

Power To Live Up To Our Name

Acts 2:1-4, 42-47

INTRO:

Once someone said to her pastor, “**I’d like to call myself a Christian, but I really don’t feel I’m good enough.**” Her pastor tried to explain to her that , theologically speaking, goodness has nothing to do with it. We are Christians not because of our merit but because we have received God’s gracious offer of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The pastor understood the feelings that lay behind her statement, and we can all sympathize with them. If we really realized that to call ourselves Christians is to think of ourselves as true imitators of Jesus Christ, anyone with half a brain would see that it is foolish to taken such a name!

Even so, it is *OUR* name. Having recognized Jesus as our Lord and savior, we take his name as our own. And this means we need to live up to this name we have received.

ME:

I think I told you before, but I was supposed to have the name Christian at birth. My mom wanted to name me Michael Christian, but my aunt Barbara's, mo Go-mother adopted my cousin before I was born. I am related to President John Tyler’s first wife, Latisha Christian, to who he was mar-

ried before he President. So instead of my having to live up to my family name of Christian, I have to live up to the name as it relates to Jesus.

YOU:

Do you try to live up to the name Christian? As it relates to Jesus, of course, unless we are distant cousins! If you are trying to live up to the name, you have power available to you to help. That's what we are going to think about this morning.

So let pray before we see what God has to say about this in the book of Acts...

GOD:

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and

enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

WE:

We have the power to live up to our name in God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may be the best kept secret of the Christian faith. Most people get that he is a part of the Trinity, and we use the trite in speaking formulas like baptism and benedictions. But really, most of us hardly know what else to say about the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is so important to us that Jesus said it was better that he himself go away so the Spirit could come (John 16:7). As Jesus prepared to leave the earth, his last counsel to his followers was their first order of business was to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. How interesting that Jesus rated seeking the Holy Spirit to be more important than all other matters that may have seemed more important to them at the time!

Why? Simply because we can't be all that Christ's name implies unless we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. When we speak of the power of the Holy Spirit, we are usually inclined to think of some really extraordinary power of ministry—perhaps of powerfully effective preaching or teaching, or do the dramatic impact on people's lives. While it is true that the Spirit of God brings such power into people's lives so that their gifts are made

fully effective, the more basic—and also, the more significant— the power of the Holy Spirit is on our inner character, in our becoming more Christlike.

And really, in the end, nothing is more persuasive than the person who is authentically and beautifully Christian. This is clear in the passage we just looked at. When we read the book of Acts we probably are inclined to notice the big names the most, like Peter and Paul. As great as they were, they could only connect with a few people at a time or in total. Most of the work carried on in the Gospels was done by people whose names we don't even know! Or at best, whose names we are not told until the end of the epistles, in the list of greetings.

But you get a feeling for these anonymous, wonderful people as you read of the “**everyday life**” of the church at the end of Acts 2. You sense the great love that must have rippled out from the group as they shared what they had, the spiritual hunger that caused them to grasp at every opportunity for worship and fellowship, and the joy that must have characterized their life of worship. So it is not surprise that they had “**the goodwill of all the people.**” And it is not surprise that, “**day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.**”

YOU:

Do you make use of the power available from the Holy Spirit to live up to your name as a Christian? Imagine that you've decided to go sailing.

The problem is that you know next to nothing about sailing. So you go to the store and you purchase several books to find out what's involved. You carefully read them and then you talk to a veteran sailor who answers questions for you. The next day, you rent a sailboat. You examine it closely to make certain that everything needed for a successful sailing experience is present and in good working order. Then, you take your boat out onto the lake. Your excitement is at a fever pitch, though you're also afraid. But you follow the instructions you've read and the counsel received from the experienced sailor, and you launch your boat into the water. You carefully monitor each step and hoist the sail.

At that precise moment you learn a crucial lesson. You can study sailing. You might even be able to build a sailboat. You can seek advice from the wisest and most veteran of sailors. You can cast your boat onto the most beautiful of lakes under a bright and inviting sun. You can successfully hoist the sail. But—and this is a big **"but"** —*only God can make the wind blow!*

It is *Ruah* in Hebrew, *Pneuma* in Greek, both meaning wind, breathe, and Spirit. All powerful words . . . if we make use of their power. The Holy Spirit, the source of our power, if we allow the Spirit to exercise that power in and through our lives.

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:

The Holy Spirit gives us power to live up to the name of Christian.

CLOSE:

Our world is in so many ways a different world, of course. But our society I'd just as hungry as ever to see authentically good people. And truly godly people are as attractive as ever. And that kind of goodness is only possible with the continuing touch of God's Holy Spirit.

Let's finish up by thinking about our gut. **Have you made a gut decision? Or have you experienced a gut check moment? Have you ever made a decision going with your gut?** According to reporting from ABC News' Lucille Tang, our abilities to think and employ solid reasoning are owed at least in part to the health of our digestive tract. We don't normally think of digestion in these terms, but there's a body of evidence to support the idea.

Some scientists call the 100 trillion bacteria and 100 million nerve endings in our gastrointestinal tract our second brain. This "brain" communicates with an interface known as the gut-brain axis, which explains why gut health can improve conditions like Alzheimer's or depression. People often associate chemicals like serotonin with the brain, but most of our body's serotonin, our sleep cycles and our appetite, is found in the gut.

On the flip side, other studies have shown a relationship between imbalances in gut bacteria and a rise in neuroimmune and neuroinflammatory diseases. But the good news is that there are established practices that we can do to promote gut health. If the conventional wisdom is right, you may not exactly be what you eat, but more what or how you digest.

Our ability to think correctly and make good decisions is also greatly influenced by a healthy relationship with our internal guide as we read in Romans 8:14 and our teacher as we read about in 1 John 2:20, 27 and with the indwelling Holy Spirit who is vital for healthy Christian living as we see in Ephesians 4:30.

*So, who's got the power? With God's **Ruah** and God's **Pneuma**, we all do!*

Let's thank God for his powerful Spirit together now . . .