



"The New Wine of Christ" Sermon Series: "The Way of the Spirit"

Acts 2:1-13

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Acts 2:1-13 (New International Version)

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."^[b]

Footnotes:

- a. [Acts 2:4](#) Or languages; also in verse 11
 - b. [Acts 2:13](#) Or sweet wine
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Introduction.

Long before there was an Austin City Limits or South by Southwest, there was Woodstock and there was also Georgia's version of it – the Atlanta Pop Festival. The summer before my senior year in high school, three friends and I attended the Atlanta Pop Festival in 1970. It was a large outdoor musical gathering somewhat like ACL, but over 350,000 people turned out for the three-day event. We camped in tents in the middle of a pecan grove and cooked our meals over portable gas stoves. All the big names in rock 'n roll were there, and it was a wild time!

Aside from the shortage of water, the only problem with event was the heat. The festival took place over the 4th of July, and the temperature was off the charts. Fifty-cent bags of ice soared to \$5 a piece. One afternoon, my friends and I were throwing a Frisbee between the pecan trees where our tent was set up, having the time of our lives. Everyone else was sprawled out in the shade, exhausted, trying to stay cool, and perhaps a bit droopy from the drugs that were omni-present that weekend.

One of my friends threw an errant Frisbee over my head, and I raced to chase it down, sweat dripping off my face. As I picked it up near a neighbor's campsite, he asked me in a drug-induced fog, "Dude. What are you guys on?!" I thought for a moment and replied, "Gatorade, man. Gatorade!" The guy figured I had to be high on something to be running around like that in the heat, but I was really just high on life and high on Jesus.



This morning we study a passage of Scripture in which the early followers of Christ were suspected to have been drunk on new wine because of their actions. However, it was simply the result of an outpouring of God's Holy Spirit in their lives. The event marked the birth of the Church, and the world has never been the same since.

When was the last time you were excited about your faith like these early disciples? When were you last amazed at what God was doing in your life and in the world? And how long has it been since you felt the power of God's Spirit flowing through your life? Maybe a fresh look at this passage can make a difference for you.

I. The Record of the Events.

The **first** thing I notice about the record of events that day is **the occasion**. Luke's narrative opens with a brief, rather matter-of-fact, reference to the time and place when the Holy Spirit was given. The text tells us, "*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place*" (2:1). Pentecost was a Jewish festival, and it was sometimes called the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks in the Bible. Originally, it was the middle of the three annual Jewish harvest festivals,

The name Pentecost means "fiftieth", and the festival was given that name because it was celebrated on the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week (see Lv. 23:15-16 and Dt. 16:10). Toward the end of the inter-testamental period, the 300 years before Christ, Pentecost also began to be observed as the anniversary of the giving of the Old Testament law at Mount Sinai to Moses, because this was believed to have taken place 50 days after the Exodus.

The **second** thing I notice about the record is **the Gift of the Holy Spirit**. Luke writes, "*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. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them*" (2:2-4). The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by three supernatural signs - sound, sight, and speech.

We are told that **the sound** came from heaven, and it was like the sound of a violent blowing wind. The noise was not the wind, but it sounded like it. This represented the breath, or in Hebrew the *ruah*, of God, and it was a symbol of His power. It reminds me of the Chinook winds that used to tear down the valley over the Flatiron mountains when Lorie and I lived in Boulder.

The sight - there appeared to the disciples visibly what seemed to be tongues of fire which separated and came to rest on each believer that was gathered in that upper room. This represented the presence and purity of God, and it was reminiscent of the live coal which cleansed Isaiah's lips (Is. 6:6,7).

The strange speech - the disciples were enabled to speak in other languages so that those gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost from around the world were able to hear them declare the wonders of God in their own language. It was not a gift of hearing; it was a gift of speech. This represented the voice of God and the universality of the message.

The text goes on to tell us that the city of Jerusalem was filled with people from all over the world that day. Luke's list comprises 5 groupings of 15 people groups moving from East to West on a map. It was an international, multi-lingual crowd that gathered around the 120 believers, and they heard the disciples speaking in their own language the mighty things of God.

The people took note that the speakers were Galileans (v.7), who had a reputation for being uneducated. Galileans had difficulty pronouncing gutturals, and they had the habit of swallowing



syllables when they spoke.ⁱ Yet these people from around the world were hearing the mighty deeds of God spoken by Galileans in their own native language, and they were blown away.

The **final** thing I notice about the record is that **the results of the coming of the Spirit were evident to everyone**. Formerly timid disciples became bold proclaimers, and life would never be the same for these early followers of Jesus. God poured out His Spirit upon them, and they felt a new power. They were different people. We also see that later in this chapter 3,000 people committed their lives to Christ that day, and the power of God's Spirit changed them forever.

When I was a boy, one of the favorite things I liked to do growing up in Atlanta during the summer was to catch the little lightening bugs or fireflies that came out as dusk in my back yard. I always wondered, "How do they do that? Where does the power come from?" I've since learned that the glow is caused by a chemical reaction, but I continue to be amazed and the power of light in such a tiny bug.

On the day of Pentecost 2,000 years ago, God sent His Holy Spirit to empower His people. It enabled them to glow for Christ in a new way. The power of the Holy Spirit is somewhat of a mystery, like the glow of the little lightening bug, but that power is indispensable if we want to live effectively for Christ.

John Stott has written:

"Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead."ⁱⁱ

It's just that simple.

II. The Meaning for Us Today.

A couple of weeks ago, I shared with you how we all seem to lack power in our lives these days. At some point we exhaust our human resources to deal with all that life throws at us, and we feel powerless. In a moment's time each of us can be taken to our knees.

I read a passage like this and I wonder, "How can I get some of that myself?!" Wouldn't it be great to be able to tap into a source of power to give us strength when we are weak, wisdom when we are confused, and guidance when we are lost? Wouldn't it be awesome to be able to overcome our problems and live the life we were made for?

The amazing truth of the Bible is that the same power about which we read in this passage is available to you and me today. God's Holy Spirit is still alive and at work in the world, and God wants to empower you and me with it. This doesn't mean that all of a sudden we can leap tall buildings in a single bound (!), it doesn't mean all our problems will go away and we'll live happily ever after. But it does mean we can experience the power of God in our ordinary lives to help us live in extraordinary ways.

The thing that strikes me most about this passage isn't the supernatural phenomenon of the tongues of fire and the gift of speech so that people from around the world could hear the gospel in their own language, as amazing as that is. It isn't even the fact that later in the chapter 3,000 people give their lives to Christ and want to be baptized. To me the most powerful thing in this passage is the radical transformation that took place in the disciples' lives.

Just a few weeks before Pentecost, these same people all abandoned Jesus and denied ever knowing Him. They cowered in fear and hid behind locked doors. But here we see them going out into the street and boldly proclaiming the truths of God to whoever would listen. That's the kind of power I want to have in my life. It's a power that can transform a person.



The power of God's Spirit is available to you and me today, just like it was to the disciples in this passage. The Lord wants to fill us with His Holy Spirit and enable us to become remarkable people who do remarkable things in service to a remarkable Savior. I really believe that. The question is will we let Him? Will we let Him have His way and tap into the source?

I look back over my life, and I see the power of God at work in many ways, not because I was special but because God is powerful. I have been so blessed to experience His grace, and the transformation He's brought about has surprised me. I'll give you a few examples.

When I was in high school I weighed 244 pounds, and I struggled with low self-esteem. I had a great fear of failure, and I hid behind my humor. I remember the night I looked for sleeping pills and thought about taking my life. But when I decided to follow Jesus, the Lord took hold of my life. He brought meaning and purpose and gave me a reason to live. Over a period of time I lost 70 pounds, I grew in confidence that God had given me some gifts and might want to use me, and my whole outlook on life was transformed from one of melancholic darkness to hopeful optimism. If you had told me in high school that today I would make my living by standing in front of you and speaking as a preacher, I would have told you. "You are crazy." But God does crazy things. Just look at Pentecost.

When I was 29-years-old, I began to experience a pain in my hip that shot down my right leg. The pain worsened and spread to both legs, and eventually I was crippled. I remember the Sunday morning Lorie had to dress me for church because I couldn't move without pain. After talking to several doctors and taking a battery of tests, I was finally diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. The good news was they could treat it with anti-inflammatory drugs. The bad news was the drugs had many side effects which affected my GI track, and I ended up in a vicious cycle of steroids and other drugs to try and control the other medications.

When Lorie and I moved to Washington, D.C. to serve my first church after graduating from seminary, I discovered the pastor and Session there believed in healing prayer. I asked them if they would anoint me with oil, lay hands on me, and pray for my healing as it suggests we do in James 5. They did, and after talking with my doctor I backed off the medication slowly with no ill effects, and eventually I was off all the drugs completely and realized I had been healed. I've been pain-free ever since except for an occasional twinge. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

A few years ago when Lorie and I lived in Boulder, we both got to the place in our marriage where we were way too busy and we started to drift apart. I thought she was cold and unsupportive; she felt I was absent and uncaring. Our communication devolved into either long seasons of silence or angry arguments, and I came to the place where I wondered if we were going to make it in our marriage. But God's Spirit convicted both of us of our sin, and we started to do the hard work of pushing past our hurt and anger and we began to do the things we did at first when we fell in love so long ago. By the power of God's Holy Spirit we fell in love again, and today I can't imagine life without my bride. God rekindled our romance, and we've never been more in love. That's the power of the Spirit.

When our oldest son Nate was in high school, he chaffed against the role of being a preacher's kid, and he hated living in the fish bowl of a pastor's family. He struggled in school, and he didn't choose the best circle of friends. We lost him for a few years as he tried to find himself, and it was a scary time for Lorie and me. But God gave us encouragement in a bumper sticker Lorie saw one day. It was a quote by J.R.R. Tolkien which read, "All who wander are not lost."

We continued to pray for Nate, we kept the lines of communication open, and by God's grace he came through those rough years in a miraculous way. Today, thanks to the power of God's Spirit, he loves the Lord, and he's become a remarkable young man. He married an amazing woman named Holly



who just graduated with her Masters in Counseling, and they have a great marriage. I confess there were times when I wondered how things would turn out, but God has been faithful, and His Spirit is still at work today.

The power of the Holy Spirit isn't magic, and rarely does God overwhelm or overrule us. More often than not, He invites our cooperation and He engages us in the transformation. God can't steer a parked car, and we've got to get moving if we want to experience the Spirit's power. Notice these believers were gathered together in prayer, they were seeking the Lord in earnest, and there was a unity to their fellowship. Those are keys to remember if you and I want to experience God's power.

Conclusion.

Pentecost is still happening in the world today, my friends. The question is do we want to be a part of it? And will we let the Lord be in charge of our lives and our church, or will we try to do things on our own power and in our own strength. Oh, that the Spirit of God might be poured out on this congregation afresh!

Gatorade had a recent ad campaign which featured athletes reaching the point of extreme exhaustion. A boxer, a gymnast, a runner, or a football player all push themselves to the limit. As the athletes pause to rehydrate, in addition to sweat pouring from their faces and bodies, something else appears - a different, brightly-colored liquid the same color as the sport drink, and trickles down their faces. Finally, with pictures of these highly conditioned athletes still pumping away, the commercial asks, "Is it in you?" The same question could be asked of you and me regarding the Holy Spirit? Is it in you? Do you sense the power, or are you running on empty?

On February 2, 1985, the Daytona 500 had just begun. The drivers were beginning their 3rd lap, when all of a sudden the car which was driven by Donnie Allison, rolled to a complete stop on the infield side of the track. When it was checked, they found out that someone had failed to fill up the tank with gas!

How many of us try to live our lives, run our businesses, raise our families, achieve at school, or lead this church for that matter, without a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to empower and guide us? How often do we try to go it alone as we face the challenges of our day? May we lean on the Lord in a new way in this new week with the new wine of Christ, because the power of God's Spirit is available to you and me today. Amen.

ⁱ See Richard Longenecker, *Acts*, p.272. See also Mt. 26:73 and Lk. 22:59.

ⁱⁱ John R.W. Stott, *The Spirit, The Church and the World*, p.60.

