

“THE FIRE OF PENTECOST”
Psalm 104:24-35, Romans 8:12-17, Acts 2:1-21
June 4 & 5, 2022

“The fire of the [Holy] Spirit can ... cleanse, empower, fill, warm, enlighten, and reflect God’s radiance. Often those truly living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit are easily recognized as men or women of God. There have been many times in different parts of the world that people have recognized a partially or even fully visible radiance on the face of someone who was specially endued by the Holy Spirit during a time of revival.

“During the 1905 revival in the Mukti residential center near Mumbai, India, where young widows could learn to read and write and be secure, the evangelist Pandita Ramabai had been teaching the hundreds of girls at the center about the Holy Spirit. As they were meeting together in prayer, girls began to be filled with the Spirit. Early one morning while all the girls were on their knees weeping and praying, suddenly a visible fire flamed around one of the girls. They all saw it, and one girl ran across the room for a bucket of water. She was about to throw it on the girl when she realized it was not a literal fire.

“The girl told them all that she had been filled with the [Holy] Spirit, and she exhorted them to repent: ‘O Lord, I am full of joy, but forgive and cleanse my sisters as you have me ... O Lord, we must have revival, we must have it. Begin it today.’ As God revived them, many of the girls testified they felt a sensation of holy burning within them. They called it a baptism of fire. They were greatly transformed, and their faces were lit up with joy. Two little girls had such a spirit of prayer poured on them that they prayed for hours with a visible ‘heavenly light shining on their faces.’

Author Wesley Duewel tells us, “You may ask why God on rare occasions pours out His Spirit in miraculous visible ways. I am not sure of the answer. **Perhaps it is to remind us that He is still the God of fire. Perhaps it is to remind us that He is holy and sovereign in His working.**”¹ And perhaps it is to draw all people to Himself as they find His revival working in their own life.

¹ (Wesley Duewel, *Revival Fire*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995] pg. 23-24)

This account reflects well the account of the first Christian Pentecost after Jesus' ascension back into heaven. After having spent 40 days with His followers, Jesus had ascended back into heaven to be at the right hand of God the Father. Before He ascended, He had instructed them, "*Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 1:4-5).

The disciples had spent the next 10 days in prayer, diligently seeking the will of God for their lives. They had chosen Matthias as the replacement for Judas Iscariot, and they constantly met in the Temple to pray. At the end of those 10 days, God moved in a marvelous way to fulfill His promise to them. Listen to a part of the account for today as it is found in Acts 2:1-13. (READ Acts 2:1-13)

Now Pentecost is the end of the Jewish festival of weeks, culminating the feast of the harvest season. The harvesting of barley and other grains took about 7 weeks, so on the 50th day after the celebration of Passover, when the harvest was complete, the Jewish people brought their grain offerings to the Lord, giving thanks for the abundance He had given to them. This celebration for the Jews brought people from all over the Middle East to Jerusalem to present their offerings to the Lord at the Temple.

It was on this particular Pentecost, this fiftieth day, not only after Passover, but fifty days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, that God began a new harvest through the work of the Holy Spirit. The work in the fields bringing in the crops was completed. But this would not be a harvest of grain, but a harvest of souls for the sake of Jesus Christ. As Jesus told His disciples, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field*" (Luke 10:2). The disciples were now ready to begin the harvest work for Jesus.

God was empowering the disciples of Jesus to begin their work of proclaiming the Gospel message to everyone in Jerusalem. With all of the Jews in the city there for the celebration of Pentecost, God's timing of a new harvest was perfect. Up to this point, the followers of Jesus had been very shy about proclaiming anything about Jesus' work of Salvation for the world, because they feared the

reaction of the Jewish leaders. By their own strength and power, they were unable to do anything for the Lord Jesus. They needed encouragement and power from God to begin this massive work of reaching the people in Jerusalem.

On that day they were all gathered together, praying, when the fire of the Holy Spirit descended upon each of them. They were asking God to give them the courage and strength to do the work that Jesus had commissioned them all to do. They were asking for the Holy Spirit to come into them and fill them.

Jesus had instructed them to do this when He taught them about prayer. In Luke 11:9-13 Jesus told them, *“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”***

But to receive the Holy Spirit, there were some things that the disciples needed to do. They had already professed their faith in Jesus; they were following His commands; and they were diligently seeking the Lord with all their hearts. But as a part of seeking the Lord, they needed to give up the ways of the world and focus on the ways of God. They could not abide by the things of this world and seek to follow Jesus at the same time. They had to choose which way they would go, and who they would follow. They had to resign themselves to being people of God.

And the Apostle Paul states that clearly for us in our lesson of Romans 8:12-17. We do not have an obligation to the sinful nature, which are the things of this world, but rather an obligation to live as children of God. If we live by the ways of the world, we will die, not only physically but spiritually also. *“But [if you live] by the Spirit [and] you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are [children] of God”* (Rom. 8:13-14).

The followers of Jesus had to put off the things of this world and be ready to live by the things of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit of God will not empower someone who is adamantly against God and His ways. He will only fill and empower those who seek after the Lord Jesus and live according to His ways so that the will of the Lord God Almighty will be accomplished. Those are the ones that will find the power of the Holy Spirit in their life to do great and amazing things.

Once the disciples gave themselves up to do the work of Jesus, as they prayed and repented of their sins and prepared their lives for the work of the Lord, the Holy Spirit came among them and filled each one of them. God's holy fire came with the sound of a violent rushing wind, filling the whole house where the disciples had gathered. Each one of them there ignited with the Holy Spirit's presence in them, and they were able to speak in different languages as they were enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Now, the disciples didn't stay in the house, hiding the fact that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. No, they went out to the crowds that were waiting for them. The noise of a tornado caught everyone's attention and they all came to investigate what was going on. So the disciples went out to them, teaching all that Jesus had taught them, in the heart languages of the people so that they could understand. It was not babbling, or a made up set of noises that the disciples were using, but a language that those from the 15 different countries present in Jerusalem could readily understand.

You see, when the Holy Spirit fills a person, He wants us to proclaim the teachings of Jesus so that the people around us might hear, become convicted of their sin, and repent from those sinful ways and turn to the Lord Jesus. **The Holy Spirit does not fill a person so that that person can glorify themselves in it, but rather that person glorifies Jesus in word and deed.**

A.W. Tozer puts it this way: "One quality belonging to the Holy Spirit, of great interest and importance to every seeking heart, is penetrability. He can penetrate matter, such as the human body; He can penetrate mind; He can penetrate another spirit, such as the human spirit. He can achieve complete penetration of and actual intermingling with the human spirit. He can invade the human heart and make room for Himself without expelling anything essentially human. The integrity of the human

personality remains unimpaired. Only moral evil is forced to withdraw.

“The metaphysical problem involved here can no more be avoided than it can be solved. How can one personality enter another? The candid reply would be simply that we do not know, but a near approach to an understanding may be in a simple analogy borrowed from the old devotional writers of several hundred years ago. We place a piece of iron in a fire and blow up the coals. At first we have two distinct substances, iron and fire. When we insert the iron in the fire we achieve the penetration of the fire by the iron. Soon the fire begins to penetrate the iron and we have not only the iron in the fire but the fire in the iron as well. They are two distinct substances, but they have co-mingled and interpenetrated to a point where the two have become one.”²

When the disciples received the Holy Spirit, they were “*declaring the wonders of God*” (Acts 2:11). The Holy Spirit had intermingled in each of them to the point of these men telling of the things of God. And so impressed were the people listening to know that each one speaking was from Galilee, they were even more amazed. Galileans weren’t known as a highly educated people, so when the Holy Spirit gave the disciples tongues to speak about the marvelous workings of God in different languages, it was highly unusual - one because they were speaking of things that the Scribes and teachers of the Law would only know, but also because they were using other languages proficiently without any training. The Holy Spirit had penetrated so deeply within each one of them, He was speaking through them to all the people through the mouths of the disciples.

And some of the people listening tried to belittle the moment by making fun of the disciples, saying that they were just drunk with new wine. **It is common for the world to try to demean and disgrace those who are filled with God’s Holy Spirit.** Since the world cannot understand or know God, what they can’t understand is derided and called rubbish just so that they don’t have to hear it any more. When a person is staunchly against Christianity, they will say and do whatever is necessary to try to stop Jesus’ messengers from stating the truths of God.

² (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000], pg. 439)

But Peter would not allow them to be degraded and dismissed. The second half of our Scripture lesson of Acts 2 goes on to say this - listen to verses 14-21 (READ ACTS 2:14-21).

The people had never experienced anyone filled with the Holy Spirit before. While they were claiming that the disciples were certainly filled with spirits, the spirits of alcohol, Peter explains what the Holy Spirit of God can do and was doing through those speaking. After all, who gets drunk at 9:00 in the morning? Rather, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32. He informs the people that God is fulfilling the words of the prophet who foretold of the Holy Spirit's activity when He penetrates the heart, soul and mind of a person. And he continues to preach to the people quoting Scriptures as he tells about God sending Jesus to the world to bring Salvation to all who will believe in Him and repent of their sinful ways. He implores the people to give up the ways of the world and to come to believe in Jesus as the Christ so that they might save themselves "*from this corrupt generation*" (Acts 2:40).

Peter was retelling the great work of the Lord Jesus for the people of the world in such a way that they were captivated over God's Word becoming truth. The Holy Spirit began to penetrate the hearts and minds and souls of the people there to the point that "*those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles*" (Acts 2:41-43).

You see, **when the Holy Spirit invades and penetrates the hearts of His people, the power that they have is enough to convince thousands to turn away from the ways of the world and turn to the ways of the Lord.** It's not to proclaim a new gospel, but to retell the old stories of Jesus and His love for the world.

Charles Spurgeon says it like this: "The Holy Ghost does not reveal anything fresh now. He brings old things to our remembrance...The canon of revelation is closed, there is no more to be added; God does not give a fresh revelation, but He rivets the old one. When it has been forgotten, and laid in the dusty chamber of our memory, He fetches it out and cleans the picture, but does not paint a new one.

There are no new doctrines, but the old ones are often revived.”³

We have all that it takes to bring the Salvation of Jesus Christ to the world. We don't need to make up anything new to persuade people to follow us. We just need to tell the accounts of the Scriptures to the people and allow them to become revived as the Word of God is made known to them and they come to believe. As we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to come into us, He will give us the right words to say to help those around us to come to know about Jesus and to claim Him as their own.

The situation, however, is that most of us don't believe that we have such power or authority with in us. **Most of us are not willing to risk becoming vulnerable enough to let the Holy Spirit work within us.** Most of us want someone else to do the work of evangelism and discipleship so that we don't have to go outside of our own comfort zone to reach out to another person.

So I pray for a revival here in this place, that the Holy Spirit might come here, even today, to convince us of Jesus, convict us of our sins, and prepare us to receive the strength and power to become the witnesses of Jesus. I pray that God would begin to move mightily in your hearts so that you might know His tremendous power and love for all people.

“Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ [describes this current situation here and in many churches in telling] this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool:

“During the depression this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy.

“Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract.

³ (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, pg. 440)

“At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day.

“And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he’d been living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He didn’t know the oil was there even though he owned it.

Folks, “many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and His energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright.”⁴ They remain content to struggle along with the things of this world, and never know the power and abundance that the Holy Spirit has to give to those who will ask, seek, and knock in order for Him to come into them.

I’m telling you today, the Holy Spirit desires to come and live in you so that He may intermingle within you and transform your life from spiritual poverty to spiritual abundance. Not for your glory, but for the glory of Jesus Christ. **Just imagine the potential each of you has once ignited by the Holy Spirit!** And who knows the tremendous difference you could make in those around you if you would but ask Him to come into you.

Humble yourself before the Lord. Repent of your sinful ways. **Call out to the Lord that He might send His Holy Spirit to you.** Find God’s revival fire in you! Let’s pray.

Father, thank You for Your Holy Spirit! Thank You for Your desire for Him to come into each one of us so that we might live as Your people before the whole world. Give us the courage to humble ourselves before You, and to commit our very lives into Your care. Convict us of our sins and forgive us through the grace of Jesus Christ so that we might be brand new creatures in You. Then light us on fire with Your Holy Spirit so that we might rejoice in Your presence and then giving others the chance to come to You, too, as we live among them with such radiance of Your glory on us. Come, Holy Spirit, come to us here in this place, to all those who watch this video or listen to this radio program. Revive us, O Lord! This we pray in the powerful name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

⁴ (PreachingToday.com, *Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002] pg. 260-261)