



STRENGTH

A 2 Part Sermon Series on experiencing the Power of God

PART ONE

Introduction

All of us need strength to do the things we need to do. The older we are, the more we recognise the value of physical and emotional strength. Likewise, there are challenges in our Christian journey that require spiritual strength. To pray unceasingly, to forgive, and be joyful in trials are just some of the many disciplines and virtues that we called to aspire to. However, there are moments when we find that we lack the strength to do so.

The invitation to follow Christ is no doubt difficult, but we should remember that we are not striving by, or for ourselves. In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul writes that God did not give us 'a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline'. The disciples and early Christians found strength from God's power. In the book of Acts, we read that besides receiving salvation and water baptism, the disciples were *empowered* to be witnesses for Christ, when they were baptised by the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider a moment in your Christian journey where you experienced a lack of strength. How did it affect you, and did you seek God about it?
2. What does it mean to live a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit?
3. Read Acts 2: 37-39. Do an inductive bible study (observations, interpretation and application). You can use the following as a guide.

"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "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."

- i. Posture your heart. Spend some time in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. Open your heart to the Lord to speak to you.

ii. Read the passage aloud

iii. Ask some context questions of the passage:

- What sort of writing is this? (a letter, a poem, a narrative etc?)
- Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- What has happened so far in this particular book of the Bible?

iv. Some observation questions of the passage:

- Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the passage?
- What is the main point or points?
- What surprises are there?
- What are the key words? What words or ideas are repeated?

v. Some leading questions of the text:

- How does this passage relate to other parts of the book?
- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

vi. Some application questions of the passage:

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude I need to change?
- How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

What Would You Do?

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit was not unique to the early church. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were given a prelude of this experience with the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 29-30), and the rituals from the outer court to the Holy of Holies reflected the salvation, water baptism, and finally, baptism of the Holy Spirit that we need today. To have a full life in Christ, it is not enough to merely hear the Word; we have to repent, believe and receive it too. Are we prepared to take this step?

Change Your Mindset

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ~ Acts 1:8 (ESV)