

I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE

Acts 2:1-47

Key verse: 2:17

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”

Today we are continuing our special study out of the book of Acts in order to see God’s vision and live as Jesus’ witnesses. In the last passage, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to His apostles (Ac 1:4, 5). Today’s passage is the dramatic fulfillment of that. As we look at it, we can see the effect of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. And the Holy Spirit also has an effect on us. Let us see how.

First of all, through the Holy Spirit we can become international gospel preachers (vv. 1-13). The opening verses of chapter two describe the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was one of three annual feasts during which the Israelites were supposed to go to Jerusalem (Ex 23:17). So there were many Jews in Jerusalem at this time (vv. 9-11). It was not a coincidence that the Holy Spirit arrived on this day. It was God’s plan for the gospel to be preached to people from all over the world.

Verses 1-3 recount what happened: **“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”** The Holy Spirit’s coming was both audible and visible. He came in such a way so that His presence and power would be clear to those who witnessed it and were waiting for it.

In the Old Testament, God’s presence was often symbolized by fire. As it sat over the tabernacle, it was visible to all the Israelites, but inaccessible (Ex 40:34-38). They could see it, but they could not approach it.

Beginning with Jesus, and now through the Holy Spirit, God has come near to His people. At Pentecost, it was as if the Lord took from that fire of His presence and began to distribute it individually on those who were there. Believers have a very personal relationship with God and are united with one another through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one person, yet He resides in each of us. He is like the glue that holds the church together.

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It is also significant that the Holy Spirit came upon them in something that looked like tongues, for one of the main works of the Holy Spirit is to empower people for witness (Ac 1:8). God's people have been commissioned to make disciples by preaching the gospel and teaching God's Word (Mt 28:19, 20). So these tongues like fire visibly represent how the Holy Spirit was empowering them for service. It was to proclaim the gospel to all those who were gathered.

Verse 4 elaborates: **“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”** The word “tongues” here can also be translated as “languages.” As the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they were instantly able to speak in languages that they did not know. It can take years to master a new language, and even at that it requires practice and use to stay fluent. But here, immediately, the Spirit empowered them to speak in various languages with perfect articulation.

Verses 5-8 go on to say, **“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?’”** It was a remarkable event, and the Jews in Jerusalem were completely astonished when they heard the apostles speaking in so many different languages.

Verses 9-11 show just how remarkable this was by listing the various regions represented. This also gives us a glimpse of God's love for the world, and His plan for the gospel to go to the end of the earth. The good news about Jesus is for **“every nation under heaven”** (v. 5). That is why so many different groups are mentioned here. God had not only prepared the apostles to speak in various languages, but He also prepared an audience of international attendees who would be present to listen.

Notice verse 11 says that the apostles were **“declaring the wonders of God.”** They were not just having small talk over a cup of coffee or commenting on the weather. They were talking about the Lord and what He had done. The Bible records many of the wondrous things God has done for His people, but the most wondrous of all was in sending Jesus Christ to save the world from sin. There is nothing more wonderful to declare than that.

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We must not forget that the apostles were ordinary, country people, who had no formal training or education; but when they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, God made them into international gospel preachers and enabled them to speak to thousands of people from all over the world.

Many of us are also ordinary people without formal Bible training. Yet, the Holy Spirit has empowered us for witness so that we too can be international gospel preachers and Bible teachers. We may not always realize this. In fact, sometimes we treat the Holy Spirit like a winning lottery ticket that is just left sitting on the table doing nothing. Let me encourage you: be filled with the Holy Spirit, and let Him empower you to preach the gospel.

And let me also ask you to pray for the upcoming conferences in Europe and the CIS. We must especially pray for the speakers to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that they can be empowered as international gospel preachers. God has already prepared an audience for them. They must now go and proclaim God's Word.

Second of all, through the Holy Spirit we can become courageous (vv. 14, 15).

Verses 14 and 15 say, **“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!’”** Some of the Jews who had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit had simply dismissed it as drunken banter (v. 13). So Peter stood up with the other apostles and boldly confronted them.

In the gospels, the apostles had been anything but bold. When the temple police came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, they had all run away and fled (Mt 26:56). Later that night, while Peter was warming himself by the fire in the courtyard of the high priest, he denied even knowing Jesus, three times (Mt 26:69-75)! They had vowed to follow Jesus unto death (Mt 26:35). But when they were put to the test, by their own strength, they could do nothing. Fear overtook them, and they locked themselves in their room, afraid that the Jews would come for them next (Jn 20:19).

Yet by the power of the Holy Spirit they were completely transformed into courageous men of God. Thus Peter took his stand, raised his voice, and began to deliver a powerful sermon.

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Just like the apostles, we cannot be courageous without the Holy Spirit. Even inviting someone to join a Bible study or sharing our faith with a stranger can be an intimidating venture without God's help. I know this from my own experience. But **“the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”** (2Ti 1:7). The Holy Spirit is transforming us into bold and courageous people for God's work.

Third, through the Holy Spirit we can see God's vision (vv. 16-21). As Peter boldly got up to speak, he began explaining to the crowd that the power of the Holy Spirit, which they were witnessing, was something that had been prophesied in Scripture (v. 16).

Quoting from the prophet Joel, he said, **“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams”** (v. 17). Peter did not try to apply his own rational explanation to the Spirit's work, but rather he appealed to the authority of Scripture. What the people in Jerusalem were witnessing was not some random event. It had been foretold and ordained by God Himself.

The phrase “in the last days” points to the time between Christ's first and second coming. That is the time in which we are living, today.

During that time, God said, **“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** In the Old Testament, God would only give His Spirit to special people, namely prophets, priests, and kings. In a sense, the Holy Spirit was given in drops, here and there to certain individuals. Beginning at Pentecost, God began pouring out His Spirit on all people, not just some people.

This pouring out of the Spirit is God's vision for the world. For God **“wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”** (1Ti 2:4). God's intention was never just to save Israel, but to save the world. Even going back to Abraham (Ge 12:1,2), God's vision was to bless all people with salvation through Jesus Christ, regardless of nationality, ethnic background, skin color, family history, education, or spiritual condition.

Furthermore, when the Holy Spirit is poured out, those who receive Him also begin to see God's vision. This vision produces hope that God will change them into holy people. They begin to see the world from God's point of view, full of lost people who need the gospel of Jesus. And they see those in other countries,

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not from the popular viewpoint of the media, or the political viewpoint of their government, but from the viewpoint of God's Word.

This is what happened to the apostles when they received the Holy Spirit. Some of them were fishermen, like Peter. Perhaps he had a vision of owning an entire fleet of fishing boats, or opening a chain of fish stores all over Galilee. One of them was a tax collector, Matthew. He had dreams of material comfort and worldly success. If he had been around today, he may have dreamed about being the head of the IRS. But his vision of material comfort and worldly success had almost turned into a nightmare because he was despised by his own people as a traitor. Then there was Simon, the zealot. His vision was to make Israel a free nation again. Yet, this dream was repeatedly crushed under the grueling oppression of the Roman Empire. But then Jesus called them to follow Him. As they left behind their own trivial dreams, it was replaced by God's vision, which was something much greater; something they could never have even imagined. God wanted to use them to turn the world upside down by preaching the gospel. And when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, this vision and dream began to be fulfilled.

Verse 17 mentions young men. We are very familiar with young people, being a university-oriented church. Young people should have a vision for their life; but sadly, many of them do not have any vision at all because of sin. They believe that they will never be useful to God or be able to serve Him because of their past. Other young people lack vision due to hardship because of their family background or the way they grew up; so they have no hope for themselves. And there are others whose vision is like that of the apostles, having mundane dreams of worldly success. But through the Holy Spirit, young people can receive God's vision for their life, to preach the gospel and advance His kingdom. In our own church, we are blessed to be surrounded by so many young people whose vision is to serve the Lord, and many of them do so on their high school and college campuses.

Verse 17 also mentions old men. We are also very familiar with this group of people. Many people have dreams of some kind when they are young. But as they gradually get older and older and older, their dreams get dimmer and dimmer and dimmer. Whatever they had hoped to achieve when they were young often remains only a dream, until even the memory of it disappears. And so for many older people, life can become a series of one petty event after another. But the Holy Spirit is able to make old people dream dreams again. That is why there are so many older people in our church whose lives are not marked by playing bingo

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every Wednesday, but teaching the Bible. From my own campus at NEIU, Dr. Joseph and Esther Chung decided to go to Uganda as missionaries after retirement, and they are so happy. This kind of dream can only come through the Holy Spirit.

As for myself, for many years, I seemed to lack any concrete vision for my life. One of my first visions was to join the Navy after high school, but that changed when the Gulf War started. When I was in college, my vision changed from studying social work to business to philosophy. Later, when none of those came to fruition, I had a vision to go to Florida with my friend to sell real estate and make lots of money. But it was during this time that God began to show me another vision. This happened when the Lord brought me to UBF, and I began studying the Bible and being disciplined as a follower of Jesus. I fell in love with God's Word, and through many years of continuous Bible study, I began to see that God's vision for my life was to teach the Bible and be a part of God's kingdom work by proclaiming the gospel to college students. Now my vision is not to study philosophy or sell real estate, but to teach through the entire Bible in my lifetime. And my family has a vision, to go out either as missionaries or to plant a chapter or church. It is a far greater vision and dream than anything I had previously. And this vision is there because of the Holy Spirit!

Notice that verses 17 and 18 also mention prophesying. This refers to speaking forth God's Word. Having a vision to reach lost people with the gospel and teach the Bible is wonderful; but it accomplishes nothing unless we go and proclaim the truth. We need the Holy Spirit to both see God's vision and declare God's Word. So, the Holy Spirit empowers us so that we can have hope for lost sinners and preach the gospel to them.

God also gives a great promise here regarding His vision of world salvation. Verse 21 says, "**And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**" When the gospel is preached, all a person has to do is call on the name of the Lord in faith, and he will be saved. And God will pour out His Spirit on that person, give him vision, and transform him into a gospel preacher.

Finally, through the Holy Spirit we can testify of Jesus' death and resurrection (vv. 22-47). Having explained the arrival of the Holy Spirit, Peter then began to explain who Jesus was, and how His resurrection relates to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 22-24 read, "**Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which**

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God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Although the people had known of Jesus because of His miracles (v. 22), they did not know that He was the Lord (v. 36). Even today, many people know something about Jesus, but they deny that He is the Son of God. To really know who Jesus is, one must understand that He was crucified and then raised from the dead. Thus, Peter's sermon emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus, for it is the resurrection that sets Jesus apart from every other great teacher or martyr in history. This is at the heart of the gospel. And it is up to us to proclaim the gospel to others so that they can know who Jesus is.

Peter also explained the connection between Christ's resurrection and the Spirit's coming. Verses 32 and 33 say, **"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."** As we have already noted, the Holy Spirit's coming was not an afterthought on the part of God. So after Jesus ascended into heaven He did not leave His apostles alone to preach the gospel by their own strength. He promised them a Helper who would be with them forever (Jn 14:16). And so on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived exactly as He said (Ac 1:5).

Finally, Peter ended his message with an indicting statement: **"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah"** (v. 36). While we would expect most people to respond negatively to such a charge, the crowd here was deeply convicted of their sin. Verse 37 says, **"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"** Peter declared, **"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** (v. 38). The result was that about three thousand people were saved that day (v. 41).

And the Spirit's work did not end there. For as the church grew, the believers were filled with sincere love for one another and joyful fellowship (vv. 42-47). Such unity was only possible because of the Holy Spirit.

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Today we have seen what the Holy Spirit does and what effect He has on us. The Holy Spirit empowers us for witness. He makes us international gospel preachers. He gives us courage. He grants us vision and dreams to save the world. And He helps us to testify of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Lord is pouring out His Spirit on all people. He is pouring out His Spirit on our church, on our families, and on students on our college campuses here in Chicago. And He is pouring out His Spirit on the people of the Middle East, Europe, the CIS, and all nations of the world.

May the Holy Spirit who transformed the apostles and gave them a vision for the world, also transform us and give us a vision for the world as well.