***In The Valley of Decision***

**Pentecost #7, Acts 2:1-21 May 23, 2021**

***“ ‘In the last days,’ God says,   
‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people.’ “*Acts 2:17 (Peter quoting Joel 2:28)**

**Celebration of Pentecost**

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

*Acts 2:1-4*

1) *Shavuot* is the second harvest festival, one of three pilgrimages which celebrates receiving Torah

2) At Pentecost God gives his people a new identifying mark, not Torah but the Spirit

3) The signs (two out of the three signs from 1 Kings 19) are there to get our attention

4) The Spirit’s arrival means the wait is over (yes to Acts 1:8, but better Jer. 31 and Hebrews 10:15)

**First lessons from Jerusalem**

*15 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia 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!”*

Acts 2

1) God brings the world to Jerusalem (Babel in reverse, see Genesis 10-11)

2) Being in Jerusalem doesn’t mean I’ll be in control

**The beginning of Peter’s first sermon**

14 *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

*17 “ ‘In the last days, God says,*

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*

*Your sons and daughters will prophesy,*

*your young men will see visions,*

*your old men will dream dreams.*

*18 Even on my servants, both men and women,*

*I will pour out my Spirit in those days,*

*and they will prophesy.*

*19 I will show wonders in the heaven above*

*and signs on the earth below,*

*blood and fire and billows of smoke.*

*20 The sun will be turned to darkness*

*and the moon to blood*

*before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.*

*21 And everyone who calls*

*on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

Acts 2

1) “This is that” – God is doing a new work

2) The GATDOTL is not one future *kairos* but the present messianic age

3) Peter knows what comes “before” (see Joel 2:28)

-- repentance (Joel 2:12-14)

-- restoration (Joel 2:21-25)

-- the assurance of God’s presence (Joel 2:27)

4) Joel and Peter both end in the Valley of Decision

*The Day of the Lord*

28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

29 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

30 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

32 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved;

for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said,

among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

**3** “In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

2 I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

There I will enter into judgment against them

concerning my inheritance, my people Israel,

for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

3 They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes;

they sold girls for wine that they might drink.

4 “Now what have you against me, O Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. 5 For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. 6 You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland.

7 “See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done. 8 I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away.” The Lord has spoken.

9 Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors!

Let all the fighting men draw near and attack.

10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weakling say, “I am strong!”

11 Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there.

Bring down your warriors, O Lord!

12 “Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat,

for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side.

13 Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—

so great is their wickedness!”

14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

15 The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.

16 The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem;

the earth and the sky will tremble.

But the Lord will be a refuge for his people,

a stronghold for the people of Israel.

**The “Last Days” in Anacortes**

1) We are identified by the Holy Spirit

*Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise if for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.*

Acts 2:38-39

2) Watch for God’s restoring work to come before

*“ I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten . . . .   
 Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other;  
never again will my people be shamed.   
 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people . . . .*

Joel 2:25-28

3) How is God getting our attention?

14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.*

Joel 3:14-16

God send us a season of glorious disorder. Oh for a sweep of wind that will set the seas in motion

and make our ironclad brethren now lying so quietly at anchor to roll from stem to stern . . . .

O Spirit of God, You are ready to work with us today even as You did then! Stay not, we beseech

You, but work at once. Break down every barrier that hinders the incomings of Your might. Overturn,

overturn, O sacred wind! Consume all obstacles, O heavenly fire, and give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach Your reconciling word for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Spurgeon’s closing prayer in “The Pentecostal Wind and Fire”

4) There is a whole lot of calling going on

32 *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.*

Joel 2:32 (see Acts 2:39)



**Resources for further studies in Acts**

The Bible Project team has great stuff on Acts at [*https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg*](https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg)

Spurgeon has sermons on this text at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/pentecost-2/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/pentecost-2/%23flipbook/)and[*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/chs1619.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/chs1619.pdf)

Deffinbaugh’s introduction at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts*](https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts )  
and Acts series at [*https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts*](https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts)

I have really appreciated John Stott’s *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (IVP, 1990) and F. F. Bruce’s work: *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) and *The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans, 1984).

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# Acts Timeline (ESV Study Bible)

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**THE PENTECOSTAL WIND AND FIRE NO. 1619**

***BY C. H. SPURGEON, at*** [*http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/chs1619.pdf*](http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/chs1619.pdf)

***“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,***

***and it filled all the house where they were sitting.   
And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.   
And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues,  
 as the Spirit gave them utterance.”***

***Acts 2:2-4.***

FROM the descent of the Holy Ghost at the beginning we may learn something concerning His

operations at the present time. Remember at the outset that whatever the Holy Spirit was at the first that

He is that now, for as God He remains forever the same—whatsoever He then did He is able to do still,

for His power is by no means diminished. As says the prophet Micah, “O you that are named the house

of Jacob, is the Spirit of the LORD straitened?” We would greatly grieve the Holy Spirit if we supposed

that His might was less today than in the beginning. Although we may not expect and need not desire the

miracles which came with the gift of the Holy Spirit, so far as they were physical, yet we may both

desire and expect that which was intended and symbolized by them, and we may reckon to see the same

spiritual wonders performed among us at this day.

Pentecost, according to the belief of the Jews, was the time of the giving of the law, and if when the

law was given there was a marvelous display of power on Sinai, it was to be expected that when the

Gospel was given, whose ministration is far more glorious, there should be some special unveiling of the

divine presence. If at the commencement of the Gospel we behold the Holy Spirit working great signs

and wonders, may we not expect a continuance—nay, if anything, an increased display of His power as

the ages roll on? The law vanished away, but the Gospel will never vanish. It shines more and more to

the perfect millennial day and therefore I reckon that, with the sole exception of physical miracles,

whatever was wrought by the Holy Ghost at the first we may look to be wrought continually while the

dispensation lasts.

It ought not to be forgotten that Pentecost was the feast of first fruits—it was the time when the first

ears of ripe corn were offered unto God. If, then, at the commencement of the Gospel harvest we see so

plainly the power of the Holy Spirit, may we not most properly expect infinitely more as the harvest

advances, and most of all when the most numerous sheaves shall be ingathered? May we not conclude

that if the Pentecost was thus marvelous, the actual harvest will be more wonderful still?

This morning my object is not to talk of the descent of the Holy Spirit as a piece of history, but to

view it as a fact bearing upon us at this hour, even upon us who are called in these latter days to bear our

testimony for the truth. The Father has sent us the Comforter that He may dwell in us till the coming of

the Lord. The Holy Ghost has never returned, for He came in accordance with the Savior’s prayer to

abide with us forever. The gift of the Comforter was not temporary and the display of His power was not

to be once seen and no more. The Holy Ghost is here and we ought to expect His divine working among

us. And if He does not so work, we should search ourselves to see what it is that hinders, and whether

there may not be something in ourselves which vexes Him, so that He restrains His sacred energy and

does not work among us as He did aforetime.

May God grant that the meditation of this morning will increase our faith in the Holy Ghost and

inflame our desires towards Him so that we may look to see Him fulfilling His mission among men as at

the beginning.

**I.** First, I shall call your attention to THE INSTRUCTIVE SYMBOLS of the Holy Spirit, which

were made prominent at Pentecost. They were two. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind and

there were cloven tongues, as it were, of fire.

Take the symbols separately. The first is *wind*—an emblem of deity and therefore a proper symbol

of the Holy Spirit. Often, under the Old Testament, God revealed Himself under the emblem of breath or

wind. Indeed, as most of you know, the Hebrew word for “wind” and “spirit” is the same. So, with the

Greek word, when Christ talked to Nicodemus, it is not very easy for translators to tell us when He said,

“spirit,” and when He said, “wind.” Indeed, some most correctly render the original all the way through

by the word, “wind,” while others with much reason have also used the word “spirit” in their translation.

The original word signified either the one or the other, or both. Wind is, of all material things, one of

the most spiritual in appearance. It is invisible, ethereal, mysterious, hence men have fixed upon it as

being nearest akin to spirit. In Ezekiel’s famous vision, when he saw the valley full of dry bones, we all

know that the Spirit of God was intended by that vivifying wind which came when the prophet

prophesied and blew upon the withered relics till they were quickened into life. “The LORD has his way

in the whirlwind,” thus He displays Himself when He works. “The Lord answered Job out of the

whirlwind,” thus He reveals Himself when He teaches His servants.

Observe that this wind on the day of Pentecost was accompanied with a sound—a sound as of a

mighty rushing wind, for albeit the Spirit of God can work in silence, yet in saving operations He

frequently uses sound. I would be the last to depreciate meetings in which there is nothing but holy

silence, for I could wish that we had more reverence for silence, and it is in stillness that the inner life is

nourished. Yet the Holy Ghost does not work for the advancement of the kingdom of God by silence

alone, for faith comes by hearing. There is a sound as of a mighty rushing wind when the Word is

sounded forth throughout whole nations by the publishing of the Gospel. If the Lord had not given men

ears or tongues, silent worship would have been not only appropriate but necessary—but inasmuch as

we have ears the Lord must have intended us to hear something—and as we have tongues, He must have

meant us to speak.

Some of us would be glad to be quiet, but where the Gospel has free course, there is sure to be a

measure of noise and stir. The sound came on this occasion, no doubt, to call the attention of the

assembly to what was about to occur, to arouse them, and to fill them with awe! There is something

indescribably solemn about the rush of a rising tempest. It bows the soul before the sublime mystery of

divine power. What more fitting as an attendant upon divine working than the deeply solemn rush of a

mighty wind?

With this awe-inspiring sound as of a mighty wind, there was clear indication of its coming from

heaven. Ordinary winds blow from this or that quarter of the skies, but this descended from heaven

itself—it was distinctly like a down-draught from above. This sets forth the fact that the true Spirit, the

Spirit of God, neither comes from this place nor that—neither can His power be controlled or directed

by human authority, but His working is always from above, from God Himself. The work of the Holy

Spirit is, so to speak, the breath of God and His power is evermore in a special sense the immediate

power of God.

Coming downward, therefore, this mysterious wind passed into the chamber where the disciples

were assembled and filled the room. An ordinary rushing mighty wind would have been felt outside the

room, and would probably have destroyed the house or injured the inmates, if it had been aimed at any

one building—but this heavenly gust filled but did not destroy the room—it blessed, but did not

overthrow the waiting company.

The meaning of the symbol is that as breath, air, wind, is the very life of man, so is the Spirit of God

the life of the spiritual man. By Him are we quickened at the first. By Him are we kept alive afterwards.

By Him is the inner life nurtured, and increased, and perfected. The breath of the nostrils of the man of

God is the Spirit of God.

This holy breath was not only intended to quicken them, but to invigorate them. What a blessing

would a breeze be just now to us who sit in this heavy atmosphere. How gladly would we hail a gust

from the breezy down, or a gale from the open sea! If the winds of earth are so refreshing, what must a

wind from heaven be!

That rushing mighty wind soon cleared away all earth-engendered damps and vapors—it aroused the

disciples and left them braced up for the further work of the Lord. They took in great draughts of

heavenly life. They felt animated, aroused, and bestirred. A sacred enthusiasm came upon them, because

they were filled with the Holy Ghost. And girt with that strength, they rose into a nobler form of life

than they had known before.

No doubt this wind was intended to show the irresistible power of the Holy Ghost, for simple as the

air is, and mobile and apparently feeble, yet set it in motion and you feel that a thing of life is among

you. Make that motion more rapid and who knows the power of the restless giant who has been

awakened. See, it becomes a storm, a tempest, a hurricane, a tornado, a cyclone. Nothing can be more

potent than the wind when it is thoroughly roused and so, though the Spirit of God be despised among

men, so much so that they do not even believe in His existence, yet let Him work with the fullness of

His power and you will see what He can do.

He comes softly, breathing like a gentle zephyr which fans the flowers, but does not dislodge the

insect of most gauzy wing, and our hearts are comforted. He comes like a stirring breeze and we are

quickened to a livelier diligence—our sails are hoisted and we fly before the gale. He comes with yet

greater strength and we prostrate ourselves in the dust as we hear the thunder of His power bringing

down with a crash false confidences and refuges of lies! How the firm reliances of carnal men, which

seemed to stand like rocks, are utterly cast down! How men’s hopes, which appeared to be rooted like

oaks, are torn up by the roots before the breath of the convincing Spirit! What can stand against Him?

Oh! that we did but see in these latter days something of that mighty rushing wind which breaks the

cedars of Lebanon and sweeps before it all things that would resist its power.

The second Pentecostal symbol was *fire*. Fire, again, is a frequent symbol of deity. Abraham saw a

burning lamp and Moses beheld a burning bush. When Solomon had built his holy and beautiful house,

its consecration lay in the fire of God descending upon the sacrifice to mark that the Lord was there, for

when the Lord had dwelt aforetime in the tabernacle, which was superseded by the temple, He revealed

Himself in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. “Our God is a consuming fire.” Hence

the symbol of fire is a fit emblem of God the Holy Spirit. Let us adore and worship Him. Tongues of

flame sitting on each man’s head betokened a personal visitation to the mind and heart of each one of

the chosen company.

Not to consume them came the fires, for no one was injured by the flaming tongue—to men whom

the Lord has prepared for His approach, there is no danger in His visitations. They see God and their

lives are preserved. They feel His fires and are not consumed. This is the privilege of those alone who

have been prepared and purified for such fellowship with God.

The intention of the symbol was to show them that the Holy Spirit would illuminate them, as fire

gives light. “He shall lead you into all truth.” Henceforth they were not to be untrained children, but to

be teachers in Israel, instructors of the nations whom they were to disciple unto Christ—hence the Spirit

of the light was upon them.

But fire does more than give light—it inflames—and the flames which sat upon each showed them

that they were to be ablaze with love, intense with zeal, burning with self-sacrifice, and that they were to

go forth among men to speak not with the chill tongue of deliberate logic, but with burning tongues of

passionate pleading, persuading and entreating men to come unto Christ that they might live. The fire

signified inspiration. God was about to make them speak under a divine influence, to speak as the Spirit

of God should give them utterance. Oh! blessed symbol, would God that all of us experienced its

meaning to the full and that the tongue of fire sat upon every servant of the Lord. May a fire burn

steadily within to destroy our sin, a holy sacrificial flame to make us whole burnt offerings unto God, a

never-dying flame of zeal for God and devotion to the cross.

Note that the emblem was not only fire, but a tongue of fire, for God meant to have a speaking

church. Not a church that would fight with the sword—with that weapon we have nought to do—but a

church that should have a sword proceeding out of its mouth, whose one weapon should be the

proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I should think from what I know of some preachers that

when they had their Pentecost, the influence put upon them was in the form of tongues of flowers. But

the apostolic Pentecost knew not flowers, but flames. What fine preaching we have nowadays! What

new thoughts and poetical turns! This is not the style of the Holy Ghost.

Soft and gentle is the flow of smooth speech which tells of the dignity of man, the grandeur of the

century, the toning down of all punishment for sin, and the probable restoration of all lost spirits,

including the arch-fiend himself. This is the Satanic ministry, subtle as the serpent, bland as his seducing

words to Eve.

The Holy Ghost calls us not to this mode of speech. Fire, intensity, zeal, passion as much as you

will—but as for aiming at effect by polished phrases and brilliant periods—these are fitter for those who

would deceive men than for those who would tell them the message of the Most High. The style of the

Holy Ghost is one which conveys the truth to the mind in the most forcible manner—it is plain but

flaming, simple but consuming. The Holy Spirit has never written a cold period throughout the whole

Bible and never did He speak by a man a lifeless word, but evermore He gives and blesses the tongue of

fire.

These, then, are the two symbols, and I should like you to carefully observe how the Holy Spirit

teaches us by them. When He came from the Father to His Son Jesus it was as a dove. Let peace rest on

that dear sufferer’s soul through all His days of labor and through the passion which would close them.

His anointing is that of peace—He needed no tongue of flame, for He was already all on fire with love.

When the Holy Spirit was bestowed, by the Son of God, upon His disciples it was as breath—“He

breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Ghost.” To have life more abundantly is a chief necessity

of servants of the Lord Jesus and therefore the Holy Spirit visits us.

Now that we have the Holy Spirit from Christ as our inner life and quickening, He also comes upon

us with the intent to use us in blessing others and this is the manner of His visitation—He comes as the

wind, which wafts the words we speak, and as fire which burns a way for the truth we utter. Our words

are now full of life and flame. They are borne by the breath of the Spirit, and they fall like fire-flakes,

and set the souls of men blazing with desire after God. If the Holy Spirit shall rest upon me or upon you,

or upon any of us, to qualify us for service, it shall be after this fashion—not merely of life for

ourselves, but of fiery energy in dealing with others.

Come on us even now, O rushing mighty wind and tongue of fire, for the world has great need. It

lies stagnant in the malaria of sin and needs a healing wind. It is shrouded in dreadful night and needs

the flaming torch of truth. There is neither health nor light for it but from You, O blessed Spirit. Come,

then, upon it through Your people.

Now put these two symbols together, only mind what you are at. Wind and fire together! I have kept

them separate in my discourse hitherto and you have seen power in each one—what are they together?

Rushing mighty wind alone—how terrible! Who shall stand against it? See how the gallant ships dash

together and the monarchs of the forest bow their heads. And fire alone! Who shall stand against it when

it devours its prey? But set wind and fire to work in hearty union! Remember the old city of London?

When first the flames began, it was utterly impossible to quench them because the wind fanned the

flame and the buildings gave way before the flame-torrent. Set the prairie on fire. If a rain shower falls

and the air is still, the grass may perhaps cease to burn, but let the wind encourage the flame and see

how the devourer sweeps along while the tall grass is licked up by tongues of fire.

We have lately read of forests on fire. What a sight! Hear how the mighty trees are crashing in the

flame! What can stand against it! The fire sets the mountains on a blaze. What a smoke blackens the

skies—it grows dark at noon. As hill after hill offers up its sacrifice, the timid imagine that the great day

of the Lord has come. If we could see a spiritual conflagration of equal grandeur it were a

consummation devoutly to be wished. O God, send us Your Holy Ghost in this fashion—give us both

the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal, till nation after nation shall yield to the

sway of Jesus.

O You who art our God, answer us by fire, we pray You. Answer us both by wind and fire, and then

shall we see You to be God indeed. The kingdom comes not and the work is flagging. O that You would

send the wind and the fire! You will do this when we are all of one accord, all believing, all expecting,

all prepared by prayer. Lord, bring us to this waiting state.

**II.** Secondly, my brethren, follow me while I call your attention to THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS of

this descent of the Holy Spirit, for these symbols were not sent in vain.

There were two immediate effects—the first was *filling* and the second was *the gift of utterance*. I

call special attention to the first, namely, filling—“It filled all the house where they were sitting.” And it

did not merely fill the house, but the men—“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” When they stood

up to speak, even the ribald mockers in the crowd noticed this, for they said, “These men are full,” and

though they added, “with new wine,” yet they evidently detected a singular fullness about them.

We are poor, empty things by nature, and useless while we remain so—we need to be filled with the

Holy Ghost. Some people seem to believe in the Spirit of God giving utterance only, and they look upon

instruction in divine things as of secondary importance. Dear, dear me. What trouble comes when we act

upon that theory! How the empty vessels clatter, and rattle, and sound! Men in such case utter a

wonderful amount of nothing and even when that nothing is set on fire it does not come to much.

I dread a revival of that sort, where the first thing and the last thing is everlasting talk. Those who set

up for teachers ought to be themselves taught of the Lord—how can they communicate that which they

have not received? Where the Spirit of God is truly at work, He first fills and then gives utterance—that

is His way. Oh that you and I were at this moment filled with the Holy Ghost.

“Full!” Then they were not cold, and dead, and empty of life as we sometimes are. “Full.” Then

there was no room for anything else in any one of them! They were too completely occupied by the

heavenly power to have room for the desires of the flesh. Fear was banished, every minor motive was

expelled. The Spirit of God, as it flooded their very being, drove out of them everything that was

extraneous. They had many faults and many infirmities before, but that day, when they were filled with

the Spirit of God, faults and infirmities were no more perceptible. They became different men from what

they had ever been before—men full of God are the reverse of men full of self.

The difference between an empty man and a full man is something very wonderful. Let a thirsty

person have an empty vessel handed to him. There may be much noise in the handing, but what a

mockery it is as it touches his lips. But fill it with refreshing water and perhaps, there may be all the

more silence in the passing of it, for a full cup needs careful handling, but oh, what a blessing when it

reaches the man’s lips! Out of a full vessel he may drink his full. Out of a full church the world shall

receive salvation, but never out of an empty one. The first thing we want as a church is to be filled with

the Holy Ghost. The gift of utterance will then come as a matter of course.

They ask me, “May the sisters speak anywhere? If not in the assembly, may they not speak in

smaller meetings?” I answer, yes, if they are full of the Holy Ghost. Shall this brother or that be allowed

to speak? Certainly, if he be filled, he may flow. May a layman preach? I know nothing about laymen

except that I am no cleric myself—but let all speak who are full of the Holy Ghost.

“Spring up, O well.” If it be a fountain of living water, who would restrain it, who could restrain it?

Let him overflow who is full, but mind he does not set up to pour out when there is nothing in him—for

if he counts it his official duty to go pouring out, pouring out, pouring out, at unreasonable length, and

yet nothing comes of it, I am sure he acts, not by the Holy Spirit, but according to his own vanity.

The next Pentecostal symbol was *utterance*. As soon as the Spirit of God filled them, they began to

speak at once. It seems to me that they began to speak before the people had come together. They could

not help it—the inner forces demanded expression and they must speak. So when the Spirit of God

really comes upon a man, he does not wait till he has gathered an audience of the size which he desires,

but he seizes the next opportunity. He speaks to one person, he speaks to two, he speaks to three, to

anybody—he must speak, for he is full and must have vent.

When the Spirit of God fills a man, he speaks so as to be understood. The crowd spoke different

languages and these Spirit-taught men spoke to them in the language of the country in which they were

born. This is one of the signs of the Spirit’s utterance.

If my friend over yonder talks in a Latinized style to a company of fruit sellers, I will guarantee you

the Holy Ghost has nothing to do with him. If a learned brother fires over the heads of his congregation

with a grand oration, he may trace his elocution, if he likes, to Cicero and Demosthenes, but do not let

him ascribe it to the Holy Spirit, for that is not after His manner. The Spirit of God speaks so that His

words may be understood, and if there is any obscurity, it lies in the language used by the Lord Himself.

The crowd not only understood, but they felt. There were lancets in this Pentecostal preaching and

the hearers “were pricked in the heart.” The truth wounded men and the slain of the Lord were many, for

the wounds were in the most vital part. They could not make it out—they had heard speakers before, but

this was quite a different thing. The men spoke fire-flakes and one hearer cried to his fellow, “What is

this?” The preachers were speaking flame and the fire dropped into the hearts of men till they were

amazed and confused.

Those are the two effects of the Holy Spirit—a fullness of the Spirit in the ministry and the church—

and next, a fire ministry and a church on fire, speaking so as to be felt and understood by those around.

Causes produce effects like themselves, and this wind and fire ministry soon did its work. We read that

this “was noised abroad.” Of course it was, because there had been a noise as of a rushing mighty wind.

Next to that we read that all the people came together and were confounded. There was naturally a

stir, for a great wind from heaven was rushing. All were amazed and astonished, and while some

inquired believingly, others began to mock. Of course they did—there was a fire burning and fire is a

dividing thing—and this fire began to separate between the precious and the vile, as it always will when

it comes into operation.

We may expect at the beginning of a true revival to observe a movement among the people—a noise

and a stir. These things are not done in a corner. Cities will know of the presence of God and crowds

will be attracted by the event.

This was the immediate effect of the Pentecostal marvel and I shall now ask you to follow me to my

third point, which is this—

**III.** The Holy Spirit being thus at work, what was THE MOST PROMINENT SUBJECT which

these full men began to preach about with words of fire?

Suppose that the Holy Spirit should work mightily in the church—what would our ministers preach

about? We should have a revival, should we not, of the old discussions about predestination and free

agency? I do not think so. These are happily ended, for they tended towards bitterness, and for the most

part the disputants are not equal to their task. We should hear a great deal about the pre-millennial and

the post-millennial advent, should we not? I do not think so. I never saw much of the Spirit of God in

discussions or dreams upon times and seasons which are not clearly revealed. Should we not hear

learned essays upon advanced theology? No, sir—when the devil inspires the church, we have modern

theology—but when the Spirit of God is among us, that rubbish is shot out with loathing.

What did these men preach about? Their hearers said, “We hear them speak in our own tongues the

wonderful works of God.” Their subject was the wonderful works of God. Oh, that this might be to my

dying day my sole and only topic—“The wonderful works of God.” For, first, they spoke of *redemption*,

that wonderful work of God. Peter’s sermon was a specimen of how they spoke of it. He told the people

that Jesus was the Son of God, that they had crucified and slain Him, but that He had come to redeem

men, and that there was salvation through His precious blood. He preached redemption. Oh, how this

land will echo again and again with, “Redemption, redemption, redemption, redemption by the precious

blood,” when the Holy Ghost is with us. This is fit fuel for the tongue of flame—this is something

worthy to be wafted by the divine wind.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.” This is one of the wonderful works of God

of which we can never make too frequently mention.

They certainly spoke of the next wonderful work of God, namely, *regeneration*. There was no

concealing of the work of the Holy Spirit in that primitive ministry. It was brought to the front. Peter

said, “You shall receive the Holy Ghost.” The preachers of Pentecost told of the Spirit’s work by the

Spirit’s power—conversion, repentance, renewal, faith, holiness, and such things were freely spoken of

and ascribed to their real author, the divine Spirit. If the Spirit of God shall give us once again a full and

fiery ministry, we shall hear it clearly proclaimed, “You must be born again,” and we shall see a people

forthcoming which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God, and by the

energy which comes from heaven. A Holy Ghost ministry cannot be silent about the Holy Ghost and His

sacred operations upon the heart.

And very plainly they spoke on a third wonderful work of God, namely, *remission* of sin. This was

the point that Peter pushed home to them, that on repentance they should receive remission of sins. What

a blessed message is this—pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus’ blood, free

pardon, full pardon, irreversible pardon given to the vilest of the vile when they ground their weapons of

rebellion, and bow at the feet that once were nailed to the tree. If we would prove ourselves to be under

divine influence, we must keep to the divine message of fatherly forgiveness to returning prodigals.

What happier word can we deliver?

These are the doctrines which the Holy Ghost will revive in the midst of the land when He works

mightily—redemption, regeneration, remission. If you would have the Spirit of God resting on your

labors, dear brothers and sisters, keep these three things always to the front and make all men hear in

their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

**IV.** I shall close by noticing, in the fourth place, what were the GLORIOUS RESULTS of all this.

Have patience with me if you find the details somewhat long. The result of the Spirit coming as wind

and fire, filling and giving utterance, was, first, in the hearers’ *deep feeling*. There was never, perhaps,

in the world such a feeling excited by the language of mortal man as that which was awakened in the

crowds in Jerusalem on that day. You might have seen a group here, and a group there, all listening to

the same story of the wondrous works of God, and all stirred and affected, for the heavenly wind and

fire went with the preaching and they could not help feeling its power.

We are told that they were pricked in the heart. They had painful emotions, they felt wounds which

killed their enmity. The Word struck at the center of their being—it pierced the vital point. Alas, people

come into our places of worship nowadays to hear the preacher and their friends ask them on their

return, “How did you like him?” Was that your errand, to see how you liked him? What practical benefit

is there in such a mode of using the servants of God? Are we sent among you to give opportunities for

criticism? Yet the mass of men seem to think that we are nothing better than fiddlers or play-actors who

come upon the stage to help you while away an hour.

O my hearers, if we are true to our God and true to you, ours is a more solemn business than most

men dream. The object of all true preaching is the heart—we aim at divorcing the heart from sin and

wedding it to Christ. Our ministry has failed and has not the divine seal set upon it unless it makes men

tremble, makes them sad, and then soon brings them to Christ and causes them to rejoice.

Sermons are to be heard by the thousands and yet how little comes of them all, because the heart is

not aimed at, or else the archers miss the mark. Alas, our hearers do not present their hearts as our target,

but leave them at home and bring us only their ears, or their heads. Here we need divine aid. Pray

mightily that the Spirit of God may rest upon all who speak in God’s name, for then they will create

deep feeling in their hearers!

Then followed an *earnest inquiry*. “They were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the

rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” Emotion is of itself but a poor result unless

it leads to practical action. To make men feel is well enough, but it must be a feeling which impels them

to immediate movement, or at least to earnest inquiry as to what they shall do. O Spirit of God, if You

will rest on me, even me, men shall not hear and go their way and forget what they have heard! They

will arise and seek the Father and taste His love. If You would rest on all the brotherhood that publish

Your Word, men would not merely weep while they hear, and be affected while the discourse lasts, but

they would go their way to ask, “What must we do to be saved?”

This is what we need. We do not require new preachers, but we need a new anointing of the Spirit.

We do not require novel forms of service, but we want the fire Spirit, the wind Spirit to work by us till

everywhere men cry, “What must we do to be saved?”

Then came *a grand reception of the Word*. We are told that they gladly received the Word and they

received it in two senses—first, Peter bade them repent and so they did. They were pricked to the heart

from compunction on account of what they had done to Jesus, and they sorrowed after a godly sort and

quit their sins. They also believed in Him whom they had slain and accepted Him as their Savior, there

and then, without longer hesitancy. They trusted in Him whom God had set forth to be a propitiation and

thus they fully received the Word. Repentance and faith make up a complete reception of Christ and

they had both of these. Why should we not see this divine result today? We shall see it in proportion to

our faith.

But what next? Why, they were *baptized* directly. Having repented and believed, the next step was to

make confession of their faith—and they did not postpone that act for a single day—why should they?

Willing hands were there, the whole company of the faithful were all glad to engage in the holy service,

and that same day they were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If

the Holy Ghost were fully with us, we should never have to complain that many believers never confess

their faith, for they would be eager to confess the Savior’s name in His own appointed way.

Backwardness to be baptized comes too often of fear of persecution, indecision, love of ease, pride, or

disobedience—but all these vanish when the heavenly wind and fire are doing their sacred work. Sinful

diffidence soon disappears, sinful shame of Jesus is no more seen, and hesitancy and delay are banished

forever when the Holy Spirit works with power.

Furthermore, there was not merely this immediate confession, but as a result of the Spirit of God,

there was *great steadfastness*. “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.” We have had

plenty of revivals of the human sort and their results have been sadly disappointing. Under excitement,

nominal converts have been multiplied—but where are they after a little testing? I am sadly compelled

to own that, so far as I can observe, there has been much sown and very little reaped that was worth

reaping, from much of that which has been called revival. Our hopes were flattering as a dream, but the

apparent result has vanished like a vision of the night. But where the Spirit of God is really at work the

converts stand—they are well-rooted and grounded, and hence they are not carried about by every wind

of doctrine, but they continue steadfast in the apostolic truth.

We see next that there was *abundant worship of God*, for they were steadfast not only in the

doctrine, but in breaking of bread, and in prayer and in fellowship. There was no difficulty in getting a

prayer meeting then, no difficulty in maintaining daily communion then, no want of holy fellowship

then, for the Spirit of God was among them and the ordinances were precious in their eyes. “Oh,” say

some, “if we could get this minister or that evangelist, we should do well.” Brothers, if you had the Holy

Spirit you would have everything else growing out of His presence, for all good things are summed up

in Him.

Next to this there came *striking generosity*. Funds were not hard to raise—liberality overflowed its

banks, for believers poured all that they had into the common fund. Then was it indeed seen to be true

that the silver and the gold are the Lord’s. When the Spirit of God operates powerfully, there is little

need to issue telling appeals for widows and orphans, or to go down on your knees and plead for

missionary fields which cannot be occupied for want of money.

At this moment our village churches can scarcely support their pastors at a starvation rate—but I

believe that if the Spirit of God will visit all the churches, means will be forthcoming to keep all going

right vigorously. If this does not happen, I tremble for our Nonconformist churches, for the means of

their existence will be absent—both as to spiritual and temporal supplies they will utterly fail.

There will be no lack of money when there is no lack of grace. When the Spirit of God comes, those

who have substance yield it to their Lord. And those who have but little grow rich by giving of that little,

and those who are already rich become happy by consecrating what they have. There is no need to rattle

the box when the rushing mighty wind is heard and the fire is dissolving all hearts in love.

Then came *continual gladness*. “They did eat their meat with gladness.” They were not merely glad

at prayer meetings and sermons, but glad at breakfast and at supper. Whatever they had to eat, they were

for singing over it. Jerusalem was the happiest city that ever was when the Spirit of God was there. The

disciples were singing from morning to night, and I have no doubt the outsiders asked, “What is it all

about?” The temple was never so frequented as then—there was never such singing before—the very

streets of Jerusalem and the Hill of Zion rang with the songs of the once despised Galileans.

They were fall of gladness and that gladness showed itself in *praising God*. I have no doubt they

broke out now and then in the services with shouts of, “Glory! Hallelujah!” I should not wonder but

what all propriety was scattered to the winds. They were so glad, so exhilarated that they were ready to

leap for joy. Of course we never say, “Amen,” or “Glory!” now. We have grown to be so frozenly

proper that we never interrupt a service in any way, because to tell the truth, we are not so particularly

glad, we are not so specially full of praise that we want to do anything of the sort. Alas, we have lost

very much of the Spirit of God and much of the joy and gladness which attend His presence, and so we

have settled into a decorous apathy! We gather the links of propriety instead of the palm branches of

praise.

God send us a season of glorious disorder. Oh for a sweep of wind that will set the seas in motion

and make our ironclad brethren now lying so quietly at anchor to roll from stem to stern. As for us, who

are as the little ships, we will fly before the gale if it will but speed us to our desired haven. Oh for fire

to fall again—fire which shall affect the most stolid! This is a sure remedy for indifference. When a

flake of fire falls into a man’s bosom, he knows it, and when the Word of God comes home to a man’s

soul, he knows it, too. Oh that such fire might first sit upon the disciples and then fall on all around!

For to close, there was then *a daily increase* of the church—“The Lord added to the church daily

such as should be saved.” Conversion was going on perpetually. Additions to the church were not events

which happened once a year, but they were everyday matters, “so mightily grew the word of God and

prevailed.”

O Spirit of God, You are ready to work with us today even as You did then! Stay not, we beseech

You, but work at once. Break down every barrier that hinders the incomings of Your might. Overturn,

overturn, O sacred wind! Consume all obstacles, O heavenly fire, and give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach Your reconciling word for Jesus’ sake. Amen.