



Strength for the Adventure

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Acts 2:1-4

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We are all on the great adventure for which God created us. It's an adventure that is at times challenging, exhilarating, and at other times, actually quite scary. We have asked the first question of adventure, "Who is the Lord of your adventure?" and we know it is Jesus, the Lord who loves us and in whom we trust. Last week in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, we saw the disciples of Jesus were on the cusp of adventure. Jesus told them they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they would be his witnesses throughout the world. They watched him ascend into the clouds and then went to the Upper Room where they were praying like crazy, waiting for the adventure Jesus promised to begin. So, the second question of adventure is, "What are you asking God to do?" We now consider the third question, "What is the source of strength for your adventure?" Today is known as Pentecost Sunday and churches all around the world remember and celebrate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon God's people.

"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak

in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

What unfolds in the rest of the chapter is the amazing movement of God touching people with the wonder of Jesus. Jerusalem was filled with visitors from the known world who suddenly heard people talking in their native tongues, speaking of the mighty works of God. It was so noisy and so chaotic, people thought the speakers were drunk while others were simply amazed, asking, “What does this mean?” Then Peter, Peter who had recently swum 100 yards from a boat in the Sea of Galilee to meet with Jesus, *that* Peter began to speak to the swirling crowd with the ten other apostles standing with him.

“Jesus of Nazareth, with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. We have received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this Spirit that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. The crowd was cut to the heart, and said, ‘What shall we do?’ Peter replied ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you

and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:22-40 selected). Three thousand people received his word, believed in Jesus, and were baptized. Wow! Talk about adventure!

Jesus had said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” and now Jesus has poured out this Spirit on his people giving them strength for their adventure. We might think, “Well they received strength from the Holy Spirit. Who else receives the Holy Spirit and strength from the Spirit? Peter answers, “Every person who repents, who is baptized in the name of Jesus will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you and for your children” (Acts 2:38). That includes you and me! When we trust Jesus, Jesus fills us with his Holy Spirit! The Book of Acts goes on to report the ongoing adventures of the disciples with all their ups and downs, always filled with the Holy Spirit, so we know our own adventures are a Holy Spirit-filled continuation of what God is doing.

It’s interesting to me that Jesus had said, “You shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,” and he didn’t just say, “You shall receive the Holy Spirit.” His focus was on the result of the Spirit’s life inside your life – power. The word translated “power” is *dunamis* from which

we have the word dynamite. *Dunamis* is power, strength, and energy. The disciples needed that *dunamis* power for their adventure and we need it for ours.

Years ago, we did a six-week sermon series here at VPC with the title “Life is Messy.” I remember it because the series ended up going on for nearly a year because the fact that our adventures in life are often messy rang true for so many people in so many ways. Some messes are external like the violent storm Jesus and his twelve disciples encountered on the Sea of Galilee. I recall having trouble opening a car door on a winter’s day. It was frozen shut. When I crawled in from the other side and pushed on the door the latch broke. Messy. I sat at my desk and turned to get the phone, hitting a coffee cup with my arm. As the coffee settled into the rug, a pile of papers decided to slip off the desk for no reason – right on top of the coffee. Messy!

Some messes are external and others are internal. Life can be messy on the inside – inside our minds or in our heart where it’s so easy to feel turmoil. Sometimes messy means miserable, really hard. There is a broken-ness in life and in every person’s life. It’s why I love the Daniel Jernigan song lyrics to our Lord, “You are my strength when I am weak, you are the treasure that I seek. You are my all in all.” The God who loves us is the ultimate source of strength. Our

God has always offered strength for the adventure of life, as messy as those adventures may be.

Asaph: God is the strength of my heart (Psalm 73:26).

Habakkuk: The sovereign Lord is my strength
(Habakkuk 3:19).

Nehemiah: The joy of the Lord is my strength
(Nehemiah 8:2).

God is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46).

But I will sing of your strength (Psalm 59).

Look to the LORD and his strength (Psalm 105).

Moses: The Lord is my strength and my song
(Exodus 15:2).

How about you? Is God your strength and your song?
How about me? Absolutely, Jesus Christ is my strength and song! I love King David's prayer, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty...and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (I Chronicles 29-11-12). God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will strengthen you for whatever your adventure may be! The power of the Holy Spirit was given to those early Christians. That same power is given to you and me. In our messy lives our Lord offers us strength for the adventure, whatever that adventure may be.

So just as those followers of Jesus prayed in the Upper Room, getting ready for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so we may pray in the words of Daniel Iverson’s wonderful song, “Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.” In one of the short, yet significant verses in the Bible, the Apostle Paul tells us, “Be not drunk with wine, for that is excess, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). The verb Paul uses, “be filled,” be filled with the Holy Spirit, tells us four things about our relationship with the Holy Spirit. I remember them with four “p’s” – imPerative, Present, Plural, and Passive.

To say “be filled” is in the *imPerative* simply means it’s a command. Not be filled with the Holy Spirit if you are in the mood or when you think of it or when it’s convenient to you. “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” is something God wants us to be filled with!

“Be filled” is in the *Present* tense, meaning we are all to be filled with the Holy Spirit right now and every now. Moment by moment by moment. Not every now and then, not in special religious moments or in church or when you read your Bible, but in every moment of your adventure of life whether you are singing a hymn, praying, washing the dishes, phoning a friend, mowing the lawn, coping with a

very frustrating situation, or dealing with a scary, uncertain, and messy adventure.

“Be filled” is a *Plural* verb meaning we are all to be filled, that every follower of Christ is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. No exceptions. Being filled with the Spirit isn’t reserved for the Apostle Pauls and Mother Teresas, or other special people you may think of. If you trust in Jesus Christ, you are designed by God to be filled with His Spirit. Period.

So “be filled” is in the imperative, a command, present tense – right now – plural – all of us. Finally, “be filled” is in the *Passive* voice. Active means we can do it, but passive means we cannot do it. I eat the hamburger. I am active. The hamburger is passive. “Be filled” is passive. We do not fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit. We must allow the Spirit to fill us. It’s like a sailboat out on a lake on a windy day. When you raise the sail, there is nothing the sail can do to get the wind to fill it. We open the sail and the wind does the rest. When you open your life to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that Spirit instantly fills your sail. All we do is yield to the Spirit.

How can you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Being filled with the Holy Spirit is not a matter of feelings, not that you might not feel something, but the

filling is a matter of faith, of trusting God to do what God says He will do. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to those who come to him. You can know you are filled with the Spirit when you trust Jesus to fill you. Our life adventures are often messy – messy, wonderful, and worrisome. No matter how you are feeling at the moment in your adventure, the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit fill you as you put your trust in Jesus.

In the wonderful *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis, three children are on a ship that sails into pure darkness. Their adventure takes a grim turn as they encounter “smooth, solid blackness.” “Do we go into this [darkness]?” asked King Caspian. “Not my advice,” his captain replied. However, the valiant mouse Reepicheep said, “Here is as great an adventure as ever I heard of,” and into the darkness they sailed. It became deadly cold and the fear of never escaping grew. Hearts filled with fear. The girl Lucy whispers, “Aslan, Aslan, if ever you loved us at all, send us help now.” Aslan in the fictional world of Narnia has the same role as Jesus in our real world.

Suddenly a beam of light lit the ship in the middle of the darkness and something approached that looked like a cross and then an airplane and then a kite. Finally, as it flew lower they saw it was an albatross, a bird that is a sign of hope. It

circled the mast three times and “called out in a strong sweet voice what seemed to be words though no one understood them... except Lucy knew that as it circled the mast it had whispered to her, ‘Courage dear heart,’ and the voice, she felt sure, was Aslan’s, and with the voice a delicious smell breathed in her face.” And the ship shot into sunlight and a new future.

Whatever your adventure may be – pleasant, even wonderful, or worrisome on a ship sailing into solid darkness, the Spirit of God fills you as you trust Jesus, lights your way, gives you strength to face what comes and whispers in your ear, “Courage, dear heart. I am with you, I love you! Always!” Amen!