

FROM OUR MINISTER

I can't do that ...!

Have you ever felt unprepared or inadequate for a task? Perhaps you've been left to get on with something and felt that the tools you were left with were not up to the job. Or maybe you felt the instructions you were given were given too quickly and you didn't really take it in. Perhaps you could have done with someone watching and making suggestions for a bit longer. Or it might have been that it was such a big job that you'd have felt inadequate however long the training, however detailed the instructions and however much someone watched over your shoulder.

I imagine that Jesus' disciples may have felt similar when they stood staring into heaven as Jesus ascended. He'd just told them to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. That's a big job by any definition. In a sense it is no wonder they stood staring into heaven – perhaps it was disbelief that he could give those instructions and then disappear and leave them to it.

But that's not quite the whole story. It seems that when they picked their jaws up off the ground they remembered something else that he said: “stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49) and “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8).

The coming of that power is what Luke describes in Acts 2. It is as though the feeling of inadequacy evaporated and confidence grew. The coming of the Holy Spirit is described in Acts in powerful terms as a “violent wind”, “tongues of flame” and being “poured out”.

If you’ve ever been struggling on your own and then found the load lightened by a helping hand you’ll understand what this was like. Suddenly they were not on their own, they didn’t have to rely on their own imagination and ingenuity, their own courage or training. The description in powerful terms indicates that God’s power was not at work in them, rather than just their own.

Acts describes many and various ways in which this transformation worked out to fulfil Jesus’ command to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Other parts of the New Testament describes some of the many ways in which God gave power, strength and courage for the task. The good news is that the Holy Spirit is still at work today in God’s people; God still gives gifts to each of us. As Peter put it in Acts, quoting the prophet Joel, “God says I will pour out my Spirit on all people”. That includes you and me for whatever ways we are given to be his witnesses through what we say, what we do and the way that we handle the situations in which we find ourselves.

So you don’t have to do it all by yourself. Not only are there others also doing his work but God is at work in you to inspire, strengthen and equip you. “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it”. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

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