



Never On Your Own – Acts 1:1-5

(Expanded Sermon Notes)

Have you ever been asked to do something that you had not been trained or equipped to do? Do you remember the feelings that rose up within yourself? Intimidation? Fear? Anxiety? Overwhelmed? Confused? We've all been there, and the honest truth is, we will be there again at some point in our lives.

One such time for me came my freshman year of college. My parents had dropped me off at Trinity International University (on the North shore of Chicago) two weeks ahead of when all the other freshmen were to show up. This meant that when it came time to get my required textbooks, I was on my own. Now, to be perfectly honest, I did not consider any schools within a 5-hour radius of our home in Pittsburgh. Why? Because I wanted to be far enough that mom and dad couldn't just drop in. I made my bed, and now it was time to sleep in it. With my booklist in hand, I went to the campus bookstore and spent \$700 on my first semester's books. The reality is that I didn't know what I was doing and didn't get any instruction. Honestly, I could have asked for help, but I didn't. Either way, when I walked into the bookstore that day, I was overwhelmed and confused. All I knew is that I needed to get books for classes that were starting in a couple of days. Fast forward one semester, and now I was a seasoned college student who knew what to buy at the campus bookstore and what to get online.

Too often, our faith and relationship with Jesus can leave us feeling the same way; we just don't know what to do or where to turn. Having a relationship with God or following Jesus in a life-defining way can feel like having to do something that we haven't been trained or equipped for. There can be a great deal of confusion and even anxiety when we feel like we're not doing it right. Or, compared to others, my faith seems like a half-baked sheet cake that is lopsided and kind of gooey in the middle. When other's seem to have a faith, that is a beautiful 3-layer cake. If you have ever felt like this about your faith or following Jesus, you are not alone. We all have. And, if we're honest, we all do. This reality was as true for the first followers of Jesus as it is for us. In fact, I'm convinced it is why Luke starts off the book of Acts talking about the Holy Spirit. Why? Because **Christians are not called to follow Jesus in their own strength.** And that is why God gave us His Spirit. The simple truth is this; we are never following Jesus on our own because we are filled with God's Spirit.

1. Part 2 begins → Luke's Gospel to Acts (Context) (vv. 1-2)

- a. Two parts of a larger volume.
 - i. It is not strange that Luke should plan a work in two parts. There was a practical limit to the length of a single papyrus.¹
 - ii. **Luke's Gospel sought to introduce Jesus.**
 - 1. **Salvation is for all.** Luke is concerned to write about the story of salvation, and he sees this in three stages:
 - a. The period of Israel (16:16).
 - b. The period of Jesus' ministry (4:16ff.; Acts 10:38).
 - c. The period since the ascension, i.e., the period of the church.²
 - 2. **Theological Theme:** God's action to restore God's people, Jesus' coming to announce and make plain God's royal rule, and the concomitant appeal to God's people to welcome and align themselves with God's saving agenda. (DJG, 546.)
 - a. All peoples and all nations: These are important connections in Luke. Salvation is for all. (Lk. 24:47, Acts 1:8)
 - iii. **Acts picks up the story and shows us the dramatic life changes that come through Jesus!**
 - a. All peoples and all nations: These are important connections in Luke. Salvation is for all. (Lk. 24:47, Acts 1:8)
 - i. In chapter 2, we will see the dramatic salvation and representation of all nations.
 - ii. In chapter 8, we will get a front-row seat to watch an Ethiopian leader come to faith and carry the gospel home with him.
 - iii. In chapter 9, we will witness the greatest enemy of the early church come to life in Christ.
 - iv. In chapter 15, we will hear the debate on an ethnic and works-centered requirement for salvation settled once and for all.
 - b. **At the center of each of these moments is the underlying and powerful work of the Holy Spirit.**
- b. Who is Theophilus?
 - i. In treating Luke 1:3, Bock suggests that Theophilus's identity is unknown but that **he appears to be a person of high social standing and could well be a Christian Gentile wavering in his faith because of the pressure placed on the church.**

¹ Walter L. Liefeld, [*Interpreting the Book of Acts*](#), vol. 4, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 23.

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 38.

- ii. The name means “friend or beloved by God.” He could be a patron or simply the most important intended reader.
 - 1. He is a real person and not a symbolic figure.
 - a. Barrett notes that the name is common and that Luke 1:3, with “most excellent” in its address, speaks to a person, not an “ideal” figure. In other words, Theophilus is not a symbolic reference to those beloved of God.³
- c. **Don’t miss the Holy Spirit → This is a key truth in this section.**
 - i. **Christians are not called to follow Jesus in their own strength.**
 - 1. We are going to come back to this truth, but we don’t want to miss what Luke notes about Jesus here, He was filled with the Spirit for His earthly ministry!
 - 2. **One of the concerns of Luke is to demonstrate how both Jesus and the church were directed by the Spirit to fulfill the purpose of God for them.⁴**
 - a. **The mention of the Spirit reinforces the role of this key figure in Acts for the church’s mission.** Jesus and the Spirit operate in concert on behalf of God.
 - b. The Spirit in Acts is almost always an aid in proclamation and an enabler (esp. Acts 2:17–18), a point that argues against tying the Spirit to mission and the choosing of the Twelve as Johnson argues.
 - c. **There is continuity between Jesus’s ministry and the apostles’ mission as they seek to call Israel to reenter the program of God.⁵**
 - i. **I.e., Through the power of the Spirit, believers are enabled to declare the good news of the gospel!**

2. The Resurrection → The start of something new! (v.3a)

- a. The second volume of Luke’s work (Acts) is only possible because of the resurrection!
 - i. **First, it is all based on the resurrection of Jesus.⁶**
 - 1. **The storyline of Acts is rooted in the reality of the resurrection.**
 - ii. The resurrection is what ultimately separates Jesus from all others claiming to be messiah.
 - 1. I.e., Without the resurrection, Jesus is just another dead Jewish insurgent at the hands of the Roman empire.

³ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 52.

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, [Acts: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 61.

⁵ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 54.

⁶ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 3.

2. With the resurrection, he is what he claimed to be... The Son of Man (Mk. 2 / Dan. 7)... the God-man who is capable of restoring all that is broken.
- iii. Jesus appears to the disciples multiple times!
 1. **The stress lies on the factuality of the evidence, as we have it in the stories in Luke 24, where the initial unwillingness of the disciples to believe that Jesus was risen was overcome by the clear evidence presented to them.**
 2. Nor did their conviction rest on one single experience but rather on repeated pieces of proof.⁷
 - a. **The term for “proof,” τεκμήριον (*tekmērion*), refers to “that which causes something to be known in a convincing and decisive manner.”⁸**
 - b. The idea is not that Jesus was continuously with them for forty days but that he appeared at intervals within that period as the appearances in the Gospels indicate.⁹
- b. These appearances showed that Jesus was still alive.
 - i. **They are part of the confirmation and encouragement Theophilus needs (Luke 1:4). To have seen the resurrection was a qualification for being a “witness” to Jesus (Luke 24:44–48).**
 - ii. These appearances gave Jesus the opportunity to continue to instruct about the kingdom of God. He was teaching the witnesses that the rule of God he was bringing now would move on with the next stage of the apostles’.¹⁰

3. Jesus is alive and active! (v.3b)

- a. ... Speaking about the Kingdom of God!
 - i. I.e., What do we do next? → Jesus isn’t dead... so what?
- b. During this period, the theme of Jesus’ teaching is said to have been the *kingdom of God*, a phrase which elsewhere sums up the theme of his earthly ministry (Luke 4:43), and signifies the saving, sovereign action of God through him.
 - i. **The point is that this is to continue to be the theme of the witness of the church, which will thus follow on from the preaching of Jesus (8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31), although there will inevitably be new elements and a new emphasis as Jesus himself becomes part of the message (28:31). It follows that the church can take up the message of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels and make it part of its own.**¹¹

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, [*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 61–62.

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, [*Acts*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 54.

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, [*Acts*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 55.

¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, [*Acts*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 55.

¹¹ I. Howard Marshall, [*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 62.

1. **I.e., The storyline of Acts does not stop with the Ascension... there is more to come!**
- c. "God's Kingdom" refers to God's promised rule that comes with Jesus's messianic program and activity.
 - i. This expression is not as prevalent in Acts as it is in Luke.
 1. It appears **thirty-two** times in Luke.
 2. **Six** times in Acts (1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31).
 - ii. For Luke, the idea summarizes a key component of the gospel (Luke 9:2, 6) that already had shown signs of arriving during Jesus's ministry (Luke 11:20; 17:21).
 1. **Jesus's resurrection allows the kingdom to be preached** (Acts 28:23, 31).¹²
 - a. **If the resurrection allows the kingdom to be preached, the Spirit will enable it.**

4. The Spirit will give the believer power for the Christian life. (vv. 4-5)

- a. What does it mean to be baptized with the Spirit?
 - i. Not something new → The promise's OT sources are Joel 2:28–32, Isa. 44:3, and especially 32:15:
 1. "A spirit is emptied out on us from on high."
 - ii. **These sources show that although this faith appears to be new, it is rooted in divine promises of old, an important idea to the ancients, who desired their religions to be time-tested.**¹³
 - iii. It means that at salvation, believers are filled with the Holy Spirit.
- b. Jesus told his followers to wait for this to happen before they tried to do anything too much. That is important advice.
 - i. Far too often, to this day, people blunder ahead, assuming that if they know a little about Jesus and about God's kingdom, they can just go off and put things into action in whatever way occurs to them.
 - ii. **Luke would tell us to wait: to pray for the presence and power of the holy spirit and to find our calling and our energy from that source.**
 - iii. **If this is a play in which we are all called to take different parts, it is a play in which the only true acting is what happens when the spirit of the playwright himself takes charge.**¹⁴
- c. **Holy Spirit dependence was a priority for Jesus.**
 - i. We are filled with the same Spirit that He was filled within the incarnation.
 1. Baseball: Mick Morandini vs. Roberto Clemente
 - a. Morandini – Solid second baseman for the Philadelphia Phillies
 - i. I met Morandini at baseball camps as a kid.

¹² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 55–56.

¹³ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 56.

¹⁴ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 4–5.

1. There is something amazing about what he achieved being an MLB starter.
 2. Only 1% of kids that play tee-ball will ever get paid to play baseball, let alone make it to the MLB.
 - b. Clemente – Legendary right fielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates.
 - i. As a kid, my dad used to take me to the Oakland neighborhood in Pittsburgh (where Forbes Field was located) and tell me stories about Clemente.
 - ii. One story was about how Clemente threw out a runner at home plate from the right-field wall... a throw well over 300 feet!
 - c. Clemente was a once in a generation – legendary talent. Morandini was a really good baseball player, but he's no Clemente.
2. Art: Édouard (Edmond-Joseph) Béliard vs. Claude Monet
- a. Béliard – He painted in company with Pissarro and Cézanne. And was a contemporary of Monet.
 - i. A well-established and respected artist. But, unless you are really passionate about impressionism, you probably haven't heard of him.
 1. Slide: View of the Lock (1872-5)
 - b. Monet – Legendary artist whom almost everyone who has taken art appreciation has heard of. Is considered the precursor talent to modernism.
 - i. Slide: Impression, Sunrise (1872)
 1. A genre-defining painting.
3. **We are filled with the same Spirit that He was filled within the incarnation.**
- a. We tend to treat the Holy Spirit as if we have received a lesser version than the Spirit that Jesus had in his incarnation.
 - i. That is absolutely false!
 - b. Again, we think we get the Micky Morandini version of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus had access to the Roberto Clemente version.
 - i. We have something good.
 - ii. He had something great and legendary.
 - c. **We are filled with the same Spirit that Jesus was filled within the incarnation.**
- ii. **The Holy Spirit, therefore, permeates Christian life and ministry at every conceivable point.**

1. In Acts: This is not a matter of a few scattered references to the Spirit as a reminder that he is available. **If the narrative of Acts teaches theology at all, it teaches that the Holy Spirit is regularly active among God's people in this age.**¹⁵
 - a. One of the key aspects of the Spirit in us
- iii. Jesus models a life dependent on the Spirit.
 1. John 16:13 - **When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.**
 2. **Another element of Jesus's promise was that the Holy Spirit would indwell and illuminate the believer:** "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth."¹⁶
 - a. **The Spirit teaches us. (Jn. 14:26)**
 - i. **"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."**
 - b. **The Spirit equips us with gifts to serve God. (Rom. 12:6-8)**
 - i. **"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."**
 - c. **The Spirit strengthens us. (Rom. 8:26-27)**
 - i. **"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will."**
 - iv. **This life in the Spirit is what God intends for the Christian.**
 1. Paul in Galatians 5 contrasts life in the Spirit with life in the flesh.¹⁷
 - a. **Works of the flesh: "¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,**

¹⁵ Walter L. Liefeld, [Interpreting the Book of Acts](#), vol. 4, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 84.

¹⁶ Millard J. Erickson, [Christian Theology](#), 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 796.

¹⁷ Millard J. Erickson, [Christian Theology](#), 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 797.

²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (vv.19-21)

- b. **Fruit of the Spirit:** “²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” (vv.21-25)

2. Ask – Helpful questions for walking in the Spirit.

a. Mature Christians ask:

- i. Is this wise?
- ii. **Does this please God?**
- iii. Does this lead to human flourishing?
- iv. **Does this jeopardize my ability to witness and share the gospel?**

3. **The Holy Spirit gives you everything you need to follow Jesus and share the good news of the gospel.**