

"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:3).

## The Church Alive – Something Radical Has Begun (Part 2)

### Acts 2:1-13

**1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. 5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."**

This morning we are going to examine what took place in the opening hours of Pentecost, that moment in history when God began the church by the sending of His Holy Spirit. As we have been noting over the past couple of weeks, this is an extraordinarily radical event and such an event might leave us wondering what all this has to do for us today. How can we apply the things we read about here in Acts 2? I am glad you asked. For as Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to usher in the Church Age, we see in our text a picture of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. What does it look like to have the Spirit of God within you; empowering you and motivating you to continue all that Jesus began to do and to teach? How are we filled with the Spirit? What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit of God? I say to you that our text gives us answers to these questions; answers that have application to our everyday lives as we seek to follow Christ.

Before we examine how our Acts 2 text answers these questions, let us be in agreement of this one particular truth; and that truth is this – *just as the church began with the Holy Spirit filling the believers to carry on the work of Christ; the church today is to continue being filled with the Holy Spirit to carry out the work of Christ.* Let us look at our text in Acts 2 and consider five key truths we can pull out that when understood, I believe will cause us to long to be radical Christians, those who are empowered to strike out into this world with the bold and unashamed truths of the gospel; as joyfully radical as even these as we find in the early church. Let me give you this outline and then we will take these five truths one by one. I would like to show you that the filling of the Spirit of God...

- I. Is the Result of Promise
- II. Is the Result of Personal and Corporate Obedience
- III. Results in Power for Ministry
- IV. Results in Proclamation of Gospel Truths
- V. Results in Perplexity for People

*"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:3).*

As you can see, this morning it is my intention to be "results" oriented. So let us see how these truths answer the question as to how we are to be filled with the Spirit as well as what being filled with the Spirit means to us; what does it look like today?

## **I. The filling of the Spirit is the result of Promise (Acts 2:1a)**

*When the day of Pentecost had come...*

We begin by reading in our text, ***When the day of Pentecost had come...*** or, to say it a bit more accurately with the Greek, "When the day of Pentecost was Last week we went to great lengths to show how this statement reveals that our God is a promise-keeping God. We noted from both the Old and New Testaments (from passages like Ezekiel 36:27 and John 14:16-17) that God promised the coming and filling of the believer with His Spirit. The promise to indwell and empower the believer to love and observe the teachings of Christ and the power to proclaim the life, death and resurrection of Christ as the only basis for being reconciled, made right with God has begun and has continued from this extraordinary day, the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

Let us never forget that the Spirit that has opened your eyes to behold the reality of Jesus as being both Lord and Savior; to understand your need for His work on the cross because of your own sinfulness; and of your ability to comprehend and share the truth of Scripture and the Gospel is all the result of this promise of God to send His Spirit upon those who believe in His Son. Every truthful word you utter in accordance with the Scripture; every act of obedience to His will; every putting away of sin for the pursuit of that which pleases God does not originate within you; but comes from the Spirit of Christ within you; the Spirit promised to you who believe by God. (see Romans 8:5-10).

So let me ask you this, are you living in light of this and the other wonderful promises of God? Are you, in the words of Ephesians 5:18, constantly being filled with the Spirit? Of course, this brings us to a very important question; one that each of must answer if we would dare say that the Spirit of God indeed dwells in us. What is that question? What is it that we must answer? How do we know if we are filled with the Spirit? What does it look like to be filled with the Spirit? Or to ask this another way, what are the evidences of the Spirit's taking up residence in our lives? This leads us to the second of our points...

## **II. The filling of the Spirit is the result of Personal and Corporate Obedience (Acts 2:1b)**

*...they were all together in one place.*

We next read in our text, ***...they were all together in one place.*** This is a simple statement but I urge not to miss the point. Why were these disciples all together in one place? Why were they not taking care of other important matters? Why was it that Peter, James and John were not out mending and preparing their nets for fishing? Why was it that these others had for this moment, put all other matters and affairs of life on hold? This was an act of both personal and corporate obedience. Let us remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus had already told them to wait, and seemingly implied in the command to wait was that they wait together. Back in Acts 1:4 we read, ***"Gathering them together [as one group], He command them [together] not to leave Jerusalem [not to leave town; not to busy themselves with any other matters] but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard from Me..."*** That

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promise being the coming Holy Spirit of God. Now in Acts 2:1, this fact that they were all together reveals both personal and corporate obedience to the command of Christ.

It was personal in that each one of had to resolve in his own heart and mind that what Jesus had commanded him to do was more binding and more important than anything else he could do, or even more important than other things he might have needed to do. I see that these disciples had the same mindset as that of the young Daniel, who upon the temptation to disregard the commands of the Lord regarding what he should eat and drink, being able to justify such a disregard because of his circumstances; he had been kidnapped, was 1000 miles away from home, surrounded by hundreds who had already given in; so what would be the big deal? And yet we read in Daniel 1:8, ***"But Daniel made up his mind [he set upon his heart] that he would not defile himself..."*** He had made a personal resolved to keep the command of the Lord. This is what we find in Acts 2; believers who had resolved to keep the command of the Lord.

Is this your personal resolve? Do you know what Jesus has commanded you? To believe on Him; to repent of your sins; to follow Him and the expense of your own personal agenda; to partake of the Lord's Supper; to be baptized; to be a contributing member of the body of Christ? All such things take a personal resolve and determination to be obedient. It means to count the cost and to realize that that which is good may often times interfere with that which is best. It is good to sleep (amen?) – but it is not so good to sleep so long so as not to have time with God in the Word and in prayer. Sleep is good; personal time with God is best; therefore, there must be a compromise with that which is good so as to fulfill that which is best. The disciples had individually chosen that which was best in their personal resolve to obey this command of Christ.

And then, by extension, personal obedience will always result in corporate obedience. Jesus had called them together, as a body, for the purpose of receiving together the blessing of God in the coming of the Spirit. As we will come to see in our study of Acts, the early church was stuck together like glue to paper. They sought to experience the blessing of God not merely as individuals, but together as a body. And so, when we gather together on Sundays or on other days which we have determined as a church to meet, we are to remember that it first takes personal obedience to be with God's people, a determination to be there and this then reflects itself in a corporate obedience, a people come together with the expectation that as they do so, they will receive the blessing of God. That blessing will reveal itself in many forms; the worship of God in song, praise and prayer; the edification or building up of the body through the proclamation of the Word; the encouragement of the body as saints' minister and meet the needs of one another. Let this be our resolve, the personal and corporate obedience to the will of God. If you want to know what being filled with the Spirit looks like; it looks like personal and corporate obedience to the will of God. Are you and are we doing what God has commanded us to do?

### **III. The filling of the Spirit results in Power for ministry (Acts 2:1c-4)**

*And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

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In addition then, we find next that the filling of the Spirit results in power for ministry. We read in our text from the end of verse 1 on through verse 4 [read text]. True ministry or service is never accomplished in raw, crude human effort but rather in granted divine power. A man may be an eloquent speaker and compose a masterpiece of a manuscript to proclaim with a group. But if that speaker is not endowed with power from on High; if his outlines and words are nothing more than the product of his own making, then he will not accomplish God's purposes but rather his own. Beloved, we run the danger of trusting in our own strengths and in our own natural abilities. Sometimes we must do like that which we see in our text, believers waiting for power from on High – divine enablement to carry on the work Jesus has given us to do.

In our text, we read of something extraordinary, a sudden event that was first detected as a sound by the disciples. The sound was "a noise like a violent rushing wind" – a noise that many in Joplin could testify about after that EF5 tornado ripped through their city. The Spirit of God was coming and thundered into the lives of these believers at Pentecost.

The point is that extraordinary power had come. Luke calls it a "noise"; using this same word in Luke 21:25 to describe the roar of the sea. Often times when God is doing something extraordinary, the Scriptures strive to describe that power in the most vivid of language. We find this in the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 29:3-5a, 7-9.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;  
The God of glory thunders,  
The Lord is over many waters.  
The voice of the Lord is powerful,  
The voice of the Lord is majestic.  
The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars...  
The voice of the Lord hews out flames of fire.  
The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness:  
The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
The voice of the Lord makes the deer to calve,  
And strips the forests bare.  
And in His temple everything says, "Glory!"

This is power; power coming upon this obedient group. But was this display merely for show or did it result in something? We read in our text at the end of verse 2, that the coming of the Spirit is said to have ***"filled the whole house where they were sitting."*** So complete, so comprehensive was this event that all the people in that house were totally "immersed" in the Spirit. This is the truly the baptism of the Spirit of which every believer partakes. Here at Pentecost the coming the Spirit descended from heaven in a unique way, but the result or effect of what He does is just the same. He baptizes us into the Body of Christ; He makes us a partaker of Christ; He places us firmly and securely in Christ; He joins us together, in the same Spirit, to all of the redeemed; He satisfies us deeply by letting us drink of the same fountain of living waters; He applies all of the power of the cross and resurrection to our sinful lives. This is what read in 1 Corinthians 12:13, ***"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."***

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This filling of the Spirit would be the very power by which the disciples would carry on the work of Jesus. We will see this in a moment. But first, we need to get the full idea of what is going on in this wild text. For next, we read in verse three of **“tongues as of fire.”** This is a picture of the work of the Spirit in the lives of the disciples. The verse goes on to say **“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.”** What is the point of this? Remember that the disciples first heard the Spirit coming and now they were actually seeing the Spirit descending and resting upon them in what appeared to be fire shaped like tongues.

I am sorry, but I can never read this without pausing and thinking, “This is just weird!” What an usual sight! The text seems to indicate that the Spirit of God manifest Himself as a unified body, pillar of fire that then broke out upon the heads of each disciple. The point of this show is to point out that the Spirit God comes upon every believer, not just an elite few. It reveals that the Spirit gives unity to the entire Body of Christ as this same fire rested upon each one individually. The picture of fire would symbolize purity, as fire purifies, but also of power, as fire fuels for service. And just what would be the service these disciples and the generation of disciples after them were to render?

We read in next in verse 4, that the disciples **“were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.”** As I already alluded to from Ephesians 5:18, we are all called to be continually filled with the Spirit. We are to know that infillings of the Spirit are to take place often. And, as we will see, the Holy Spirit fills us to enable us for service, not for self-consumption, and not for personal attention. The filling of the Spirit is not to make us feel better but to empower us to worship, to witness, and to service.

In our text, we read that the manifestation of being filled with the Spirit for these first believers was the ability to **“speak with other tongues.”** This is one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted areas of Scripture all because of a failure to take Scripture at face value.

When the text speaks of tongues here, the kind of tongues mentioned in this verse and throughout the book of Acts were always known languages or dialects. The text is extremely pointed on this. Look again at the three words in verse 4 where says that they “began to speak.” This phrase is never used to describe some unknown heavenly language or ecstatic ramblings, but is the common Greek phrase used to speak of human speech (*laleo*) throughout the New Testament. After this we read **“with other tongues,”** telling us that what they were saying was simply different known languages. The word “other” means “other than their own” (*heterais*) tongues, that is, tongues not native to their own. The word “tongues” (*glossai*) refers to languages, not ecstatic utterances or unintelligible speech.

And if we move on in the text, we see that this is exactly so from verses 5-11, since the known languages in which they were speaking were identified by the countries represented. The comment in verses 6 and 8 of the people hearing in their own “language” is the word “dialect” (*dialektos*), which means one's own manner of speech. Many of these languages were similar in background and sound yet different; just as the Swiss language is similar to the German language today, but the Swiss is considered a dialect.

I would also have you notice back in verse 3 that this divine power to speak known languages was from the Spirit as He was **“giving them utterance.”** This was the work of God to communicate the truth of the gospel to all the nations repressed in Jerusalem. The word **“utterance”** emphasizes “declarative speech” (*apophtheggomai*) as the disciples were making the truth of God known.

God the Holy Spirit came upon and filled these disciples with divine power in order that they may carry out the task God had purposed for them. He empowered them for this specific

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ministry. Now we most likely will never be called upon and empowered to speak with other tongues as it is not necessary to our circumstances today. But we are all called to be empowered by the Spirit for service to carry out the ministries that God has purposed for us. You and I are dependent upon the same power, even though that power will manifest itself in different forms. But the point is this – if you are filled with the Spirit of God, you will have power to fully carry out one or more ministries. This brings us to the fourth result of being filled with the Spirit:

#### **IV. The filling of the Spirit results in Proclamation of gospel truths (Acts 2:5-11)**

*5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."*

Let us read through verses 5-11 [read text]. Here we learn of two purposes for this particular manifestation of the power of the Spirit at work in the disciples. The first one is related specifically to the people of our text. For the filling of the Spirit and the speaking of other languages by the Spirit was to reveal to all these Jews that the Messianic age had come and that the promises of the Old Testament related to Messiah were fulfilled. These tongues then were given a sign to the Jews.

But additionally, as these uneducated Galileans were speaking in these other languages, what was its purpose? We the express purpose in verse 11 as they were communicating the "mighty deeds of God" in the native languages of this cosmopolitan gathering at Pentecost. This was not some rambling gibberish but each one was hearing these men and women giving testimony of God's saving power in their own language. No one was in the dark or misunderstood what was said. The point is that the filling of the Spirit was not without purpose; a purpose that is true for us as well! The Holy Spirit fills that we might speak "of the mighty deeds of God" to a lost world! In fact, I would offer to you that one of the keep evidence by which a person knows that he or she is filled with the Spirit, is simply this, is he or she speaking of the great saving power of God that has been realized in Jesus Christ?

We see this in Acts 4:31 as the church is gathered together praying, that is being obedient to gather together and to pray together, the first point we made. And when they had been obedient, what happened. We read,

**"And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness."**

(See also of the church in Acts 6:4-7 and of Stephen in Acts 6:8-10; 7:55-56; and of Paul Acts 9:17-20; 27; the Gentiles Acts 13:48-52). And if you would look with me at Ephesians 5:18-19 and notice the same thing is communicated. We read...

**18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord...**

*"...about all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:3).*

How can you know if you are filled with the Spirit? Are you speaking of the mighty deeds of God to others. It is that simple. So we have seen that being filled with Spirit results from the promise of God and from both personal and corporate obedience. It also results in power for service and proclamation of the truths of God to others. Let us quickly note the last result of being filled with the Spirit of God as seen in verses 12-13

## **V. The filling of the Spirit results in a perplexity for people (Acts 2:12-13)**

*12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."*

As we read our text, we are presented with two responses from unbelievers. The first response is that of wanting to know more as they ask the question, **"What does this mean?"** To these we can give our answers and share the Scriptures concerning Jesus. To these we must always, in the words of 1 Peter 3:15, be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks [us] to give an account for the hope that is in [us]." Be looking for people who have questions, who need to be guided in the Scriptures.

There is a second group mentioned here as well, those who scoff and mock and try to give excuses for not believing the testimony given concerning Jesus, saying things like, **"They are full of sweet wine."** In other words, "They must be drunk and therefore dim-witted, ignorant and irrational." You know people like this, who have every excuse for not believing what you share with them from the word of God concerning Jesus.

But the point is this, that disciples who are full of the Spirit speak the mighty things of God. The evidence that they are full of the Spirit is found not only in their speaking of such things, but also in the amazement and perplexity of the people who hear the testimony. In other words, if we are full of the Spirit, we will speak of what the Scriptures teach concerning Jesus, and when we do, it will push people to either want more information, asking "What does it mean" or push them away as they mock saying, "They must be full of sweet wine."

The point is that to be filled with the Spirit cause people to either question for more or to search for excuses as to why what we are doing must be wrong. The world looks upon following Christ as foolishness but the question is, do people know you are following Christ, not simply because you say so, but also because they can see something extraordinary at work in you. Have you believed the promise of God? Are you seeking to be personally and corporately obedient to God? These are the first steps to being filled with the Spirit. Then as you are being filled, it will result in power for service to the church – are you ministering to the body. It will result in power for proclamation of the gospel to others – are you speaking to others about Christ? These are all indications you are filled with the Spirit. And the last one – are people perplexed seeking for answers as to the difference in you. May these be what we pray for and seek that we might be as radical as these early believers to the glory of God.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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