

## **“THAT OLD TIME RELIGION”**

# ***“The Pathway to Power”***

## **Scripture Reading – Acts, 1:1-8**

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*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit”.*

*So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.*

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***‘Jesus told the disciples, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”.’***

**Luke, 24:46-49, NIV**

**This series, based on THE BOOK OF ACTS, is entitled ‘THAT OLD TIME RELIGION’.**

The reason I want to call this series ‘THAT OLD TIME RELIGION’ is because we need to look back in order that we might really look forward. The ‘old time religion’ needs to become the ‘new time religion’, because it is the ‘all time religion’. If we get back to the basics of life in the Early Christian Church, we will understand what the Holy Spirit can do in our hearts and lives today.

**Vince Lombardi wanted to ‘get back to the basics’.**

The legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers did not like to lose any game of American Football. On one occasion, after losing a game because of some foolish mistakes; a game that they could not afford to lose, the coach said very little on the journey home. He said little on the bus to the airport and less still on the airplane journey. The next day at team practice, with all of the players assembled, he reached into a canvas bag, pulled out its contents and said, “Gentlemen, this is a football”.

**Billy Graham wanted to ‘get back to the basics’.**

When Billy Graham went to a particular city some time ago, for a revival crusade, there was a preacher there who did not want him to come. The preacher said, “*We do not want that man here in our city. He will set evangelism back fifty years*”. When Billy Graham heard this he said, “*I do not want to set evangelism back fifty years; I want to set it back two thousand years*”.

**THE BOOK OF ACTS is the story of success; the story of a church triumphant.**

It is the story of a small group of uncultured and unlearned people with meagre resources – very little money, no prestige, no magnificent church buildings. This small group of people went out to tell the story of a publicly executed Jew. They went out against three great obstacles – the imperial might of the Romans, the intellectual sophistication of the Greeks, and the religious bigotry of the Jews. They turned the world inside out and upside down for Jesus Christ.

**Luke wrote the third gospel and THE BOOK OF ACTS.**

There are only three references to him in THE NEW TESTAMENT. We know that he was a doctor, a historian (obviously), and a Gentile – the only Gentile author, in fact, in THE NEW TESTAMENT. Luke was one of Paul's most valued helpers and loyal friends, for he was Paul's companion in his Roman jail. Luke gives us the only account of what took place in the Early Christian Church. It is because of his record that we see the growth of the church and the amazing triumph of faith in the face of almost overwhelming adversity and opposition.

*‘One cannot spend several months in close study of this book without being profoundly stirred and, to be honest, disturbed. The reader is stirred because he is seeing Christianity, the real thing, in action for the first time in human history. Here we are seeing the Church in its first youth, valiant and unspoiled, a body of ordinary men and women joined in an unconquerable fellowship never before seen on earth. The reader is also disturbed, for surely this is the Church as it was meant to be. It is vigorous and flexible, for these are the days before it ever became fat and short of breath through prosperity, or muscle-bound by over organisation. These men did not make acts of faith – they believed; they did not say their prayers – they prayed. They did not hold conferences on medicine – they healed the sick. By modern standards they may have been naïve, but because of their very simplicity, because of their readiness to believe, to obey, to give, to suffer, and, if necessary, to die, the Spirit of God found that he could work in them and through them, and so they turned the world upside down.’*

***“THE YOUNG CHURCH IN ACTION”, J B Phillips***

*‘The disciples of the Early Church, whose acts are recorded in this book, were not merely men of words and ideas, they were men of action. There is bold and dramatic movement from Jerusalem and its upper rooms to Rome and its prisons. We see a growing group of men and women, filled with the dynamic power of new life. Here are heroic adventures and deeds done for Christ. All of this stems from Pentecost and THE BOOK OF ACTS becomes the story of the Holy Spirit in the church in terms of faith and life, doctrine and action.’*

***“THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES”, Roy Laurin***

***The Acts of the Apostles is the story of a church on fire with evangelism and growth...***

## **“THE PATHWAY TO POWER”**

## 1. RECOGNISE HIS PRESENCE IN YOU

*‘In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.’*

**Acts, 1:1-2, NIV**

### Recognise the presence of Jesus in your life.

Such a statement is so simple. Perhaps you are wondering how such a statement is earth shaking. However, this is more than just a phrase. The fact that Jesus is present in your life is one of the most vital, dynamic, electrifying, earth shaking thoughts that you can ever have.

*‘The ‘FORMER BOOK’ referred to is ‘The Gospel of Luke’ in which Luke told the story of what Jesus began to do and teach while he was on earth. ‘The Acts of the Apostles’ picks up the account by telling what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Church on earth. The Gospel of Luke tells of Christ’s ministry on earth in a physical body, while Acts tells of his ministry from heaven through his mystical, spiritual body, the church.’*

**Warren W Wiersbe**

### Every Christian needs to move out of Luke’s Gospel and into Acts.

Knowing about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is enough for salvation but not for Spirit-empowered service. We must identify ourselves with him as our ascended Lord and allow him to work through us in the world. The church is not simply an organisation engaged in religious work; it is a divine organism, the Body of Christ on earth, through which his life and power must operate. Jesus died for the lost world; we must live to bring that world to Christ.

*‘I once heard of some cows who were out grazing one day as a milk wagon went past. On the side of that big milk tank it gave the name of the dairy and its advertisement read, “Our milk is grade A, sanitised, pasteurised, homogenised, vitamin enriched, and from contented cows”. One cow said to the other one, “It makes you feel inadequate doesn’t it?”.’*

### Jesus has given us a mission which seems impossible.

The Great Commission calls on us to make disciples of all nations. How are we going to be able to do that? I feel so inadequate when I look at the task God has called us to do. When we look at The Great Commission and consider what our Lord has told us to do, and when we feel so inadequate about ourselves, we need to remember that Jesus said, “UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH”. Jesus did not say we would build his church. Jesus said he would build his church. The great ability that you need is availability. Bringing the world to Christ is not your responsibility. It is your response to his ability.

### Whose ‘acts’ are they anyway?

In my Bible, it reads across the top ‘ACTS’. That title is not part of the inspired text; it was put there by the publisher. Some publishers call the book ‘THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES’ and William Barclay sates that the correct title should be ‘ACTS OF APOSTOLIC MEN’. Nonetheless, what we are looking at is not specifically the acts of the Holy Spirit but the acts of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke wrote his gospel to show what Jesus started to do, but in this second volume, he is showing what Jesus continues to do.

### Jesus does not want is to do anything for him.

It takes great spiritual maturity to recognise that Jesus wants to do something through us. Young Christians especially often set out wanting to do something for the Lord. It is quite an exciting journey, but we all need to discover the life-changing truth that Jesus wants to work in and through us.

*Our Christian experience commenced with the miracle of the new birth.*

*Our Christian experience concludes with the miracle of the translation of the rapture.*

*Our Christian experience continues with the miracle of Christ in you the hope of glory.*

***‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’***

**Galatians, 2:20, NIV**

*‘There was a preacher in Kentucky who used to keep on his desk an old leather glove. Every Sunday before he would go out to preach, he would take that old glove off the desk and would slip his hand into the glove and flex it several times. Then he would take the glove off and put it on his desk before going out and preach. Someone asked him, “Why do you do that?” He replied, “To remind me of this vital lesson: the glove is absolutely impotent and powerless until my hand is slipped into it. Then I say ‘Oh God, as my hand has activated this glove, I want you Lord Jesus to activate my life. And I want you Lord to enter into me and inhabit my humanity and live your life through me’.”’*

### The reason why the Church did what they did was because Jesus did it.

*“Lord, I can’t. You never said I could, but you can and you always said you would.”*

## 2. RECEIVE HIS PROMISE TO YOU

***‘On one occasion, while Jesus was eating with the disciples, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit”.’***

**Acts, 1:4-5, NIV**

### Not only is it foolish, but it is wicked to attempt to do God’s work without God’s power.

Some Christians say that we need to continue to wait for the Holy Spirit to come today before we even set out to attempt to do anything for Jesus. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it is out dated. In fact, it is nearly two thousand years out of date!

Christians who claim we should wait have missed out on the truth of the Holy Spirit’s Pentecostal presence and power. Their waiting is often merely an excuse not to be engaged in the work of God today at all.

***‘Jesus told the disciples, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”.’***

**Luke, 24:46-49, NIV**

**The promise of the Father is spiritual power through the Holy Spirit.**

We do not have to wait anymore because the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an accomplished fact. Nowhere in the Bible is the Christian commanded to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. Instead, we are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

***‘Be filled with the Spirit.’***

**Ephesians, 5:18, NIV**


**At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus.**

We receive the Holy Spirit when we receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour. This marks the beginning of the Christian experience. We cannot be Christians without his Spirit, we cannot be joined to Christ without his Spirit, we cannot be adopted as his children without his Spirit, and we cannot be in the body of Christ except by the Spirit. The Spirit is the power of our new lives. He begins a lifelong process of change as we become more like Christ. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us become more like Christ.

*We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have but with how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to his leading and draw constantly on his power...*

 **The power of the Holy Spirit will enlighten you.**

I do not know where to go. I do not know what to do. I do not know what to say. Jesus said he will guide me, and he does through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

 **The power of the Holy Spirit will enable you.**

*“Lord, I can’t. You never said I could, but you can and you always said you would.”*  
It is the Holy Spirit that bestows gifts upon you as you seek to build up the Body of Christ. These spiritual gifts are poured out upon us as he sees fit, but their use is absolutely essential for the welfare of his Church.

 **The power of the Holy Spirit will encourage you.**

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Counsellor, the encourager. He is the One who comes alongside you as the ‘PARACLETE’ – someone who gives us strength and encourages us to get the task done.

**These First Christians were going to face persecution.**

There was not an easy road. There were going to be heartaches and tears. Some of them were going to be physically threatened. Some of them were going to be killed. But they had the power to live for Christ and die for Christ because the Holy Spirit of God had come upon them.

**Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary.**

That power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority. The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfil their mission. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life.

*‘When we rely upon organisation, we get what organisation can do. When we rely upon education, we get what education can do. When we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. But when we rely upon the Holy Spirit, we get what only God can do.’*

**A C Dixon**

### **3. RESPOND TO HIS PROGRAMME FOR YOU**

***‘Jesus said to the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.’***

**Acts, 1:8, NIV**

**The disciples wanted to talk about Bible prophecy.**

They wanted to know if Jesus would now restore the Kingdom to Israel. However, Jesus wanted to talk about proclamation. Jesus wanted the disciples to get their heads out of the clouds of prophecy, and get their feet on the paths of witnessing and soul winning.

A good witness is one who knows something first-hand through their own experience, and who can bring that truth to the attention of others. It involves both an experience and a testimony.

*‘There is a story told about a man who was accused of some wrongdoing and was brought before a judge. When the judge asked if he had a lawyer to represent him, the man answered, “No, I cannot afford one”. The judge replied, “Well, do not worry about that, I will appoint one to represent you, and I will choose a really good one”. The man answered, “I appreciate that, Judge, but if you really want to appoint someone to help me, what I need most is not a really good lawyer, but several good and reliable witnesses”.’*

**James W Moore**

God does not need a couple of good lawyers trying to prove his existence, or the truth of creation, or defending his ways to a lost humanity.

What the Lord does require is this: a number of good witnesses that are willing to tell others what the Almighty has done for them, believing that he can do it for others today.

*‘We who proclaim the Gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish goodwill between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.’*

**A W Tozer**

### **If Christ has done anything for you then you are to witness to it.**

You are to tell about it. You are to share the love of Jesus. Anybody who is saved can be a witness. Do not tell me that you cannot be a witness. If you cannot witness are you saved? Can you not tell how you were saved? Can you not tell what happened to you? Perhaps you have not seen or heard anything and that is the reason why you cannot be a witness.

### **However, I want to remind you the greatest ability is availability.**

Just simply saying, *"Lord Jesus, you inhabit my humanity. Lord Jesus, in the Holy Spirit of God, you have given me power and now I am going to be a witness for you to share the saving love of Jesus".*

### **In the Greek, the word for 'WITNESS' is the same word as 'MARTYR'.**

A martyr is somebody who has been killed for the cause or name of Christ. Do not make the mistake of thinking that there are no Christian martyrs for the faith during these days. More people have died for the cause of Christ in the last thirty years than those who died from Pentecost up to the last 30 years. In other words, more people have died for Jesus Christ in the last thirty years than all the history of the Christian Church prior to that time.

You do not have to die physically to die to your pride. You do not have to die physically to die to your ambitions. You do not have to die physically to die to your ego and say, *"Lord Jesus, I want to obedient to you. I want to be a witness. And I want to start in my Jerusalem".*

***'Jesus said to the disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".'***

**Acts, 1:8, NIV**

### **Witnessing must always start in Jerusalem, but it cannot end there.**

When Frances Cachelin was in charge of The Salvation Army's work in the United Kingdom, he asked would-be officers what they were doing in their home church. His viewpoint was that if they were not winning souls in Jerusalem it would be unwise to let them travel into Judea.

*'A man came to a foreign mission board and said, 'I want to be a missionary'. They interviewed him and asked, "What are you doing for Jesus here?" He replied, "Not much of anything". They said, "Well please, for God's sake, don't go overseas and do it. Do not export it".'*

### **Witnessing must always start in Jerusalem, but it does not end there.**

*We begin in Jerusalem and then in Judea and in Samaria and then to the ends of the earth...*

***Edward Kimball**, a Sunday School teacher, went into a shoe store to witness to a clerk, a 19-year-old boy who was in his class. Kimball laid a trembling hand on his shoulder and told him about Jesus. The young lad received Christ in his heart. He was saved.*

*The shoe clerk was **Dwight L Moody**. He was one of the greatest evangelists that God ever placed on earth. He started out in Chicago teaching boys and girls in Sunday School,*

*where he won many of them to Christ. He was a layman, never ordained, but he was so powerful when preaching the gospel that he was invited over to England to preach.*

*In England, Moody preached at the Church of **Frederick B Meyer**, a cultured Englishman who had to sit and listen as Moody murdered the King's English. Meyer was ashamed he had invited this uncouth, uncultured American, but there was no denying that the power of God was upon his preaching. When Meyer was having tea with one of the ladies in his church, he asked her if everything was going well with her. He was amazed when he heard that Moody's impact had helped her win every girl in her Sunday School Class to Jesus. F B Meyer said, "I learned something that day about the language of the human soul. It transformed my life".*

*Frederick B Meyer went to the USA to preach at a college there. Whilst he was speaking on the subject of 'SURRENDER', he said to the students, "If you are not willing to give everything to Jesus Christ would you at least tell him that you are willing to be made more willing?" One student, **Wilber Chapman**, said, "Oh God, that is me! I haven't been willing. God, I'm willing to be made more willing".*

*God took **Wilber Chapman** at his word and made him willing. Chapman, a great evangelist, needed a helper so he asked a member of the YMCA, an ex-professional baseball player named **Billy Sunday**. When Chapman was too tired to carry on, Billy Sunday took over and had a worldwide ministry, impacting the lives of millions around the world.*

*Billy Sunday went to Charlotte, North Carolina in 1924 to hold a revival crusade. There was such a mighty moving of God's power that a prayer meeting commenced and continued right to and through the depression. They prayed that God would send another revival to Charlotte that would shake the city and the world.*

*As a result, **Mordecai Ham** went to Charlotte in North Carolina for another crusade. During that crusade, whilst Ham was preaching, a young, tall, sixteen year old farm lad came forward to give his heart to Jesus Christ. His name was **Billy Graham**. He has preached to kings and princes around the world. What impact he has had!*

### **But how did all this start?**

Trace it back to a Sunday School teacher named Mr Kimball who got serious about witnessing and soul winning and told a pupil about Jesus.

You never know what impact you will have when you tell someone about Jesus and bring a soul to Christ!

*'Our work is salvation. We believe in salvation, and we have salvation. We are not mere sentimentalists or theory people; we tell what we have heard and seen and handled and experienced of the word of life and the power of God. We aim at salvation. We want this and nothing short of this, and we want this right off. My brothers, my comrades, soul saving is our avocation, the great purpose and business of our lives. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God, let us be Salvationists indeed.'*

**William Booth**