**The Unstoppable Spirit**

Acts 2:1-13

**God’s plan is unstoppable**. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem “until they were clothed with power from on high.” He promised the Holy Spirit to empower, comfort and guide them. ***God’s promise could not be stopped*** - and the story of Acts is the fulfillment of that promise.

The disciples WERE witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the known world of their time. But they could never have done this on their own. **They needed the Holy Spirit**. ***So the first command of Jesus was not to GO but to WAIT.***

We need to hear this instruction today! Here are the last words of Jesus in Luke’s gospel:

“And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. ***But stay in the city*** until you are clothed with power from on high.” Luke 24:49

God will fulfill all of His promises. ***But He calls us to wait upon Him*** - to exercise our faith in **PATIENCE** - to trust in His timing and fix our hearts and minds on Him. How many of us love praying for patience? How many of us have actively warned younger believers on the dangers of praying for patience?

We are such an instant culture. We don’t like to wait for anything. I quote Indigo Montoya all the time - “I hate waiting… I don’ suppose you cann’a speed things up?” *The Princess Bride* touches on every experience in life! Luke restates the command to wait in Acts 1:

“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to ***wait for the promise of the Father***… ‘You will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now.’” Acts 1:4-5

Oh, **we have to learn to wait**. We need to strengthen the muscle of faith and trust God enough to be patient. We want to see revival. We want to see the miraculous, dramatic move of God. We know in our heads that revival always come in answer to prayer - patient, enduring, long-suffering prayer. But we don’t want to do that work - we just want the payoff. ***“Instant Revival!”*** Like the Ramen noodles version of revival.

Join me in Acts 2 and we will see **six steps to live in the power of the Spirit**. They come in pairs. The first pair is to gather and wait.

**How to live in the power of the Spirit:**

1. Gather & **Wait**

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.” Acts 2:1

This refers to **the 12 apostles** - having just added Matthias to their number - staying all together in that upper room. They were following Jesus’ instructions to STAY and WAIT. This was now ***50 days after the crucifixion***. Pentecost meant 50 days, following the Passover. Jesus appeared to the disciples over 40 days, so this was a 10 day prayer huddle, completing a 50 day season of waiting.

That’s a long time. We have just lived through a long season of stay at home orders and some of us have done a full **14 day quarantine**. Our son, Caleb, went off to College in West Palm Beach and on his third day there got COVID-19 and went into a 14 day quarantine. What a way to start college! Welcome to your new school, good look learning names as everyone is wearing a mask - oh, and now you need to stay in this room by yourself for two weeks. Quite a lesson in patience!

The disciples had a ***50 day quarantine*** in that upper room. At first, they were terrified that the Romans would find them and kill them as they had Jesus. They didn’t understand what had happened and thought Jesus had failed. Then He appeared to them and they realized the cross had always been the plan. But still they battled fear and still they struggled to understand. So Jesus patiently visited them and taught them, preparing them - and urging them to WAIT. *“When the Holy Spirit comes, this will all start to make sense… He will guide you into all truth. He will remind you of everything I have taught you.”*

This is the theological reality - ***the Holy Spirit changes EVERYTHING***. Pentecost marked a totally new beginning for the disciples and really for the whole world. Before the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples were a confused, fearful and divided group of guys. After the Spirit came they became a clear, bold, unified team. This is why Jesus told them, “It is better for you that I go - so I can send you the Holy Spirit! Then ***you will do even greater things*** than I have been doing!”

The Holy Spirit’s coming changed history forever. And you can see that in your life as well. Before you called on Jesus to save you, you did not have the Holy Spirit. So you were confused about the truth, controlled by your own desires and sins and utterly powerless to change. After you put your faith in Jesus - whether it was at age 3, age 30 or age 85 - your whole life changed! Jesus took your old, sinful, selfish heart and replaced it with a ***new, holy, God-loving heart!*** Instead of being filled up with and focused on sin, suddenly your heart and mind were tuned to spiritual truth - you could understand and even DESIRE a relationship with God. The Bible started to make sense to you.

The Holy Spirit changes everything. He changed history. He changed your life, as He did mine. And **He changes our day to day experience** as well - IF we let Him. This is why the first steps to a Spirit filled life are to GATHER and to WAIT.

This confronts two common sins we commit - both **impatience and independence**. We need each other. We need to gather together with other believers - for worship, fellowship, encouragement, accountability, prayer and ministry. We desperately need each other. We need to continue to gather in large and small groups. If you want to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in you and working through you, you need to gather with other believers. Don’t believe the lie that you can make it on your own. You can’t. No one can. We need each other.

And one of the main things we need each other for, is to WAIT - to support one another in the waiting. Look back at Acts 1:

**How to live in the power of the Spirit:**

1. Gather & **Wait**

“All these ***with one accord*** were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” Acts 1:14

The 11 apostles were obeying Jesus by gathering together - not just unified in body but also unified in spirit - “with one accord.” This transitions us to our second set of steps.

**How to live in the power of the Spirit:**

1. Worship & **Pray**

“All these with one accord were ***devoting themselves to prayer***, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” Acts 1:14

As we gather together to wait on the Lord and as we wait on him individually, what we are called to do is to worship and pray. **This was Jesus’ pattern** and it must be our pattern. Jesus “often withdrew to lonely places to pray.” He did this at key moments in his ministry and at regular times.

We will see this pattern over and over in Acts - ***prayer precedes the powerful acts of God.***

* Acts 1 prayer comes before Acts 2 outpouring of the Spirit.
* Acts 4 prayer comes before and leads into the generous sharing of resources among the early believers.
* Acts 6 prayer among leaders leads to the appointment of the first deacons to care for widows.
* Acts 13 prayer leads to the sending of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Just to name a few examples.

This has also been **the pattern in history**. A movement of PRAYER always precedes a movement of REVIVAL.

<https://factsandtrends.net/2014/02/20/prayer-and-revival-yesterday-and-today/>

In 1707 there was a part of modern Poland called **Silesia**. Lutheran believers there were being forced to become Catholic. In these fearful and stressful times, it was the CHILDREN who led the way! School kids began to gather together to pray, sing hymns and read psalms. Afraid of Catholic punishment, their parents tried to keep them home but the kids would climb out of their windows and race to the field with their praying friends.

<https://makinghistorynow.wordpress.com/2020/06/16/praying-children-started-a-stream-of-revival-in-silesia/>

Some Catholic children began to join in the prayer times. Parents began to gather around the kids as they prayed, forming a circle with their hands. One local official brought a whip to break up the meeting but when he heard the children praying he could not use it.

These small gatherings of children grew into what they came to call ***“Camp meetings,”*** of hundreds and eventually thousands of believers in those early 1700s. Historians trace the beginnings of the revival movement in Europe that spilled across to America in the First Great Awakening to those prayer meetings in Silesia, led by children.

Many studies have been done on this. You cannot force God’s hand or manipulate revival (though many have tried.) ***There is not a formula*** for getting enough people or believing hard enough. But there is a common thread that runs through all prayer that has led to revival.

**How to live in the power of the Spirit:**

1. Worship & **Pray** - with brokenness and desperation

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

What united the disciples in that upper room? ***Brokenness and desperation***. They were all guilty of Peter’s failure - they just weren’t as vocal and brazen about denying Jesus. They all fled. They all hid in terror. None of them stood up for Jesus. None of them stood firm in confident faith in His victory. They were all broken over their sin, weakness and failure.

And they were all desperate for a move of God. They had no illusions that they could do anything on their own. They knew that Jesus’ words were true, “apart from me you can do nothing.”

Do we have these in our prayer times? ***Are we a people marked by humble brokenness and serious desperation?*** Or are we the opposite - are we a proud, independent, self-reliant people who are pretty content with our comfortable lives? We should not expect a significant move of God until we ask Him to break our hearts and humble us before Him.

There is one more point to make, with the final two steps.

**How to live in the power of the Spirit:**

1. Listen & **Obey**

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:4

12 apostles. All filled with the Spirit at the same time. All start preaching AT THE SAME TIME. This was not a miracle of PREACHING but **a miracle of HEARING**. If 12 preachers were going in the same language you would struggle to hear any of them. 12 preachers in 12 languages? Good luck!

But the people heard and they understood. It was a work of God.

The point for our purposes is that when they were filled, ***the apostles SPOKE***. Were they so overcome by the Spirit that they lost all will and freedom of their own? I don’t think so. This was a uniquely powerful moment for all of them. But I believe it was the same in type of all other sermons in the New Testament, different only in POWER because it was the first outpouring.

**If you want to be filled with the Spirit**, there is no option but to wait on the Lord, to worship and to pray with a heart to LISTEN and then a will to RESPOND in obedience. We get stuck at all of these points. We don’t gather. We don’t wait. We don’t worship, really. We don’t pray, hardly. We don’t listen. And we don’t obey. But I think the primary break down is on this last one - we simply don’t obey. The Holy Spirit has not suddenly gotten bad at communicating with us. We have simply learned to tune Him out, to place Him on the back burner.

I am going to close today with a long story in the words of **Duncan Campbell** - a preacher from Scotland in the 1950s. You’ll see how his experience in the islands of northern Scotland illustrates all of these points and ties them together.

<http://www.revival-library.org/index.php/pensketches-menu/historical-revivals/the-hebrides-revival>

“I would like to make it perfectly clear that I did not bring revival to the Hebrides… Revival was there before I ever set foot on the island. It began in a gracious awareness of God sweeping through the parish of Barvas.” Duncan Campbell, 1968

“When I speak of revival, I am not thinking of high-pressure evangelism. I am not thinking of crusades or of special efforts convened and organized by man… Revival is a moving of God in the community and suddenly the community becomes God conscious before a word is said by any man representing any special effort.” Duncan Campbell, 1968

There are two things that I would like to say in speaking about the revival in the Hebrides. First, I would like to make it perfectly clear that I did not bring revival to the Hebrides. It has grieved me beyond words to hear people talk and write about the man who brought revival to the Hebrides. My dear people, I didn't do that. Revival was there before I ever set foot on the island. It began in a gracious awareness of God sweeping through the parish of Barvas.

Then I would like to make it perfectly clear what I understand of revival. When I speak of revival, I am not thinking of high-pressure evangelism. I am not thinking of crusades or of special efforts convened and organized by man. That is not in my mind at all. Revival is something altogether different from evangelism on its highest level. Revival is a moving of God in the community and suddenly the community becomes God conscious before a word is said by any man representing any special effort.

Now I am sure that you will be interested to know how, in November 1949, this gracious movement began on the island of Lewis. **Two old women**, one of them 84 years of age and the other 82-one of them stone blind, were greatly burdened because of the appalling state of their own parish. It was true that not a single young person attended public worship. ***Not a single young man or young woman went to the church.*** They spent their day perhaps reading or walking but the church was left out of the picture. And those two women were greatly concerned and they made it a special matter of prayer.

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Isaiah 44:3

A verse gripped them: ***"I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground."*** They were so burdened that both of them decided to spend so much time in prayer twice a week. On Tuesday they got on their knees at 10 o'clock in the evening and remained on their knees until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning--two old women in a very humble cottage.

One night, **one of the sisters had a vision**. Now remember, in revival, God works in wonderful ways. A vision came to one of them, and in the vision she saw the church of her fathers crowded with young people. Packed to the doors, and a strange minister standing in the pulpit. And she was so impressed by the vision that she sent for the parish minister. And of course he knowing the two sisters, knowing that they were two women who knew God in a wonderful way, he responded to their invitation and called at the cottage.

That morning, one of the sisters said to the minister, "You must do something about it. And I would suggest that you call your office bearers together and that you spend with us at least two nights in prayer in the week. Tuesday and Friday if you gather your elders together, you can meet in a barn-a farming community, **you can meet in a barn-and as you pray there, we will pray here**. Well, that was what happened, the minister called his office bearers together and seven of them met in a barn to pray on Tuesday and on Friday. And the two old women got on their knees and prayed with them.

Well that continued for some weeks--indeed, I believe ***almost a month and a half***. Until one night; now this is what I am anxious for you to get a hold of--one night they were kneeling there in the barn, pleading this promise, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, floods upon the dry ground" when one young man, ***a deacon in the church***, got up and read **Psalm 24**.

"Who shall ascend the hill of God? Who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity or sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing of the Lord." Psalm 24:3-5

And then that young man closed his Bible. And looking down at the minister and the other office bearers, he said this-maybe crude words, but perhaps not so crude in our Gaelic language-he said, "It seems to me to be so much humbug to be praying as we are praying, to be waiting as we are waiting, if we ourselves are not rightly related to God." And then he lifted his two hands-and I'm telling you just as the minister told me it happened-he lifted his two hands and prayed, ***"God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?*** " But he got no further.

That young man fell to his knees and then fell into a trance. Now don't ask me to explain this because I can't. He fell into a trance and is now lying on the floor of the barn. And in the words of the minister, at that moment, he and his other office bearers were ***gripped by the conviction that a God-sent revival must ever be related to holiness***, must ever be related to Godliness. Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? The man that God will trust with revival-that was the conviction.

When that happened in the barn, **the power of God swept into the parish**. And an awareness of God gripped the community such as hadn't been known for over 100 years. ***An awareness of God-that's revival, that's revival***.

“And an awareness of God gripped the community such as hadn't been known for over 100 years. ***An awareness of God - that's revival***.” Duncan Campbell, 1968

And on the following day, the looms were silent, little work was done on the farms as men and women gave themselves to thinking on eternal things gripped by eternal realities.

**Now, I wasn't on the island when that happened**. But, again, one of the sisters sent for the minister. And she said to him, "I think you ought to invite someone to the parish. I cannot give a name, but God must have someone in His mind for we saw a strange man in the pulpit, and that man must be somewhere." Well, the minister that week was going to one of our great conventions in Scotland. At that convention he met a young man who was a student in college and knowing that this young man was a God-fearing man, a man with a message, he invited him to the island. "Won't you come for 10 days-a 10-day special effort? We have had so many of them over the past couple of years, but we feel that something is happening in the parish and we would like you to attend."

This minister said, "No, I don't feel that I am the man, but quite recently there has been a very remarkable move in Glasgow under the ministry of a man by the name of Campbell. I would suggest that you send for him." ***Now at that time I was in a college in Edinburgh.*** It wasn't very easy for me to leave but it was decided that I should go for 10 days. I was on the island within 10 days.

I shall never forget the night that I arrived at the piers in the mail steamer. I was standing in the presence of the minister whom I had never seen and two of his elders that I never knew. The minister turned to me and said, "I know Mr. Campbell that you are very tired-you have been traveling all day by train to begin with and then by steamer. And I am sure that you are ready for your supper and ready for your bed. But I wonder if you would be prepared to address a meeting in the parish church at 9 o'clock tonight on our way home. It will be a short meeting and then we will make for the manse and you will get your supper and your bed and rest until tomorrow evening." ***Well, it will interest you to know that I never got that supper.***

We got to the church about quarter to nine to find about 300 people gathered. I would say about 300 people. And I gave an address. Nothing really happened during the service. It was a good meeting. A sense of God, a consciousness of His Spirit moving but nothing beyond that. So I pronounced the benediction and we were leaving the church I would say about a quarter to eleven.

Just as I am walking down the aisle, along with this young deacon who read the Psalm in the barn. He suddenly stood in the aisle and looking up to the heavens he said, ***"God, You can't fail us. God, You can't fail us. You promised to pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground-God, You can't fail us!"***

Soon He is on his knees in the aisle and he is still praying and then he falls into a trance again. Just then the door opened--it is now eleven o'clock. The door of the church opens and **the local blacksmith** comes back into the church and says, "Mr. Campbell, something wonderful has happened. Oh, we were praying that God would pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground and listen, He's done it! He's done it!"

When I went to the door of the church I saw a congregation of approximately 600 people. Six hundred people--where had they come from? What had happened? I believe that that very night ***God swept in Pentecostal power-the power of the Holy Ghost.*** And what happened in the early days of the apostles was happening now in the parish of Barvas.

Over 100 young people were at **the dance in the parish hall** and they weren't thinking of God or eternity. God was not in all of their thoughts. They were there to have a good night when suddenly the power of God fell upon the dance. The music ceased and in a matter of minutes, the hall was empty. They fled from the hall as a man fleeing from a plague. And they made for the church. They are now standing outside. Oh, yes--they saw lights in the church. That was a house of God and they were going to it and they went. Men and women who had gone to bed rose, dressed, and made for the church. Nothing in the way of publicity--no mention of a special effort except and intonation from the pulpit on Sabbath that a certain man was going to be conducting a series of meetings in the parish covering 10 days. But God took the situation in hand--oh, He became His own publicity agent. ***A hunger and a thirst gripped the people.*** 600 of them now are at the church standing outside.

This dear man, the blacksmith, turned to me and said, ***"I think that we should sing a psalm."*** And they sang and they sang and they sang verse after verse. Oh, what singing! What singing! And then the doors were opened and the congregation flocked back into the church.

Now the church is crowded--a church to seat over 800 is now packed to capacity. It is now going on towards midnight. I managed to make my way through the crowd along the aisle toward the pulpit. I found a young woman, **a teacher in the grammar school**, lying prostrate on the floor of the pulpit praying, "Oh, God, is there mercy for me? Oh, God, is there mercy for me? " She was one of those at the dance. But she is now lying on the floor of the pulpit ***crying to God for mercy***.

That meeting continued until 4 o'clock in the morning. I couldn't tell you how many were saved that night but of this I am sure and certain that at least ***5 young men who were saved in that church that night are today ministers in the church of Scotland*** having gone through university and college.

At 4 o'clock, we decided to make for the manse. Of course, you understand, we make no appeals--you never need to make an appeal or an altar call in revival. Why, the roadside becomes an altar. We just leave men and women to make their way to God themselves--after all, that is the right way. God can look after His own. Oh, God can look after His own! And when God takes a situation in hand, I tell you He does a better work. He does a better work.

So we left them there, and just as I was leaving the church, a young man came to me and said, "Mr. Campbell, I would like you to go to the police station." I said, "**The police station**? What's wrong?" "Oh," he said, "There's nothing wrong but there must be at least 400 people gathered around the police station just now."

Now the sergeant there was a God-fearing man. He was in the meeting. But people knew that this was a house that feared God. And next to the police station was the cottage in which the two old women lived. I believe that that had something to do with the magnet, the power that drew men. There was a coach load at that meeting. A coach load had come over 12 miles to be there. Now if anyone would ask them today, why? How did it happen? Who arranged it? They couldn't tell you. But they found themselves grouping together and someone saying, "What about going to Barvas? I don't know, but I have a hunger in my heart to go there." I can't explain it; they couldn't explain it, but God had the situation in hand.

***“This is revival dear people!*** This is a sovereign act of God! This is the moving of God's Spirit, I believe in answer to the prevailing prayer of men and women who believed that God was a covenant-keeping God but must be true to His covenant engagement.” Duncan Campbell, 1968

I went along. I went along to that meeting. As I am walking along that country road-we had to walk about a mile-I heard someone praying by the roadside. ***I could hear this man crying to God for mercy.*** I went over and there were four young men on their knees at the roadside. Yes, they were at the dance but they are now there crying to God for mercy. One of them was under the influence of drink, but a young man he wasn't 20 years of age. But that night God saved him and he is today the parish minister, university trained, college trained, a man of God. Converted in the revival with eleven of his office bearers. A wonderful congregation. Well, he was saved that night.

Now when I got to the police station, I saw something that will live with me as long as I live. I didn't preach--***there was no need of preaching.*** We didn't even sing. The people are crying to God for mercy. Oh, the confessions that were made! There was one old man crying out, "Oh, God, hell is too good for me! Hell is too good for me!" This is Holy Ghost conviction! Now mind you, that was on the very first night of a mighty demonstration that shook the island. Oh, let me say again, that wasn't the beginning of revival--revival began in a prayer barn meeting. Revival began in an awareness of God. ***Revival began when the Holy Ghost began to grip men and that was how it began.***

And, of course, after that we were at it night and day-churches crowded. A messenger would come--I remember one night it was after 3 o'clock in the morning--a messenger came to say that the churches were crowded in another parish 15 miles away. Crowded at that hour in the morning. And we went to this parish minister along with several other ministers who I thank God for the ministers of Lewis--how they responded to the call of God. How they threw themselves into the effort. And God blessed them for it. We went, and I found myself preaching in a large church-a church that would seat 1,000--and the Spirit of God was moving, oh, moving in a mighty way! I could see them falling, falling on their knees. I could hear them crying to God for mercy. I could hear those outside praying. And that continued for, I'm sure, two hours.

And then as we were leaving the church, someone came to me to tell me that a very large number of people had gathered on a field--they could not get into the church. They couldn't get into any of the churches. And they had gathered in a field. Along with the other ministers I decided to go to the field. And here I saw this enormous crowd standing there as though gripped by a power that they could not explain. But the interesting thing about that meeting was a sight that I saw. **The headmaster of a secondary school** in the parish is lying on his face on the ground crying to God for mercy. Oh, deeply convicted of his desperate need and on either side of them, **two young girls**, I would say about 16 years of age-two on each side of him. And they keep saying to the headmaster, "Master, Jesus that saved us last night in Barvas can save you in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tonight. Jesus that saved us last night in Barvas can save you tonight." It is true that when man comes into vital relationship with Jesus Christ, his supreme desire is to win others. ***To win others!*** And they were there that night to win their master, and they won him. Oh, God swept into his life, I believe in answer to the prayer of four young girls, 16 years of age who had a burden--who had a burden.

***Now that was how the revival began and that is how it continued…*** An awareness for God gripped them, and a hunger possessed them and they cried out to God for mercy. And God swept in. I was visiting them recently--I happened to be up in the Hebrides--and what a joy it was to listen to them tell again of that wonderful experience when God swept into the seven houses. My dear people, that's revival. I mean, it is so different from our special efforts. So apart altogether from man's best endeavor. God is in the middle and miracles happen.

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Ephesians 3:18-19 Benediction