

Week of May 13-19

ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Read Acts chapter 1

The fifth book of the New Testament is often called the Acts of the Apostles and, while it's true the apostles are mentioned in the book, we really ought to call the book the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because he is the only reason the apostles were able to do what they did in preaching and through signs and wonders. The Holy Spirit empowered them to do what they could never have done on their own. In addition, he directed the church again and again in its missionary endeavors. For example:

Acts 8:29 *The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."*

Acts 13:2 *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

Acts 13:4 *The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.*

Acts 16:6-7 *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.*

These are just a few of the more than 50 references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. On just about every page, you can see the Spirit at work. Did you know that Luke has included more references to the Holy Spirit in Acts than the four gospels do combined? The Spirit's presence was the hallmark of the early church and its source of power. How else do you think a ragtag bunch of disciples in the outskirts of the empire could turn their world upside down in such a short period of time as recorded in Acts? It was only through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit at work through the apostles and the church.

What was true of the 1st century church needs to be true of our day as well. We may have access to greater resources technologically than the 1st century church. We may have more money and more people but the message of Zechariah the prophet still rings with authority today: *Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.* Come Holy Spirit, we need you!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Take some time to reflect on how often you rely on your own wisdom and strength instead of depending upon the Holy Spirit's guidance and power. Repent for your self-reliance and pray for Holy Spirit dependence. Pray also that the Holy Spirit would be as active in your life and in the life of the Church in the 21st century as he was in the early church.

Take-a-way: *The Acts of the Apostles were only possible because the Holy Spirit was acting through them.*