

# Our Potential Power

*Upside Down*

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This morning when you hear those phrases that he is a way-maker, that he is a miracle-worker, the one place in the Bible that we naturally gravitate to is what we know as the book of Acts and I want to encourage you this morning to turn with me to the book of Acts 2 and if you're new with us this morning, I want to welcome you in this season of our church's life as we're walking through obviously this very famous section of the Bible but with this purpose and intent, answering the question how is it that the early church who didn't have the resources that we have, didn't have the means that we have, most likely didn't have the populous that we have, how is it that according to chapter 17, verse 6, how did they turn the world upside down? In fact, if we look at the world around us today, I would say there would almost be a unanimous vote in this place that this old world needs some changing, does it not? There are some wrongs that need to be righted and etc., and I think oftentimes we go back to the book of Acts and in particular today as we turn to Acts 2, there is just this natural response to say, "Yeah, but that was back then. God doesn't do that anymore today."

Now I will agree with you that Acts 2 is a one-time historical occasion, it's what we know as the outward birthing of the church of Jesus Christ. Pentecost, 50 days after Passover as we'll read in just a moment, was a Jewish celebration of which the Lord manifested himself in such an incredible way. What we know as Pentecost has never been duplicated but there are certain principles that we see in this story that need to be applied to our own personal lives, they need to be applied to our church's life, they need to be applied to our culture's life because what we need is what we just heard, we need a way made for us. In fact, today we're going to talk about what is our potential power. You know, we hear that word "power" and there's a lot of different analogies and illustrations that come to mind but you may not be aware that the biblical word for power, Jesus said you'll know when the Holy Spirit comes in power, is where we get our modern-day word for dynamite. Notice when we talk about our potential power, it means what does the Lord do in our life to where he can remove obstructions that we can't seem to get out of the way. How is it that the Lord can move in our life where he can create an obstruction that we can't seem to erect. So how is it in our life that we can experience the same power that they did at Pentecost. Now it may not be duplicated in the manner that it was in Acts 2 but we're going to see in just a moment the principles still apply.

Acts 2 beginning in verse 1. I'm going to read very slow and steadily this morning because as you're going to see in a moment, this is probably one of the most misapplied passages in all of the Bible. I want us to hear and read what actually takes place, not what we think takes place. Beginning in verse 1,

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Fast forward to verse 41. It says,

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that

believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Now we read Acts 2 and, of course, this is that great Pentecost event of which if it were not for, we would not be here today celebrating and worshiping as we are. But again, this is a "one-time event." This is the outward birthing of the church of Jesus Christ. How is it, though, that they experienced the power of God, how is it they saw what they saw and you and I can see the exact same things in our lives? Three things that I think they saw on that famous day in Acts 2 that are available to each and every one of us every day of our lives and the first thing is this: they recognized that they were in possession of a very powerful message.

Now I want you to think about Acts 2. We just read it. We typically when we read this passage, we gravitate toward the whole tongue experience, correct? And we always talk about that and we always question it, we debate it, there's been books, classes and such. Can I just state for the record, though, the miracle was in the hearing, not the speaking, but that's another message for another day. But here's what I want to share with you. Peter gets up, he gets up to "preach," does he not? Do you find it interesting that he doesn't turn to the crowd and say, "Guys, did y'all just see that? Did y'all just hear that? Wasn't that incredible?" There's no reference to the experience they just experienced. What does he do in verse 16? "But this is that which the prophet Joel gave us." I find it intriguing that the very first thing that the Apostle Peter does when he stands before this crowd of multiple thousands of people is he opens up the word of God and he reads it. Unwavering. In other words, they had just experienced the experience not just of a lifetime but a one-time historical event and he doesn't allude to who said what, who heard what. He literally opens up the prophet Joel. He's unwavering.

If you and I want to see the power of God in our life, it's not going to be based on our experiences, it's not going to be based on our opinions, it's not going to be based on any of that stuff. It has got to be rooted in unwavering in the word of God. The event of all events and he says, "Let's turn to Joel. We need to read some scripture." Four verses he reads from the prophet Joel and then he shares them with everyone.

It wasn't just unwavering, it was uncompromised. You see, when we use the word to compromise, it means to trade one thing in for another but biblically speaking when we compromise our faith, what we're doing is trading an eternal truth for a temporary blessing. How was it uncompromised? I want you to notice verse 16 again. This could be in the top five most misunderstood verses in all of the Bible. "But this is that." Now 99.9% of the time when you're studying this passage of scripture, people will allude to the fact of, "Yes, what you just heard, what you just experienced is what the prophet Joel was talking about." But they've got the phrase backwards. If I were standing before you

hypothetically and we just experienced what they experienced in chapter 2, my response would not be "this is that," my response would be "that is this."

And there's a step there. Y'all thought Bruce was the only one who could pull that off. I'm glad I've got rubber soles, brother, that's all I've got to say.

We often hear it backwards. If you were to ever have a public speaking engagement where you were going to reference something that just took place, you would never say "this is that," you would always say "that is this." Why is that important? Because the next four verses of Joel are not looking back on the famous Pentecost event, he's actually looking forward. Uncompromised. He did not trade the eternal truth of God for whatever public opinion was because when you start in verse 17, do you know what he's talking about? The Second Coming. I mean, read those verses. The sun is going to go dark. The moon is going to go red. All kinds of plagues.

That's what we see not just in the prophet Joel, we see it in the book of Revelation, we see it toward the end of your Bible. Why is that important? Because there were skeptics in the midst, we'll talk about them in just a moment. There were people that were mocking them, making fun of them. There were people questioning their motives, their message and all those things. Do you know how easy it would have been for Peter just to say, "Well, gentlemen, let's talk this out. And you know, this might not quite be what you think it is." Do you know what he does? He gets up and he opens the Bible to one of the most powerful places about the fact that one day Jesus Christ is going to come back and he's going to judge the sins of humanity. You talk about uncompromised.

Of all the places the Lord could have led him and that is where he reads and that is what he claims and then he begins to tell the whole story from the time that it was prophesied that Jesus would come, his life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, and it's all the way back in verse 33. He ends the sermon and he says, "Oh, by the way, if you need evidence that this is real, don't you remember what you just heard?" In other words, the uncompromised message. You and I live in a world today where we, and I'll use the possessive pronoun, we, the Christian community, are too quick to compromise the message of the Bible for the fad of the day. We are too quick to compromise the word of God for whatever the latest celebration of the day is.

What did they do here in Acts 2? The message was powerful enough, the scripture was enough. They were unwavering and they were uncompromised. But it wasn't just the message, it was also the messengers. You see, it's at this point where we typically say, "Okay, I believe the Bible. I got that. I believe it's powerful. I believe it addresses and overcomes all other communication." That's one thing, it's another thing to "do as James 2 says" and actually live it out. There is a powerful message but there were also powerful messengers.

Go back to verse 4 of chapter 2. It says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Now the question we've got to address is who is the "all" there? Well, if you go back up to the last verse of chapter 1, you discover it's the 12 apostles, Matthias having replaced

Judas, and when you read what we read earlier, it says that he, being Peter, stood up among the 11 and spoke. Who was it that actually "did the speaking" here? It was the apostles. Why is that critical? Because the apostles are declared as being filled with the Holy Ghost. Now that doesn't mean that at some point they had gotten lost and "resaved." In fact, at the end of the gospel of John, Jesus comes to the apostles, he breathes on them, he says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Later in chapter 3 and 4 and in 5, you're going to see other places where it says they were filled with the Holy Spirit and I know there's a lot of different opinions but let me give you what I believe is a very quick biblical analysis of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The day that you got saved, we celebrated just a moment ago, a young lady got saved three weeks ago, the day she got saved, the day I got saved, the day you got saved, you got all the Holy Spirit you're ever going to get. The Holy Spirit does not come in an installment plan. The question is how much of you does the Holy Spirit have? You see, we discover that it wasn't just the message that was unwavering, it was the messengers as well. What are you seeing happening? When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, you're seeing growth, you're seeing maturation, you're seeing the biblical word "sanctification" becoming more holy, more like God. If the apostles needed to grow in their trust in the Lord, how much more do we?

They were unwavering. Here at Pentecost they'd been praying for seven days, the Lord moves mightily. You would think, "Well, that ought to be enough." Then you get to chapter 4 and they have another prayer meeting and it says "and they were filled with the Holy Spirit." Chapter 5, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. What you see is an unwavering growth, a yielding to the Lord. How many of us today would confess that our spiritual life looks more like a roller coaster? There's days where we're high and wonderful and close to the Lord, and there are days that we're not only down in the dumps, we're upside down at the same time, and we have all these swings, these ups and these downs. But you see an unwavering with them in the fact that there was a continued steady dependence. It's one thing to believe the word of God as powerful, it's another to actually trust it and to live it out.

They were unwavering and they were uncompromised. Go to verse 13 of chapter 2, again one of these verses and passages that I think has been taken so many contrary ways. It says, "Others mocking them." Now let's stop there for a moment. These are individuals that are ridiculing them, they're making fun of them, they're harassing them. "These men are full of new wine." Go to verse 15, "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day." Now let's break that down for just a moment. New wine according to the book of Deuteronomy is grape juice. That's all it is. There's no added sugar. There's no fermentation. There's no heat. There's no time. So why is it that Simon Peter would say, "These are not drunken as you suppose, it is but the third hour of the day"? It's 9 o'clock in the morning. Number 1, chronologically that would not be the time that someone would participate in an activity like that. 2. He's saying there's no way they could be. I mean, you can come to a Baptist church and drink all the grape juice we've got at the Lord's Supper and it's not going to do anything to you. I mean, it's just grape juice.

Why is this important? Because they were making fun of them of being something they were not actually possessing. Let me flesh that out for you. When you cannot or you do

not have the ability to argue the facts, when you do not have the evidence on your side, is this not true, you always attack their character, right? Haven't y'all watched the news lately? It doesn't matter what the information is, if you possess the wrong information, you immediately go after character, do you not? You defame them as a person. Let me share with you what's happening here. They are so desperate to dismiss the claim of Jesus Christ that they're attacking the character of his followers even though they know it can't be true. You cannot get drunk on new wine. It's only 9 o'clock in the morning. I know this is shocking in our world today, they're just making it up to try to defame them.

Is that not the world we live in today? How many times will people personally attack you, say things about you, make things up about you, claim things that aren't true, take away things that are true, whatever it may be and what do we discover? They're uncompromised. You notice that nobody left the scene and nobody fled for the hills. They stayed true to who they knew they were in Jesus Christ and they did not allow the very loud voices of their culture to deter them. Listen, when the attacks get personal, you might just have the facts on your side. It was a powerful message, powerful messengers, but a powerful means.

As you look at the totality not just of Acts 2 but also the entire message of the book of Acts, we discover that these individuals were unwavering. In fact, if we go back into chapter 1 that we studied last time, do you remember what Jesus told them to do? He said, "Wait here in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit is going to come upon you and you'll be endowed with power." That's what he told them to do, right? So what did they do? According to Acts 1:14 they got up in the Upper Room, they waited and they waited. The Lord didn't tell them how long to wait, 7 days, 14 days, 40 days. He just said, "Wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Here is what I want you to hear about the unwavering means of these people: they did what Jesus told them to and they didn't add to it or take away. They didn't come up with a, "It's been five days, we need a new plan." You see, that's what Saul did in the Old Testament. Remember King Saul? He had this great battle, this great victory, and there was a sacrifice that needed to be offered and Samuel, in his opinion, was running late, the priest. So what did he do? He offered it up and he actually lost the crown because he got ahead of God. I don't know about you but my personality, I always think God's just a day late and a dollar short. Do you know what I always find out? He's always on time and always has the resources.

They were unwavering. They just did what the Lord told them to do. That's important to the equation because they were uncompromised. What was their source of power? What was their means? What did the Lord tell them to do? Wait. What did they do according to chapter 1, verse 14? They prayed, that's what they did. You know, today we live in a world where you and I have access to an incredible amount of resources and means to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ, to see his church "grow." But let's call it what it is, folks, if you compare where we are today to days past, it's not looking good. In fact, darkness is growing, light is being diminished at least in the public square. Those of us of faith in Jesus Christ are not only being told to be silent, there's times where we're actually being silenced. You do know that was their world too? There was only 120 of them. Whom we know as the Apostle Paul actually had legal orders to eradicate them. Their

situation really wasn't much different than ours and their world got turned upside down, so why isn't ours?

I want to share a story with you that took place about 25 years ago and I don't often do what I'm about to do but I'm actually going to put the source up on the screen. This is a book that was written some years ago that chronicles the story that I'm going to share with you and it's not only this source, there are multiple sources, because I'm going to be completely transparent with you. This is one of those stories that you're going to hear it and go, "Nah, that's not real." Do you know why? Because you're about to hear about a way-maker promise-keeper light in the darkness who moved in a mighty way that we can't fathom.

The story that is shared was in what we know as Southeast Asia, an island off the coast of China. There were two young ladies, they were sisters not just in Christ but they were actually biological sisters. They had become believers in Jesus Christ six months before this story took place. They had heard that there was a missionary conference that was happening. Missionaries from all over the world were going to be gathered there and newfound in their faith and excited about sharing the gospel, they attended. Obviously they hadn't registered as they were supposed to. They weren't a part of the organization and such but they made their way to have conversation and made their way all the way to the individual who actually was leading the conference. And he heard their heart and he said, "Ladies, I appreciate your zeal but this just isn't for you." And they said, "Oh, no, no, but God's told us to go start churches. We want to go and start churches." He said, "Well, that's fine but there are several reasons you can't." And they said, "Well, why?" He said, "Well, number 1, you've only been saved six months. I mean, you're just a new believer and we need you seasoned. You know, it's not easy starting churches. You need to be a little more seasoned." He said, "Second of all, you have no training. You have no formal biblical training, no formal theological training and when you get out in the field, there are so many questions that come up and so many scenarios that happen. You don't have the background. And number 3, where you're saying you want to go is a very dangerous place. Missionaries have been going there for over 100 years and they all come back with a pretty bad report. That's not where I'd start." Well, the zeal of these new believers, they said, "Well, thank you for your advice. We're going to go anyway." And so they left.

Well, as most conferences do, they typically meet like in a bi-annual fashion. Two years later they were gathered up and some of those missionaries who had heard the dialog questioned this man, "What happened to those sisters? What happened to them?" So he made way to get them to the conference. They weren't that far off in the part of the world that they were. They came in looking dejected, very humble. He got kind of smirky. He said, "Ladies, how's the church planting business going?" Not very good, sir. Not very good. He kind of got that smile up and he said, "Oh really? Not as well as you'd hoped?" No, sir. No, sir. He said, "How many churches did you start?" Not very many. He said, "Come on, just tell me, did you start a couple of churches? How many churches did you start?" She said, "Sir, we failed. We only started 30 churches." 30 churches? "Yes, sir, we're very sorry. We're a poor example. We only started 30 churches." He said, "Okay,

you may have started 30 churches but how big are these churches? I mean, how many people?" Oh, not very big. Not very big. "Well, how big?" Oh, very small. Only about 200-220 people. He said, "Now you started 30 churches of 200+ people?" No, sir. That's the smallest church. That's the smallest. "What's the largest?" Oh, not very big. Not very big. You could imagine the bantering went on. He said, "Well, how big is the largest?" Almost 5,000 people. He said, "Let me get this right, you've only been saved less than three years, you have no formal training, you went to a place where other missionaries have failed and you started 30 churches between 2-5,000? How did you do that?" I want to conclude with their response, "We just prayed and did what the Holy Spirit told us to do." End of story.

People, maybe our problem is that we're so busy trying to figure out what the Holy Spirit needs to do that we just need to pray and say, "Holy Spirit, what do you want us to do?" Maybe we've been so busy adding to the equation, the Lord wants us just to remove and say, "Just do as I lead." That, my friends, is power.