

Acts 2:1-21 Momentous Gift - The Spirit! Falls Church AM 6/5/22

The book of Acts is about Jesus.

The Jesus who died on the cross on Good Friday, then rose again, ascended to heaven, and sent The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God was present, but always temporarily, and limited for special purposes. For example, we read in the Book of Numbers chapter 11, that the Spirit of God temporarily came upon two men, in the camp of Israel, and for one moment, enabled these two men to prophesy the Word of God. Compare that with the way that the New Testament speaks about the Holy Spirit. For example, we read in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1, that God filled John the Baptist and his parents with the Spirit. And another example in John 3:34, we learn that God the Father gave to Jesus the gift of God the Holy Spirit “*without measure.*” Why? Why was Jesus given the Spirit without measure? For a reason. When in Matthew 16:18, Jesus gathered the twelve disciples, Jesus did not say that He was going to build the nation of Israel, or the religion of the Jews known as Judaism. No. Instead, Jesus said in Matthew 16, “I will build _____” Do you remember what Jesus said? What would Jesus build? Jesus said, “I will build My church.” Jesus was given the Spirit without measure in order to build His Church. We learn from John 7:39, that as long as Jesus was not yet glorified, the Holy Spirit would not yet come. Only after Jesus was glorified, would Jesus then breathe on them the Holy Spirit in anticipation of the actual outpouring of the Spirit from heaven on the Day of Pentecost. After Jesus’ resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus breathed on His disciples and said in John 20:22-23 “*Receive the Holy Spirit...*” Then, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit descended upon the apostles, the women and Mary, the brothers of Jesus, and other people, 120 people in all. Do you see the difference between the OT and NT, with regard to the Holy Spirit’s presence? This was no longer temporary, limited in time, and only for a special assignment. The gift of the Spirit here was permanent, pervasive, and for many, many good and constant assignments of upbuilding for the church. God gave the Spirit to be with His church continuously! We have the Spirit!

Jesus had told His people to begin building the church in Jerusalem. So, here in Acts chapter 2, the apostle Peter, in harmony with Jesus’ command to begin building the church in Jerusalem, stood up and proclaimed the gospel of Christ in the holy city of Jerusalem, immediately that very same day. Later, Peter would also go out and preach in Samaria and Caesarea. In each of these places where Peter preached, we read that the Holy Spirit was poured out. So, from the very start, the gift of the Holy Spirit was in order to launch and build the church, and also from the very start, the church of Christ Jesus was designed as a universal and worldwide church.

After Christ ascended, He gave us a momentous gift – the Spirit!

1. Know about the grand event, and celebrate. (v.1-4)

What is the basic idea about the grand event that you need to know? That it was an action of God as significant as the creation in the first place. In a sense, God was re-creating the world. Let me show you from verses 1-4.

Verse 1 – the day of Pentecost arrived. It was an annual festival set up by God in the Old Testament. God was about to fulfill the Day of Pentecost in a new way.

Verse 2 – the first thing we are told is something that they heard. We read about a sound that came from heaven. We need to focus on the sound like wind. “*sound like a mighty rushing wind...*” Where was the sound? The sound “*...filled the entire house where they were sitting.*”

What is the first thing we are told about the original creation? In Genesis 1:2, “*...the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*” This was not some light and airy fluttering, like a butterfly fluttering past our ears. No, this was the sound like the wind of God. The creative, moving, dynamic, life-giving breath of God blowing across the waters.

Then, in Genesis 2, God created Adam from dust. What did God do into the nostrils of the dust body of Adam? God breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and he became a what? By the breathing of God into him, Adam became a living being!

In John 3:8, Jesus said the wind blows wherever it pleases. We hear its sound, but we cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

Just as God breathed into Adam to give him life, so also again, to be born again or born from above, God must breathe into us to make us spiritually living beings.

In Acts 2, we have the story of God re-creating. Here is the best part. The heavens and the earth formed by the Spirit in Genesis 1 will pass away, but the work done by the Spirit in the hearts of men, which started in Acts 2 is eternal. We must be born from above, in order to live forever! In verse 4, the disciples were filled with the Spirit, and began to speak, **AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM UTTERANCE**. Let’s move on to see the amazing thing The Spirit was doing!

2. Learn about the power, and be amazed. (v.5-13)

Verse 5, there were holy people from all around the world gathered in Jerusalem. Verse 6, when they heard this sound from heaven, the people came together, and they were bewildered, because each of them was hearing the disciples speaking, and yet each one of them heard the message in his own language! Verse 7, They were amazed, and we are amazed right with them!

Verse 8 – how does that work? The Spirit of God uses the Galilean disciples to preach, and yet all the nations hear in their own native language? It is a miracle

of God to show that the church that just was launched, is going to preach to be spread through all the world, and preach God's Word to all the nations!

Verses 9, 10 and 11, we get a sample list of nations represented that day. Verse 12, they ask what it means, for they did not yet understand.

Notice verse 13. We already have haters. We have people who are suspicious, and it is the first day of the church's existence! We have people who mocked the Galilean disciples of Jesus, and said that the reason they were speaking in a way that everyone could hear in their own language was because of wine. The mockers in the crowd, in the presence of the miraculous work of the Spirit of God to bring good news of rescue of sinners to all nations, said it was because the disciples were drunk. What do we need to learn from verse 13? We need to learn that there were two categories of reactions to the church from the first moment of the church. The two reactions were for and against! Amazed and skeptical! Believing and not believing!

Some wanted to know more and understand. Others scoffed and accused.

The Holy Spirit brings new life to those who believe in Jesus.

We keep in mind that there will always be two reactions to the gospel news and to the actions of God. We build the church anyway, knowing that God helps us carry on with His work. Learn the power, and be amazed. Now our 3rd point.

3. Understand Peter's explanation, and call on God. (v.14-21)

Look at verse 14 – Peter stood up. Peter took a stand. It does not mean that he arose from a sitting position to a standing position. Rather, it means that he faced the multitude. In a crowd divided and in a world divided, Peter took a stand on the side of God and His Kingdom. Peter became an official spokesperson to officially provide the correct interpretation of the momentous events of that incredible day. We might say that Peter took to the podium. We might think of it as Peter calling a press conference. Peter literally stood, alongside the eleven, representing the church standing before the nations, in front of the representatives of the gathered and watching world, with a message from God to them all about the events that they literally heard.

Notice in verse 14, who was with Peter – the Eleven! The presence of the other apostles, now next to Peter, conveys to the crowd that Peter speaks on behalf of the Twelve. All twelve of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter was preaching, and the Eleven were there with him. Together, they stood in the presence of the thousands of Jews in the temple area that day. Peter spoke to them boldly and confidently, with the full required number of 120 leaders needed to form a new community according to Jewish law.

The main point of Peter's sermon is to trace the gift of the Spirit back to Jesus. The Spirit's coming was an act of Jesus, who now lived in heaven. It was

Jesus who had sent the Spirit. All of this noise like wind, and the languages, this was actions of Jesus – Jesus was up to something. The same Jesus that was crucified and buried and rose again and ascended – that Jesus was doing something.

Verse 15, what was the first thing Peter talked about? Peter countered their false accusation about drunkenness, with a remark that would appeal to the common sense of the audience. It was only nine o'clock in the morning.

Verse 16. After refuting that claim about drunkenness, what did Peter say next? Peter turned to Scripture, quoting from the Old Testament prophet of Joel.

Peter followed the pattern Jesus had taught the apostles – first open the Scriptures, and then explain how those Scriptures are fulfilled by Christ, and then apply it to the people of God. So, Peter read words from the ancient book of Joel, who had predicted the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Then, Peter explained those words from Scripture. Literally in verse 16, Peter said “THIS IS THAT.” This is that. You know how Joel prophesied the Spirit coming down? This event today is that prophecy coming true.

Notice the verb in verse 17 is “POUR OUT,” like the rains of a heavy tropical rainstorm. It is a downpour. We are drenched with the Spirit. The generosity of God in giving us His Spirit abundantly is clearly the message here. The Spirit's coming is just as final and as irreversible as the resurrection of Jesus. Peter himself showed the crowd what it was like to have a man of God filled with the Spirit of God. Peter was giving them truth about Christ, from the Scriptures.

Verse 18, the mention of servants shows that God granted His Spirit to all classes of society. Every believer, irrespective of their outward status – young or old, male or female, red and yellow, black and white, servants and masters, well educated or not, – all received the Spirit. What is the result? At the end of verse 18 we read it plainly, “*And they shall prophesy!*”

The gift of the Spirit to everyone leads to everyone speaking about how great is our rescue in the Lord Jesus Christ! The Old Testament expectation of Joel was that in the New Testament days the knowledge of God would belong to everyone. All of God's people are now prophets, priests, and we are all kings. It means we can share Scriptures with each other, we can pray for each other, and we can defend each other. This is the Reformed position on Pentecost. Martin Luther understood prophecy as the knowledge of God through Christ which the Spirit kindles and makes to burn within us by the word of the gospel. John Calvin wrote that prophecy signifies simply the rare and excellent gift of understanding. In Jeremiah 31:34 God said they will all know Me. 1 Thessalonians 4:9, we read “*you yourselves have been taught by God.*” 1 John 2:27, God's anointing *teaches you about all things.*” Every Christian has the Spirit and the Word.

Verses 19-20, the wonders and signs written here, had been fulfilled at the time of the cross of Jesus. During Jesus death on the cross, darkness came over the land for three hours (Matthew 27:45). The sun was no longer visible. The signs of that time were an eloquent testimony to Christ's death. On none of the occasions of the outpouring of the Spirit were there reported these signs in the sky as Joel had predicted them. When the Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4), in Samaria (Acts 8:17), in Caesarea (Acts 10:44), and in Ephesus (Acts 19:6), no one reported that the sun went black. Rather, these signs were all already fulfilled at the cross of Jesus, not meant to be repeated at the coming of the Spirit.

Verse 21, Peter applied his sermon to each person within the crowd. Peter offered each listener Christ's gospel, and Peter told them to call upon the name of the Lord. We each continue to call on God for our own rescue from our sins.

Conclude: Two applications to us: 1) Remember what adjective is used to describe the Spirit. The Spirit in us is the Holy Spirit. That is a call to us to live holy lives. Of course we cannot, so we run to Christ and His cross to receive forgiveness.

2) Read your Bible.

That might seem like a surprising application, but to be filled with the Word is to be filled with the Spirit and to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word. Never fall into the error that the Spirit works independently of the Word of God. No, the Spirit works to illuminate the Word of God to us.

Do you know how you can tell that you are having an increasing working of the Spirit of God in your life? You will hunger more and more for God's Word, to read it, to study it, and to hear it proclaimed. Why should we sinners care about God's Word? Because God has sent His Spirit to give us life in our hearts and minds! This is the powerful gift of the Day of Pentecost.

The Pilgrim's Progress is a book about Christians walking through life in this world. It is a religious allegory by the English writer John Bunyan, published in two parts in 1678 and 1684. When the main character Pilgrim, who represents us as Christians, enters the house of one called "Interpreter" that represents the Holy Spirit.

Let me try to illustrate the Momentous Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Years and years ago, at this location where our church building is today, if we go back to the 1800s, there were just a few farms. If they wanted water, they would get it from a well, and then carry it in buckets to their homes and barns.

But then, beginning about 1920 in America, plumbing was added.

Fast forward 100 years and today, what a wonderful convenience that in our homes we can turn on a faucet, and water comes out!

Now, they are building new homes all around our area.

Will they need to spend some years carrying water in buckets from a well?

No. Their homes will be connected to the plumbing.

In the same way, when a new person comes to Christ, he or she does not have their own personal Pentecost, any more than they would need to have their own personal Calvary. They each get connected to Jesus Christ by faith, and they each get Christ's death at Calvary for each of them, Christ's resurrection for each of them, and Christ's gift of His Spirit for each of them.

Each of us, by faith, gets Christ, and all of His blessings. One of Christ's blessings is the Bible. Our one application is read your Bible!

Colossians 3:16, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*