or on the throne of my life.

Everything I did, I did on my power and it pretty much centered around ME.

What did I want, how would that affect my life.

When I accepted Christ then I let Christ be at the helm, or on the throne.

Then how I lived my life went more like- what would Christ have done here, what would Christ want me to do, how does Christ want to use me to fulfill his purposes?

So I would pray and read my Bible to find those answers through the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction.

Yet I have to admit that I did not often find myself experiencing earth shaking power in my prayer.

You see I am the other woman I mentioned at the beginning of my sermon.

I loved the Lord.

I was even serving the Lord.

But I was not experiencing the abundant life in the Lord.

Here is what I found out – it is what made the difference between me and the other young woman I told you about.

I kept finding myself asking the Lord for direction but I didn't want to get off the throne.

I wanted the answers to be the ones I truly wanted.

And so I found myself knocking Christ off the throne and putting myself back up on it - like I could actually knock Christ off the throne.

It is his throne. He created me, I am his. He was just waiting for me to acknowledge it.

One day I was frustrated and I prayed – Lord I don't want to live like this anymore.

I want the abundant life you came to give me.

I want to live victoriously instead of just exist. I want to find joy in serving you.

I don't know what that means you want me to do, or say, or be, but whatever it is, I am yours.

Please fill me to overflowing with your Spirit and give me that abundant life.

In essence what I said was Lord the throne belongs permanently to you, it always did and now I know that.

Fill me with the Holy Spirit, you lead, you guide, you direct me.

Now I didn't feel the room shake but I did feel my heart quake.

More importantly I found that day by day as I continued in my same life,

I felt a joy, a power and life was more abundant.

My life was the same and yet completely different.

I was experiencing what the early church experienced, what Pastor Chris has been talking about for the last few weeks – **supernatural living in the Holy Spirit.**

A couple of years later I entered the ministry – something I would never have done on my own, and I continue to experience that abundant, supernatural life.

You see when you finally give up the throne to the Lord and say – whatever Lord I am yours and want to be used and led by you, God honors that.

It would be like your child saying to you, “Mom, Dad I want you to help direct my life decisions, I want to do whatever you would like for me to do.”

Oh if only....

But what parent wouldn't then want to guide and direct their child in the very best direction so that their child would live a victorious and abundant life.

Well guess what Friends, that is exactly what your heavenly Father wants.

Romans 12:1-2 says, “Give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy – the kind He can accept...Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his way will really satisfy you.”

A new and different person, filled with the Holy Spirit, and with Christ firmly seated at the center, on the throne of your life.

That is what Peter and John did.

That is what the early church did.

And the Bible says God added to their numbers daily.

That is what Martin Luther did, and John Wesley (who started the Methodist faith)

That is what Mother Teresa, Billy Graham did.

And that is what you and I get to do also.

Filled with the Holy Spirit we are able to:

 speak a new language of love and faith.

 boldly proclaim a new message

 courageously witness

 persevere through trials (which I will speak more about next week)

 and experience earth shaking prayer.

Now let's go back to that early church and Peter and John for a moment in [Acts 4](#).

Let me quickly point out to you some of the characteristics of that earth-shaking prayer they experienced.

Because I want you to know that it is still possible today.

We can experience earth-shaking prayer today.

Vs 23-24a READ

All the church was united in one mind and one heart as they lifted their voices in prayer.

Supernatural POWER is released when we come together in one spirit.

Imagine if you will, what could happen if God's church really got together and united themselves in one accord:

 Perhaps we could: defeat AIDS - end world hunger - offer compassion and help to the abused

Imagine the power Tipp City UMC could experience.

Perhaps we could:

 Feed those who are hungry through the Needy Basket so no one in Tipp was hungry.

 Bring the Good News to those who come here for UPWARD who have never heard it and change their lives not through basketball but through the Word of God.

 Deliver more meals to those who are in need of not only a warm, healthy meal but of love and compassion and knowing that someone cares about them.

 We just recently received a survey that says 35% of Tipp City peoples, and in a surrounding 5 mile radius, do not attend church – perhaps we could reach them, boldly proclaim the Gospel to them, and add to our numbers daily by showing them the life saving blood of Jesus.

Almighty God can turn the winds of opposition into the winds of cooperation when we come together and unite in prayer.

I think that is one of the reasons heaven is so wonderful – because everyone is of one mind and heart.

Earth-shaking prayer **RELIES** on God's rule and power.

In the second part of verse 24 it says, "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them."

Notice that before the church asked God for anything – they acknowledge who he is and what he can do.

How they addressed God revealed what they believed about God.

The word "Lord" in this passage is not just some title of reverence or honor.

It is an admission that God is their absolute ruler, he sits on the throne of their lives.

The faith of the church was that the Lord God was in charge at all times.

Earth-shaking prayer RELIES upon God to be true to his character.

Allow me to quote Pastor Chris and the Bible on God's character:

For the weak – he is strong

For the guilt-ridden – he is merciful

For the grieving – he is the God of all comfort

For the anxious – he is the ever-present help

For the hungry – he is the bread of life

For the thirsty – he is the living water

For the oppressed – he is the mighty deliverer

For the confused – he is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding

For the outcast - he is a friend

For the comfortable – he is the one who searches the heart.

He is God, he is true to his character and he is reliable!

Earth-shaking prayer **ACKNOWLEDGES** Jesus and his saving blood.

Look at verse 27 –**READ**

And again at the end of verse 30 it says, "may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant, Jesus."

This fact was dramatically demonstrated in the lives of the early church.

When the enemies of the Lord saw the way He was fulfilling His promise in the lives of Peter and John, and observed their boldness and the remarkable quality of their lives, they were amazed.

These uneducated, ordinary fishermen were living victorious, supernatural lives.

This fact is still demonstrated today.

There is a song called, "Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet."

The music to it was written by a man named Gavin Bryars, who is not a Christian.

He had been working with his friend on a film about homeless people living in the streets of London.

Many of them were drunks who would break into songs of various sorts.

One homeless man however, did not drink and seemed to have a rather sunny disposition- for a homeless man who had nothing.

They recorded him singing over and over again a song. His voice was untrained but never wavered from pitch.

Gavin looped the first 13 bars of this homeless man's song, preparing to add orchestration to it.

He left the loop running and went to grab lunch one day and when he returned he noticed that everyone in the studio was unusually quiet, some were even crying, as they listened to this homeless man's song play over and over again.

This is what the man says:

“Jesus blood never failed me yet, never failed me yet. Jesus blood never failed me yet. This one thing I know, for He loves me so.”

Although the homeless man died before he ever heard the recording, his song and his message continue to touch thousands of lives today.

Through the purpose of God, the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit –

This homeless man who by all outward appearances did not have anything of value to offer anyone –

boldly proclaimed the power of God and the joy of Christ in his life.

Pretty amazing work for a homeless man, a non-Christian composer and the Holy Spirit don't you think.

Finally Earth-shaking prayer says YES!

Read ACTS 4:31

They preached God's message with boldness.

They were willing to let God have the throne to their lives because they knew that supernatural power is released when **God's people unite in one accord, rely on God to be true to his character, acknowledge Jesus' as Lord and Savior, and says Yes to whatever the Holy Spirit is calling them to do.**

John 14:12-14 states, “The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!”

The Holy Spirit is the wind that filled the sails of the life of the early church and fills the sails of the church today.

He gives us the power to live victorious, supernatural lives and experience earth-shaking prayer in the process.

Prayer that stands firm for the Lord

Prayer that boldly proclaims the Good News

Prayer that seats Christ firmly on the throne of your life

Prayer that loves others as only God can

Prayer that empowers the Holy Spirit in your life

Prayer that changes your life and the lives of others because you are willing to be used by God

Let me ask you:

Who is on your throne today?