



The Gathering message notes

re|ACTS - Week 4 - September 30, 2012 / Paul Jenkins

THE BIG IDEA: To have _____, we have to _____ the
_____.

1. We pay the bill in our _____.

2. We pay the bill in our _____.

3. We pay the bill in our _____.

The Take-Off

Who doesn't love before and after pictures? We all do (well, provided that they go in the right direction!). I mean, here's a before and after picture of Arnold Schwarzenegger that isn't one to love, right??

But the point here is that - for the most part - we all love looking at transformations of people from bad to better. And I know something about each of us, too. When we see these kind of pictures, we believe that it can be us, too. But a quick look around the room would reveal that reality paints a different picture, doesn't it? So, what is it that keeps us from getting from the "before" to the "after" picture?

Many people would say desire, or having the "want to"

I don't think that's true. Let me explain why this way:

This year alone about 250,000 high school seniors will play varsity basketball. Of those, about 12,000 will receive college scholarships. Out of that 12,000 somewhere around 200 will be drafted by the NBA, but of those 200, only 50 will be offered a contract. From those 50, only 5 will be starters and only 2 will play in the NBA longer than 5 years.

What set those 2 apart from the other 248,998 seniors? Desire? I don't think so, because my guess is that if you had asked all 250,000 of them if they wanted to play in the NBA, most would have said yes.

They would have been motivated just like you and I are motivated when we look at the after pictures! Something in us says "I want to have that change in my life, too!"

We do the same thing with the early church. We see Peter's "before" picture in John 18:17 - denying his association with Jesus to a GIRL with no power but to watch the door! Then we see his "after" picture in Acts 2 when he boldly preaches to thousands and sees 3,000 of the crowd saved, baptized and planted in one day!

We see that transformation - along with tons of other "after" shots we'll get of Peter and the apostles in Acts - and we have no shortage of desire for that to be our picture, too.

So why isn't it? Because what we think is a matter of wanting is actually a matter of doing.

I know I'm throwing a lot of athletic stuff at you, but I want to make sure you get the point, so allow me to really drive this point home and then we'll jump into the text of Acts 2.

According to John Lather, a renowned sports researcher, there is only 1 real variable that separates world-class athletes from regular athletes (or, the 2 from the 248,998 in the earlier example).

The variable? Time spent training.

Here's the bottom line: we all want power to turn our before picture into an after picture. If I lined you all up and asked you if you'd rather live a life like the "before" Peter - denying Jesus to a little girl - or the "after" Peter - preaching boldly to thousands without fear - my guess is that you'd all pick the latter.

But that kind of power will cost us something, and the question we have to ask ourselves is whether or not we value the end result enough to pay the price, because **to have power, we have to pay the power bill.**

Let's backtrack a second to make something very clear: the Holy Spirit was (then) and is (now) a gift. We know that from Acts 1:4. But we still have to open the gift, use the gift. If I choose not to pay the power bill, there's still power. I just can't use it.

So paying the power bill isn't about earning a gift, but using the gift the way it was intended.

With that said, here are 3 areas where we will find ourselves paying the power bill:

1. **We pay the bill in our resources**

By resources, I mean whatever you have at your disposal. Some have greater resources than others, but we all have something at our disposal.

Common resources that everyone has would be time, money and energy.

The disciples paid a price in those areas to have the power of the Holy Spirit. They were told to wait, and even though we don't know exactly how long they waited, the word "wait" means some amount of time passed between the command and the answer.

They spent energy in prayer (Acts 1:14). They spent energy in kingdom matters (Acts 1:15ff).

They spent the money they could have made fishing. Basically, they paid the price to put their lives on hold while they waited.

Are we willing to do that? Short answer? Probably not.

We want to see the world come to know Jesus and give a dollar in the offering. Then we wonder why we have no power in our churches.

We want to have the same power and unity as the church in Acts but can barely make it to one church service every other week and seemed confused about why we feel powerless to walk with Jesus daily. The early church paid a price in their resources and the result was that they had power.

2. We pay the bill in our reputation

We touched on this last week when we talked about our tendency to extinguish what God intends to distinguish us. God gives the power of the Holy Spirit as a way to set us apart, but so often we want to blend in, and the reason for that is pride.

So, what does God do? He gives us power that has a price tag associated with it that takes a swing at our pride!

- For some of us, it is impossible to think about the Holy Spirit without thinking about tongues
- For others of us, it's the first time we've ever thought of the Holy Spirit
- For all us, the end result is usually the same question: "Why tongues?"
- So let's try to take a clear, practical look at that question
- Why tongues? Of all the possible signs God could have used, why did He choose speaking in tongues?
 - Acts 2:4
 - Acts 10:45-47
 - Acts 19:6
 - Acts 8:18 - something happened that Simon could see (or hear)
- I think there are 2 reasons: one, the tongue itself actually needs to be purified (James 3:3-12, esp. 6) and two, we need to be cured of pride (Proverbs 16:5)
- Let me be clear: we think the hang up for us is tongues, but the hang up is our pride
- We're afraid we might look weird, or feel weird, or find that others think we're weird
- Tongues accomplishes 2 things at one time: God purifies the most vile organ in our bodies and also challenges the pride in our hearts

Now, what this means is that there's no way for me to teach this that will make us comfortable and there's no way I can teach it that will answer all our questions

(Even Peter didn't try to answer the questions in his sermon after the tongues happened!)

But this is about doing and then learning, remember? It's about trusting that the way God designed something is better than the way you and I would have designed it, right?

If we were designing the process, we would have made the sign of the Holy Spirit good looks, or a money tree! But anything we would have designed would have fueled our pride instead of killing it

Of course, we can do things that can make us look even more foolish, and some of us get uncomfortable about the Holy Spirit because we've seen some of that

But what happened in Acts 2 wasn't as much about losing control as it was about giving up control; they weren't getting more of the Holy Spirit as much as the Holy Spirit was getting more of them

Think about it like this: the more we empty ourselves, the more room there is in our lives for God's power. That's why anyone who goes to another country on a mission trip will almost always come back talking about how full of power the believers were in that country even though they had nothing.

There's something about nothing that opens us up to everything God wants us to have

John 3:30 says it best: He must increase and I must decrease

Peter was willing to pay a price in reputation in order to have the power of the Holy Spirit

Are we willing to surrender whatever we decide is reasonable for what others may think is unreasonable?

And before we move on to the last area that we have to pay the price, let me emphasize that this is more than just playing the mental pros vs cons game

We all know how to choose crazy over safe in every other area of our lives:

- Business people who throw everything they've got into a new business for the hope of wealth and success
- Students who throw all their energy into studying in hopes of a scholarship
- Athletes who throw everything they've got into training in hopes of a great victory
 - Kobe Bryant - 6-6-6 training
 - Herschel Walker - 3500 situps and 1000 pushups EVERY morning
 - Various olympic athletes - (show Citi commercial)

But none of those examples cuts against pride. This one does, and the question is are we willing to pay that price?

3. We pay the bill in our routine

This third area is closely related to the first area of resources, but since the end of the second chapter mentions a change in the routine of the early church, it's probably worth mentioning here, too (although my guess is that most of us are still thinking about tongues!).

The early church was so consumed by the power of the Holy Spirit that it led to a radical change in their routine

They were no longer content to see each other once a week at the synagogue

Now, they found themselves getting together on the other six days

Now, they were eating together, praying together, ministering together

Their entire spiritual routine changed, and their willingness to change it allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to continue to move in the church

Christianity went from being a "one big event" deal (3,000 added one day) to an "every day event" that led to people being added to their numbers *every single day* (Acts 2:47)

The Landing

So, what does this mean for us?

For starters, let me give you an out. We're just on a journey through the book of Acts, which means that you can choose to simply be a spectator to all of this. You can say that we've learned what THEY did and not even think about making it something YOU do.

But the question we've been asking from the beginning is, "What could happen now if we trust God like they did then?"

Sure, it's gonna cost us something. Greatness always does, and great power in God's kingdom is no different.

But if we see our need of it - and value it - then we'll find ourselves willing to pay any price in the areas of resources, reputation and routine in order to have it.

We'll be like I was in my early college years: so aware of my need for power that I'd respond to any preacher's altar call just for the chance to have more of God's power.

But some of us won't respond like that. We'll choose the safer route, the route that makes God's kingdom all about us, and the good news for those of you in that boat is that there are plenty of churches to choose from who are more than happy to appease you.

Unfortunately, the Lord of those churches isn't. He actually wants to break our pride in order to pour more of His power into us so that we can be better carriers of His grace to the world around us.

He gave the church in Acts power, and when they were willing to pay the power bill, they were able to give Him their world.

We can do the same, and the best part is that when we want His power more than anything it might cost us, our after picture will become a picture that motivates other churches to seek to do the same.

Let's pray.