

Holy Spirit Power

Acts 2:1-13

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Read Acts 2:1-13 while playing sounds of wind and showing video of Fire

This weekend, we're encountering some of the most important words ever written because this passage describes something entirely new and amazing. Here we see the birth of the church, the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the power for worldwide gospel proclamation.

During our journey through the Book of Acts we're learning what it means to live on mission. BTW, there are now over 2600 names up on the wall in the worship center! These are people you're praying will follow Christ. My understanding is this wall will be available for another week before it's covered with acoustic panels. I love being part of a church that longs for lost people to become faithful followers of Christ. Our text today is Acts 2:1-13. Here's what I'm hoping we learn: *The Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans.*

The Setting

Acts 2:1 establishes the setting: "***When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.***" Over the last couple weeks we discovered these first followers were told to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them before they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth. They had just returned from the Mount of Olives where they watched Jesus ascend into heaven and now they're back in Jerusalem waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost, means "*fiftieth*" in Greek and refers to the Jewish feast called *Shavuot* (shuh-voo-owt), held fifty days after the second day of Passover. It's also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22) and Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16).

Pentecost was one of three Old Testament festivals when people were to travel to Jerusalem with gifts and offerings. This feast celebrated the harvest and was filled with great rejoicing. Held in mid-June, it was the largest pilgrimage feast, filling Jerusalem with visitors.

It's fascinating how the calendar of Jewish feasts in Leviticus 23 outlines the work of Christ. I won't take a lot of time on this but consider just three:

- Passover pictures the sacrificial death of Jesus as the Lamb of God. 1 Corinthians 5:7: ***“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*** Jesus died on Passover.
- The Feast of First Fruits pictures His resurrection from the dead as seen in 1 Corinthians 15:20: ***“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”***
- The Feast of Pentecost, which was celebrated fifty days later, marks the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church.

My friend Gerad Hall is leading a team from Edgewood to Israel next June. Gerad is a Moody grad and works as a Development Director for Moody. He serves on a Jewish evangelism ministry board and has led many trips to Israel. This week I asked for his insight into why God sent the Holy Spirit on this particular feast day.

- Two loaves of wheat bread were waved before the Lord, which represents the Jewish and Gentile components of the church.
- During the first century a tradition developed that the Torah was given on Pentecost so it's appropriate the Spirit was given on the same day.
- Another tradition said David was born and died on Pentecost. Peter quotes extensively from David later in this chapter.

I'll add, since Pentecost is a harvest festival, it's appropriate we read of a great harvest of souls as a result of Peter's sermon in Acts 2:41: ***“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”*** This harvest of souls has continued for almost 2,000 years. Jesus put it like this in John 4:35: ***“Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”***

The phrase, ***“when the day of Pentecost arrived”*** literally means, ***“Had been completely fulfilled.”*** It's similar to the thought found in Galatians 4:4: ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...”*** The idea is not that Pentecost just happened but rather this particular Pentecost fulfilled its eternally determined destiny.

Notice also the believers ***“were all together in one place.”*** Other translations say they gathered ***“with one accord,”*** which means to ***“have one mind.”*** It's a musical

term meaning to strike the same notes together. These first followers understood the importance of gathering together. They had made a commitment to the community and nothing was going to get in their way. This was obviously a value because we see it three other times in the first two chapters.

Acts 1:14: “*All these with **one accord** were devoting themselves to prayer...*”

Acts 2:44: “*And all who believed **were together** and had all things in common.*”

Acts 2:46: “*And day by day, attending the temple **together**...*”

Think about what someone would have missed had they slept in that day or decided to play sports or go camping. In our context, I was thinking about how special it was last weekend when we showed the video of Edgewood member Ruth Darr living on mission by BLESSing people at Fareway. When we asked her to stand people applauded loudly. In the 10:45 service, the young man she became a “grandmother” to stood up in the back and came down front to give Ruth a hug. Ray ended up sitting with Ruth for the rest of the service. I realize not everyone can be here every weekend but I will say this – you don’t ever want to miss a service because you never know what you’re going to miss!

This reminds me of the young boy who had to stay home from church on Palm Sunday because he was sick. When family members returned home with palm branches, the father explained to the boy they had palms because when Jesus came to town everyone waved branches to honor him. The boy responded, “*Sure the one Sunday I skip church and Jesus shows up!*”

Spectacular Signs

The Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans. Let’s look now at three spectacular signs. These signs are audible, visual and verbal.

1. Power. The first sign is audible and is found in verse 2: “*And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.*” The word “*suddenly*” means this sound came abruptly, unexpectedly and immediately. That’s why we began the sermon with the unexpected sounds of a mighty wind.

This was not actual wind but ***“a sound like a mighty rushing wind.”*** This can be translated as a ***“violent blasting roar.”*** Like the sound of a raging tornado this roar filled not just the room they were in, but also the entire house. Verse 6 tells us it was so loud it drew the multitudes to come.

Notice they were ***“sitting.”*** This is significant because the normal posture for prayer was to stand or kneel. They didn't bring the Holy Spirit down by their actions or their intercessions. They were sitting because they were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came He came down unexpectedly and it was all God's doing.

The word for ***“wind”*** is also the word for Spirit and represents the power of God. We first see the Spirit's work in creation in Genesis 1:2: ***“And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”*** The Spirit's work in the new creation is seen in John 3:8: ***“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”***

2. Presence. The first sign of the invisible Spirit is extremely loud and the second sign is incandescently bright in verse 3: ***“And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”*** Notice the flames separated and come to rest on ***“each one of them.”*** No one was left out and no one was excluded.

Fire in the Bible represents God's purifying presence as seen in Exodus 3:2: ***“And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.”*** God also used fire to lead His people in Exodus 13:21: ***“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.”***

These first two spectacular signs are found together in Ezekiel 1:4, where we see God's power and His presence on display: ***“As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal.”***

3. Proclamation. The third stunning sign of the Spirit is verbal and found in verse 4: ***“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*** When all 120 believers were

filled with the Holy Spirit they started proclaiming their praises in a number of languages they had not spoken before. The word for **“tongues”** refers to intelligible languages. These were languages unknown to the speakers but clearly understood by the hearers.

Notice this was not a “prayer language” or “ecstatic utterances” but rather real languages understood by people from other countries. Look at verses 5-6: ***“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.”***

The word **“bewildered”** means they were confounded and confused because they were hearing the praises of God in their own native languages. We have a clue about this from the word **“language,”** which is the Greek word **“dialekto,”** from which we get dialect.

The people are particularly unsettled because they recognize those who are speaking these languages had never studied a foreign language. Look at verse 7: ***“And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’”*** They were beside themselves and out of their minds. They marveled and wondered because this was a miracle.

Listen to these responses recorded in just the first four chapters of the Book of Acts...

*Acts 2:43: “And **awe** came upon every soul...”*

*Acts 3:10: “And they were filled with **wonder** and **amazement**...”*

*Acts 4:13: “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were **astonished**...”*

It makes me wonder why I’m not more filled with awe, wonder, amazement and astonishment when I consider the mighty works of God.

This was really striking because Galileans were known to be uneducated and culturally backward. They were thought of as hicks and hillbillies, with a distinct dialect, much like someone from Wisconsin. They struggled to make the guttural sounds necessary for Aramaic and Hebrew and were known to make errors in

grammar and pronunciation. Pejoratively, they were called “people of the land” or “dirt people.”

These followers were flabbergasted because these Galileans could speak fluently in multiple languages and so respond in verse 8: ***“And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language?”*** When we consider the geographical areas where these pilgrims come from, it is even more remarkable. Check out verses 9-11: ***“Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”*** This list of 15 nations generally moves east to west and then north to south and encompasses three continents!

When these first missionaries returned to their countries they lived on mission, spreading the sweet savor of the gospel. In one generation the gospel exploded everywhere! We know how it all ends according to Revelation 7:9-10: ***“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”***

Let’s go back to the beginning. Adam and Eve were made in God’s image and their mission mandate was to multiply and fill the earth. After sin entered the world, humans were more interested in making a name for themselves. Instead of filling the earth, they came together in rebellion against God.

The wording in Acts 2, along with the reference to languages and many nations makes me think of Pentecost as a reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. Instead of spreading the fame of God’s name, Genesis 11:5 reveals the people’s self-centered pride and ambition as they declare, ***“let us make a name for ourselves.”*** As a result, Yahweh came down and confused their languages, spreading them out across the continents. In Acts 2, we see the Spirit of God coming down to proclaim salvation by making the gospel intelligible in all languages.

It's fascinating that God's first word to Abraham after the Babel incident in Genesis 12:1 is to **"go."** That's pretty cool in light of the Genesis mission to fill the earth with God's image.

Would you notice how God shows respect for each culture and language? This is important because Christianity is not a western white person's religion. Birthed in the Middle East, the gospel must go global. To evangelize effectively today, we must bridge cultural barriers and preach the gospel in one's heart language.

John Piper reminds us we're called to be sojourners, not settlers:

"Many churches need to be summoned forcefully out of a merely settler mindset to a pilgrim mindset...if the settler mindset dominates a church we will not reach our neighborhoods or networks of unbelievers, or the nations of the world for Christ. It isn't just missionaries that need a risk-taking, comfort-disturbing, semi-nomadic, pilgrim mindset. We all do. Christ did not call us to settle in on this earth as it is. He called us to be exiles and sojourners on the earth."

While these spectacular signs were unique and unrepeatable, we are called to live out their significance today. Some want to recreate the signs but the most important thing is to reflect their significance. The signs are incidental but the Holy Spirit is essential.

Since *the Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans*, here are three significant truths to apply.

Significance

1. The Holy Spirit has been universally poured out on all believers. In the Old Testament, God's Spirit settled upon a few selected individuals but since Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes upon every believer at the moment of conversion. Instead of only being *with* the disciples, the Holy Spirit took up residence *within* them, and is now within every born again believer.

This fulfills what Jesus said in John 14:16-17: ***"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."***

2. God's plan is to spread the glory of the gospel to all nations through the church. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18: *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Ephesians 3:10 says, *"So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."*

David Platt puts it like this: *"The church is God's plan A. There is no plan B."* Ever since the birthday of the church in Acts 2, the church's mandate is to gather, grow, give and go with the gospel.

3. All believers are now empowered to be witnesses for Christ. The meaning of Pentecost was not to encourage believers to have an ecstatic experience for their own edification but that we might be empowered to live on mission by telling the story of His glory. Because we have the Holy Spirit you and I can now fulfill the mission mandate found in Acts 1:8: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

The Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans. When the Holy Spirit fills us, Acts 4:31 gives us our task: *"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak."*

I've been reflecting on something Vance Havner said: *"We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God."*

A powerful example of a witness ignited by the Spirit of God took place this week. Here's the backstory...

One year ago in Dallas, Amber Guyger entered the apartment of Botham Jean and shot and killed him. This past week she was found guilty of murder and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Botham's brother Brandt was allowed to appear before the judge to give a victim-impact statement. He addressed Amber Guyger directly. What happened next can only be explained by the power of the Holy Spirit speaking through him as he gave a strong witness for Christ.

If you truly are sorry, I can speak for myself, I forgive, and I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you...I love you just like anyone else. And I'm not gonna say I hope you rot and die just like my brother did, but I presently want the best for you...I don't even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you, because I know that's exactly what Botham would want you to do. And the best would be to give your life to Christ...I think giving your life to Christ would be the best thing that Botham would want you to do. Again I love you as a person and I don't wish anything bad on you.

Then he turned to the judge and made a request: *"I don't know if this is possible, but can I give her a hug, please? Please?"*

After granting this hug, reporters tell us the judge exhibited some amazing grace when she came down from the bench and spoke to Amber. She left the room and returned with a Bible and gave it to her and said these words: *"This is your job while you're in custody."* She turned to [John 3:16](#) and said: *"You did something bad in one moment in time. What you do now matters."*

We've looked at the setting, the signs, and the significance related to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Let's conclude by considering a summary of how people responded.

Summary

We see two primary responses anytime the Spirit is moving and the gospel is communicated.

1. Some are receptive. Look at [verse 12](#): *"And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'"* This group was open and wanted to know more. Their questions sent them on a quest to know more about Christ. To be *"perplexed"* means they had some doubt but they were willing to deal with their doubts.

2. Others are resistant. We see this in [verse 13](#): *"But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine.'"* The *"new wine"* was the cheap harvest wine, which was highly intoxicating. This group was closed and wanted nothing more. Instead of being amazed, they chose to mock. To *"mock"* means they thought it

was all a joke, using insults as they turned their noses up. Even a miracle won't convince a mocker.

How are you going to respond today? Will you be receptive or will you resist? Are you going to make fun or will you move forward in faith? I'm reminded of the response to one of Paul's sermons in Acts 17:32-33: ***“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’ So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed...”***

What happened *to* the first followers and how God worked *through* them can and must happen *to* and *through* us today because the *Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans.*

I want to introduce you to a family living on mission in some amazing ways. Dave and Denise Browning, along with their 11-year-old twins, David and Tori, are experiencing the Holy Spirit giving them power to accomplish His plans.

- 1. How has the Holy Spirit given you power to live on mission?**
- 2. Can you share a story about how God is using you as you seek to BLESS others?**
- 3. What has God been teaching you as you reach out?**

New Member – Diana Sauser (10:45)