



3 | ACTS 2:1-13

PENTECOST: LOVE CAME DOWN

God wants us to experience a fresh outpouring of his love through his Spirit and by his Word, that it will shake the nations with the embrace of divine love.

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On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. —John 7:37-39

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction

We continue our series in the book of Acts called “Life on Life Discipleship.” Our title this morning is: “Love Came Down at Pentecost”.

Our study this morning brings us to the first great outpouring of love from God on the nations. This is not just a promise for the first generation, but every generation till Jesus comes again. I want to experience an outpouring of the love of God this morning. Right now, may the Spirit fill us and cover us with infinite divine love that satisfies every longing, every dream, every desire. That’s what we are studying this morning.

What would it look like to have true visitation from God here at Living Hope? When he visited the earth in human flesh, it was in a very humble place: in Bethlehem, which was such a little forgotten town. God visited us in a barn with animals. When God shows up, he shows up for the humble. It’s always for the powerless, so that his glory can be displayed.

In the book of Acts, at Pentecost, God came down in his Holy Spirit, and he visited those 120 disciples, who were waiting for that power, to be clothed with power from God. They were powerless and humble and hungry. They knew what needed to be done but had no power to do it. But they knew who had the power. How do we get that special outpouring of the Spirit? Jonathan Edwards, the leader of the Great Awakening some 250 years ago in this country, put it like this:

Special Movements of God: From the fall of man to our day, the work of redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by extraordinary movements of the Spirit of God. Though there is a more constant influence of God's Spirit always in some degree attending his means of grace, yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work, always have been by remarkable outpourings at special seasons of mercy.¹ –Jonathan Edwards

In other words, from time to time, God has moved in extraordinary ways in history through the outpouring of his Spirit on his church to do extraordinary things. God has poured out his Spirit in fresh, new, uncustomary, dramatic ways. These times have been called times of revival or awakening or reformation.

These kinds of revivals or reformations often come at times with the moral fabric of a society is ripping apart, and they change the moral fabric of society to reflect Christ. I want to consider how this first happened in Acts 2 to increase your expectation for the Spirit of God for us today.

¹ Jonathan Edwards. “A History of Redemption”, *Works*, vol. 1 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 539.

A Brief History of Revival

Dear saints, we desperately need revival in our country. We need personal revival in our own lives. They needed revival at the time of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Spirit was an absolute necessity. The Roman empire was teetering and weak. In the first three centuries, Rome was falling apart, and the Gospel's power spread so quickly, that by the third century, the Roman Emperor Constantine, as misguided as he was, recognized that Christians were the only stable fabric of society.

Many awakenings have come since then through men like Peter Waldo (b. 1140), John Wycliffe (b. 1320), and John Hus (b. 1369), but in recent history, we see God breaking forth afresh beginning in 1517 with Martin Luther, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit followed for fifty years. Over 2000 new congregations of born-again Christians are started throughout Europe through men like Luther, Calvin, John Knox, and William Tyndale.

The Moravians experienced revivals in the sixteen and seventeen hundreds. Some of the churches during this time in what is today the Czech Republic ministered to around 20,000 people each week in one congregation with various languages. God can do anything!

When God moves, time stops. The Spirit ministers through prayer meetings that seem to have no end. We've seen God pour forth in our own country with many awakenings beginning with Jonathan Edwards in the 1700s and then the second Great Awakening in the 1800s which created the modern missions movement. After that came the third Great Awakening through D.L. Moody and William Booth in the early 1900s. then most recently, in the 1960s and 70s, God moved again through the Jesus movement where many hundreds of thousands were swept into the kingdom. Some of you here are old enough that you were alive when that happened, and you can remember.

Again, I want to emphasize that each of these outpourings have occurred when the country or nation was facing deep unrest. I believe we have come again to a time in our nation when we need to ask the Lord again for his reviving and refreshing presence. My intent is to consider what God has done and can do for us by looking at our text in Acts 2.

In Acts 2, we witness an event that changed human history. A small group of ignorant, uneducated men and women from marginal class in a marginal people group in the Roman Empire, within two centuries became the most powerful force in that Roman Empire. How is that? I understand this is a unique moment, but it is also a moment that carries on to us today. It's a power of the Person of the Holy Spirit that continues to be poured out to all nations, as he promised. Every nation will crumble, but what remains will be the true Christians, anointed with the Holy Spirit. As nations teeter and crumble, God often moves in and does his best work.

Pentecost was the first of these great outpourings on the Christian church, and until the task of world evangelization is completed, I believe it is our duty to pray for fresh seasons of the extraordinary outpouring of God's Spirit—to awaken and empower the church and to penetrate the final frontiers of world evangelization.

TWO MEANINGS OF PENTECOST

So let's go back to the first Pentecost of the New Testament church. Let's look at the very first of the Great Awakenings if you will. You ask, "How did that happen?" You can read the whole book of Acts and you'll see them burning but not burning out, a flame, but not flaming out. Why did Jesus choose Pentecost as the day when he would pour out the Spirit on the disciples? There are two possible reasons.

Feast of the First Fruits

The original meaning of Pentecost was that it was the Feast of the First Fruits. The harvest of first fruits happened about 50 days after Passover. That's where you get the word *Pentecost*. It's a week of weeks: 49 days. It's from our Greek and our Latin word for 50 or 5. Fifty days after Passover was when they were celebrating the harvest. It was the Jewish Thanksgiving of the Old Testament.²

Moses Meets God Face to Face

But there's a second meaning of Pentecost. The Jews came to recognize that 50 days after Passover was the first Pentecost, when God came down on Mount Sinai and met with Moses face to face and gave the Law and created the new people of God, created Israel, and constituted them a people of God. So the first Pentecost was Moses meeting God face to face, and his face was so bright, he had to wear a veil (Exo 34:29-35). Remember that? Pentecost is all about meeting with God. The Spirit is poured out on Pentecost so that we might know him in a greater way than even Moses!

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end... ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. —2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 18

As a result, the Jews, on Pentecost, celebrated God coming down and meeting Moses face to face and the giving of the Law. What did it mean for God to send down his Spirit on that day? What does it teach us about the Spirit of God? This is what it teaches. God creates a new people on Pentecost. He reconstitutes his people by pouring out his Spirit. We learn that through three things: *the presence of the future, the outpouring of the Spirit, the salvation of the nations.*³

Key thought: God wants us to experience a fresh outpouring of his love through his Spirit and by his Word, that it will shake the nations with the embrace of divine love.

² Sproul, *Acts*, 41.

³ Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*, "The Spirit of God", sermon preached September 17, 1995 (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013). Several ideas in this study were adapted from Keller's teaching.

1. THE PRESENCE OF THE FUTURE (1:1)

Acts 2:1 | When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

What do we mean when we say that when the day of Pentecost arrived, it's a taste of the future? There's coming a time when we will forever have a perfect view of God's love for us. He will wipe away all tears, and we shall be his people, and he shall be our God. All things will be made new. The lion and lamb and the wolf shall all lie down together. But we have that perfect peace of the new creation right now in our hearts. We have the perfect love of Christ poured out to us right now.

THE SPIRIT BRINGS THE FUTURE NOW

Pentecost is the celebration of the *first fruits* of the harvest. Israel's first harvest, the *Feast of First Fruits*, is when you taste something that is to come. It's when you get a small experience of what's going to happen later.

Ponchatoula Strawberry Harvest. Every year as a child I remember celebrating the first fruits of the strawberry harvest in Ponchatoula, Louisiana. The first ingathering of strawberries was the best. We would have the Strawberry Festival to celebrate. Oh the strawberries were so big! Some of them were the size of my fist when I was a child. It's a taste of the harvest that's about to come: a taste of the future.

Eschatology. There is a theological word for that future age: *eschatology*, the study of the future eschaton, or the end of the present age.⁴ The Spirit of God is eschatological. What will the future be like? That's what the Spirit of God introduces us to at Pentecost. There is coming a day when God wipes away all tears and gives perfect joy. The Spirit is sent to deliver that (at least in part) to us.

Groaning for the Future. What was God saying by sending the Spirit of God on the *Feast of First Fruits*? Romans 8 gives us a glimpse. Paul talks about the fact that right now everything in this world is subject to decay. He says, "We groan right now." We groan. Why? Everything is subject to futility and decay (Rom 8:20). So, we are groaning.

For the creation was subjected to futility... in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. —Romans 8:20-23

Advanced Physics. Everything is falling apart. It looks like the apostle Paul knows advanced physics. Scientists tell us that since the beginning of time, that the universe has been expanding and running down. Paul knew this because the Creator of the universe had revealed it to him.

There was an enormous expenditure of energy in the beginning, in the creation of the universe, but now it's running down. Everything is falling apart. Every day the

⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Eschatology," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 716.

universe and everything in the universe expends more energy than it creates, and so it's running down. It will run out. Everything is going to more and more disorder, and that includes you and me. Some of you look great. You will not be able to hold on to that. You're going to fall apart. Some of you feel great. You will not be able to hold onto that. You're going to fall apart. "Everything is falling apart," Paul says. Everything is subject to decay.

"But," he says, "someday the full glory of God is coming to earth, and it's going to transform everything." Then he has the audacity to say in 8:23, "We know this because we have the first fruits of the Spirit."⁵

We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly... —Romans 8:23

Pentecost is an experience of the future! We get a taste now that makes us groan for more. The Spirit of God that comes down into the Christian when you believe is the first installment of the glory of heaven (*cf* Eph 1:13-14). He's our down payment of heaven. His ministry is a slice, only a slice, but a *real* slice of ultimate reality. It is a taste, only a taste, but a *real* taste of the life and the power and the joy of heaven itself.

YOU HAVE THE FUTURE NOW

What's it going to be like in heaven? In heaven we'll see him face to face. If you have the Spirit of God, you are capable of experiences of his presence that you'll have when you are with him in eternity.

Clark Kent. Do you see what Paul is saying here in chapter 8? Remember the place where Ma and Pa Kent at some point had to sit down with little Clark Kent and say, "Let me tell you something about who you really are. Let me tell you what kind of powers you have." This is Paul coming to you and me as Christians and saying, "Little Clark, do you know what you have?" You have the ability to experience heaven on earth and to reflect the perfect image of Christ. That's what we mean when we say the Spirit is eschatological. The Spirit is the very presence of the future. Experience your future now, by being filled and anointed with the poured-out presence of the Spirit. The Spirit is the first fruits of our future glory.

On the one hand, you have to remember that we have the first *fruits* of heaven itself, which means we have inside ourselves and our church the power to stem the tide of decay. We believe, because we have the first fruits of heaven, we have the power of the Spirit to overcome spiritual and psychological and social breakdown. So we should give up our small ambitions and have tremendous hope for ministry.⁶ That's what this life-on-life discipleship is all about. We need to be able to talk like John Newton, who expressed our longing so well.

I'm not what I ought to be. I am not what I hope to be, but I'm not what I used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.⁷ —John Newton

⁵ Keller, *ibid.*

⁶ Keller, *ibid.*

⁷ John Newton, ed. Joseph Foulkes Winks, *The Christian Pioneer, Volume 10* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1856), 128.

There it is: Pentecost. The Spirit gives us the experience of the future now. Something quite amazing occurs at Pentecost: wind and fire! These are two signs introducing us to the presence of the Lord!

2. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT (1:2-3)

Acts 2:2-3 | And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

THE SURPRISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Suddenly—instantly—something radical happened. In the morning hours of Pentecost, the people suddenly hear the sound of a violent wind blowing from heaven. There's no actual wind, but the sound of the wind, like the sound of a hurricane or tornado.

One important aspect of the coming of the Holy Spirit is the suddenness of his appearance. Although, as they were instructed, the disciples stay in Jerusalem to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit, nonetheless his sudden arrival is surprising.⁸

Everywhere in the Old Testament that God actually shows up, every time his presence appears you get wind and fire.

- When God appears to **Job**, he appears in a *whirlwind*.
- When God appears to **Abraham**, he appears as a *burning torch* passing between the pieces of the animal (Gen 15).
- With **Moses**, at the first Pentecost, when God came down on Mount Sinai, he came down in a *windstorm and in fire*. Wind and fire. Acts records the next Pentecost.

The coming of the Spirit of God was both audible, like the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and visible, with an observable manifestation of fire. Let's look into these two things. *What is this wind? What is this fire?*

THE WIND OF NEW CREATION

Acts 2:2 | And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

The wind is the wind of the new creation. This sound of a mighty, rushing wind, like a tornado or a hurricane, not only fills the house but is also heard throughout the city.⁹ It comes straight from heaven. The word “wind” is also the word for “Spirit” in both the Old and New Testament. The Greek word *pneuma* not only means “spirit,” but it also means “wind” and “breath.” This wind is associated with the power of creation, as in Genesis 1.¹⁰

⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 17, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 76.

⁹ Chalmer Ernest Faw, *Acts*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 42.

¹⁰ Sproul, *Acts*, 42.

It brings us back to the first chapter of the Bible. This rushing wind is the sound of the Spirit that was heard at the first creation.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. —Genesis 1:1-2

The reason for the sound of the rushing wind, is that at Pentecost we have a new creation, a second creation, a creation that is redemptive. This is the Creator God coming to visit us. Just as the Spirit/wind hovered over the face of the waters, here he hovers to bring forth a new creation. It's just like the Valley of the Dry Bones passage in Ezekiel 37, where God summons a new creation from the old.

Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. —Ezekiel 37:9

The sound of wind, then, was a reminder of creation, indeed that a *new* creation was beginning. The *old* was giving way to the *new*. As Paul would say,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. —2 Corinthians 5:17

Those who live in this era, post-Pentecost, are living in the power of the new creation now. The new order of existence has broken through into this present space-time continuum. The *breath* of God is being experienced. The life-giving atmosphere of the new creation has arrived.¹¹ The coming of the Holy Spirit as a violent wind, then, is the coming of the creative power of God to inaugurate a new era in which men and women live in the life-giving, creative power of the Spirit. No longer would he merely be with us, but he would be in us (Jn 14:16-17). This is the beginning of the new creation here at Pentecost.

THE FIRE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Acts 2:3 | And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

They heard the wind when the Spirit came: the wind of new creation. Now they see the fire of tongues upon each person.

Tongues of Fire

Why tongues of fire? God is reuniting humanity. All the walls of hostility come down when the Spirit comes. The confusion of languages that came at Babel is now removed.

Fire Illuminates

Fire, like wind, was a symbol of the presence of God. A *pillar of fire* led the church through the wilderness (Exo 13:21–22), and it was a *burning bush* that symbolized God's presence to Moses (Exo 3:2–5).¹² These are flames that do not consume but, like the

¹¹ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 29.

¹² Thomas, *ibid.*

burning bush (Exo 3:2–6), show God’s presence.¹³ The manifestation of the Spirit as a fire is indicating first, the ministry of the Spirit to guide the believer into all truth. The Spirit is like the fire in the lampstands that gives light to our path. He leads and guides the believer.

Fire Burns

What are these tongues of fire? It is that the presence of God demonstrating that sin had been dealt with. Fire was also a symbol of judgment. Remember the words of John the Baptist in Luke 3 (referring to Jesus).

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. —Luke 3:16

Jesus would say that he had indeed come to bring “fire” (Lk 12:49–50), but this was a reference to the cross. The lost will spend eternity in a lake of fire.¹⁴ There are the flames of eternal hell fire awaiting those who do not have the Spirit. The burnt offering was a constant fixture in the Temple. And the price had to be paid, the whole burnt offering had to be entirely consumed. The fire of judgment came down *upon Jesus himself!* Glory to God that the presence of the Spirit indicates that sin had been entirely dealt with. The Spirit not only assures the believer that the judgment has been dealt with, but he also convicts the believer of sin so that we stay far away from it.

Fire Warms

Every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19; 1 Pet 4:14). We are warmed by the assurance and comfort of the Spirit. He is our comforter.

Fire Signals

A fire can signal people to come to you. It can point in a certain direction. The fire of God lit up Moses’ face and pointed all who knew him to God. He was so luminous that he had to wear a covering over his face.

THE FIRE AND WIND OF GOD’S TRANSCENDENCE

At times the Holy Spirit makes himself known with visible, audible, touchable manifestations. In the Old Testament there was the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. At Jesus’ baptism there was the dove. In Acts 4 the building shakes. In chapter 6 Stephen’s face was like the face of an angel. At times the Spirit stoops to give us visible, audible, touchable demonstrations of his presence and power. Why? To help us understand God’s transcendence. That means God transcends everything temporal. Are you worried? Are you angry? Are you bitter? Are you unhappy? Are you bored? Do you know what you need? You need the one true and living God to manifest himself to you. He’s not some ho-hum God. When you see him and know him, then you experience the “fear of the Lord.”

One of the key passages on God’s glorious presence is Exodus 34, where Moses asks to see God’s glory. He wants to see God’s transcendence, his infinitude, we might say. Moses had already experienced God’s immanence, or his nearness. He had spoken to the

¹³ Faw, *Acts*, 42.

¹⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 2:3.

Lord as a man speaks with his friend, face to face. But there was something beyond that Moses needed to experience.

So Moses is hidden in the cleft of the rock, remember? And God's glory, just the backside of his glory, passes by. And God describes his glory as "his goodness." So Moses sees the glory of the transcendent God, but he experiences God's goodness.

In other words, Moses sees the glorious holiness of God, his glory that cannot dwell with sinners. His omnipresence and omniscience that sees all things in all people. And you would think that transcendent glory would absolutely destroy Moses, all the people of Israel, and the entire world. But no. Because God is willing to take that judgment upon himself and absorb our judgment in himself, through his Son, later in redemption history.

Faith in the transcendent God is not just "he loves me just as I am." He does love you, but he's the holy God that can crush you. He's the good God that doesn't allow sinners into heaven. And he's the merciful God that doesn't allow one iota of sin to pass into heaven. He's got to crush sin. And in loving you, he's had to crush his own Son for him to love you. That's the transcendent God worth worshipping. There's no cheap grace, but only costly, painful grace. We are his because of the mighty cost of his own Son.

3. THE SALVATION OF THE NATIONS (1:4-13)

Now we see God's love outpoured for the nations. Oh how he loves us. Go to the farthest nation, and you will find God's Spirit pleading with the hearts of men through their conscience and in his Word where it is available. You see we forget about the nations, but God never forgets.

The Lord is... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.—2 Peter 3:9

[God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. —1 Timothy 2:4

One of the ways you can judge whether a real revival of the Holy Spirit has come is that people are not just praising God for what he's done, but they are coming together in community in an otherwise broken humanity.¹⁵ That's what we read about here. The walls of culture and pride and racism are broken down. It is when we experience the vision of God's glory that these people had seen and experienced that our focus is no longer on ourselves, but on God. That's when the walls of hostility are torn down.

At Pentecost, God prepared 120 people to be seeds to the nations. We know that when Peter stood up to preach on the steps of the Temple, there would have been thirty to sixty thousand people in that area where there are about fifty mikvehs (cleansing pools, i.e. baptistries). God lights these people on fire in order to pour out his Spirit on people from so many diverse nations. Let us receive that same anointing from the Spirit today. We are to be seeds of the Gospel to the nations. That's what they were at Pentecost. Let's read about it.

¹⁵ Keller, *ibid.*

Acts 2:4-13 | And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

THE UNDOING OF BABEL

Now we think of the undoing of Babel as the mere unification of the languages. We find out later through Peter that this is a fulfilment of Joel 2.

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...—Joel 2:28

But it's more than that. At Pentecost, God had assembled a great multilingual Jewish congregation. During the exile of Israel, Jews emigrated to various nations around the world. They were successful wherever they went, as God through Jeremiah had commanded them.

Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. —Jeremiah 29:11

So there were many successful Israelites from the many nations listed in our passage who would come back for the three main festivals in Israel, the first of which was Pentecost. Later on in the year you would have Passover and then finally Tabernacles.

Most of this passage gives you this long table of the nations. Look at all the different nations. Why in the world would Saint Luke, the writer of this passage, make such a long list? Here's why. The last time you see the table of the nations is in Genesis 10. We're told about all the nations of the earth and then in Genesis 11 we're told about the Tower of Babel, that the people of the earth decided to be their own masters and make a name for themselves, and as a result, God divides their languages. They are divided into various nations and people groups through a confusion of their languages.

God came down, we're told on the Tower of Babel, to confuse their languages, which was a way of showing us that when you decide to justify yourself and be your own lord and savior, the result is racial and cultural hostility, and a destruction of human community. We're reminded through the events of Acts 2, that when God came down on Mount Sinai, he created a new people.

So when God comes down at Pentecost, his Spirit creates a new people. Babel is reversed. The first thing that happens is the barriers between cultures come down. The first worship service, the first sermon, was preached in what language? All of them! The first worship service, the first sermon, was preached in what culture? All of them! Why? When God came down he reversed the curse of Babel.¹⁶

So when you find a person that believes in the death, burial and resurrection and knows the power of the Spirit, you say: “I have even more in common with that person than someone from my own culture who doesn’t understand this truth.” The way you know that a revival has hit is that people get along who could never get along anywhere else.

THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Acts 2:4a | And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...

Several ministries of the Holy Spirit affect the believer in this age. The baptism of the Holy Spirit places us into the Body of Christ. The indwelling of the Spirit makes us the Temple of the Spirit. The sealing and earnest of the Spirit is the ownership mark of God on the believer. These are all sovereign acts of God bestowed on the believer at the time of salvation. They are unconditional, sovereignly given to every believer in the Lord Jesus. They never need to be repeated, they are never withdrawn, and they guarantee the believer’s eternal security and his glorious standing in Christ.

But the *filling* of the Holy Spirit is different. It is conditional. When Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 5:18 he uses the present continuous tense—literally, “Be being filled”—and he uses as an illustration being filled with wine—a fluctuating state. The filling comes and goes based on how the individual believer surrenders and lives under the Lordship of Christ. He can be filled one moment and, because of some disobedience, empty the next. The purpose of the filling is to change our temperament and make us like Jesus in his nature, person, and personality so that in thought, word, and deed we might show him to a lost world. When we are filled with the Spirit, we are “Jesus with skin on” as one of my seminary professors (Dr. Robert Kelleman) liked to say. The filling is always available to us, but our experience of it depends upon our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost all those present were filled with the Spirit. The filling is available to every believer. There is no exception, and there can be no excuse for not being filled. You should be constantly filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Can you see the signs of being filled with the Spirit?

A New Culture

Acts 2:4 | And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Spirit’s filling brings a new culture. They spoke in **other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance**. So though we may never see this amazing miracle of

¹⁶ Keller, *ibid.*

people from various countries being able to understand my language without an interpreter, you can see that the filling of the Spirit breaks down cultural boundaries.

Is this happening here at Living Hope? Has this happened to you? Can you see your prejudices and pride coming down? Do you walk into a room and only see the outward, and say, “He’s like me. He’s not like me.” Or do you walk into a room and say, “He needs Christ. She needs Christ. They are like me because they know Christ.” Are you creating a new culture, a “Jesus” culture in your family and your church and your neighborhood?

A New Amazement

Acts 2:5-6 | Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

When you see something only God can do, that’s a miracle. When people have a prayer meeting or a worship service, there should be a sense of amazement if God has showed up. Again, we may not see the miracle of languages again like this, but there are always God size events when the Spirit is working. People see God. Our children see God. They are bewildered, surprised. What is more surprising than seeing the thrice holy God clearly and finding out he loves you.

A New Praise

Acts 2:7-11 | And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

I mean look at this. People from everywhere shouting the mighty works of God. God breaks through for each one of them. See, one thing we all have in common is the burdens and brokenness of this life. But when the Spirit of God is poured out, the sewers open up. God cleans us out. The mighty works of God are done. And no one can explain it, except to says, “To God be the glory!”

A New Persecution

Acts 2:12-13 | And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Target on Your Back. People who truly know God and love him are going to live for him no matter what the cost. And you know what happens when you really start serving Jesus? You get a target on your back. This persecution recorded here is mere mockery, but it gets worse from here on out. They are going to begin suffering for Jesus.

Remember what Jesus says: “If they hated me, they will also hate you.” Be ready to have a wartime posture if you follow Christ in the fullness of the Spirit.

Conclusion

Oh, how we need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I know it’s winter, but soon we’ll get the warmth of summer. In fact, I can think of some summers that it was so scorching that lawns are dead, fruit stands are deserted, and farmers are defeated. I’ve never seen anything close to a drought, but I’m sure your grandparents could tell you about one of the most famous droughts in the 1930s when it didn’t rain for nine years.

The Dust Bowl. In the breadbasket of the country, our richest farmlands were turned into a “Dust Bowl.” In 1934, thirty-four states experienced severe droughts. On April 14, 1935, a day known as “Black Sunday,” the wind whipped across the parched farmland and blew up the dust into an enormous “black blizzard” that whisked away countless acres of topsoil. That’s what a drought is like, and most of us have never experienced a real one—not in our countryside at least. But sadly too often we experience a drought in our spirits.

We need the outpouring of the Spirit for our country, for each of us personally. Let’s begin expecting and experiencing that downpour.