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Pentecost — The Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Joe Oden

After following this thread, we can now apply Acts 1:8 in a broader perspective. Jesus, after he was raised from the dead, instructed his disciples "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you to be a witness." Where the empowerment of the Holy Spirit was somewhat ambiguous in the book of Luke, it has now become absolutely explicit from the very words of Jesus. He clearly instructed them to wait in the upper room until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Obediently, they waited for ten days. And, in the second chapter of Acts, we read that the fulfillment of the promise came. The Bible says there was a wind— the sound of a rushing mighty wind that filled the place in which they were. A flame of fire descended upon every head, and they began to speak in other tongues.

The disciples had never spoken like that in their existence. Not only was their speech empowered, but they felt compelled to move out in faith. They didn't simply stay in their prayer room and say, "Thank you God for filling us." What happened? They took their experience out into the street. The Bible tells us that many different nationalities were gathered in Jerusalem on that day. They each heard the wonders of God in their own language. They literally heard the proclamation of the Gospel in their own native tongue.

No doubt, there were those who criticized the spectacle they witnessed. Not everyone accepted the event as a heavenly appointment. The Bible tells us some of the comments being made were, "What's taking place? What's going on? It's only 9 o'clock in the morning. Are these men drunk?"

However, we may assume that not everyone thought the disciples, and the other one-hundred and eight in the upper room, had been drinking all night. There were those who discerned that something was upon them that was not of their own disposition. Something unusual was influencing these men. Maybe they could not find the right words in their vocabulary to describe what they witnessed. Instead, they used the only language they knew. Surely, some were looking for a genuine explanation when they exclaimed, "These men are drunk."

Today, if an individual gets pulled over by a police officer for drinking and driving, the officer may say, "You've been driving under the influence." The signs posted outside of drinking establishments say something like, "Food and Spirits," or "Wine and Spirits." What those men and women were saying that day in Jerusalem was, "Something is on those men who have been with Jesus. They are under the influence of something else and they are no longer in control. What is it?"

Peter, in a clear and concise manner, stands up and says this, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...'" (Acts 2:14-17 ESV).

Peter clearly articulated and demonstrated Luke's message. He gave them a theological foundation to the questions they asked. He told them explicitly that when the Spirit comes, prophetic unction follows. In Israel's history, those deemed as prophets had been the only ones who prophesied. Peter established groundbreaking theology. To all those who would listen, in essence, he said, "We have entered into a new dispensation of time where not only Elijah, Elisha, Samuel, Ezekiel, and al the prophets of old will prophesy, but every individual that is filled with the Spirit will be empowered to prophesy as well.

To bring the point home, Peter repeats himself, "...your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18 ESV).

Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed the good news of the gospel to this particular crowd. Three thousand people were born-again. As he preached, people who were bound by sin-alcoholism, immorality,

and all manner of addictions— were set free under the Spirit empowered proclamation of the gospel.

Following Peter's story, we see the same thing happen again in the next chapter. Peter and John are on their way to prayer. Aman, lame since birth, is healed in a supernatural way. What did Peter do? He proclaimed the gospel. He publicly testified of Jesus; of his divine nature, and of his death, burial, and resurrection. This time, two thousand people were born again. Peter gave a supernatural proclamation through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and multitudes were

saved.

At this point, Peter and John are arrested. Acts 4:8 (ESV) sets the scene for Peter's defense as he addresses those who have

imprisoned him: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders...'" The Bible is clear. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter begins to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to his accusers. At the end of the fourth chapter of Acts, Peter and John are released from prison, and as usual, began to pray: "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Luke 4:29-30 ESV). Luke tells us at that moment, they were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 5, we see a continuation of the Lukan Pneumatological Pattern. Peter once again preached through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. People were healed. Thousands more were added to the Kingdom of God.

It is here (Acts 6) that we come to a turning point: Luke begins to highlight a Greek influenced Jewish believer named Stephen. This is significant in the fact that although Stephen was of Jewish ancestry, his cultural practices were Gentile in nature. We see from this point on, a push toward the gospel being moved out of Jerusalem and into the Gentile world. But although a shift in focus took place, the means in which the proclamation went forth remained the same. What was Stephen known for? -Powerful speech, and signs and wonders. Luke makes sure we know that Stephen was filled with the Spirit.

As the thread continues to weave its pattern, in Acts 8 we encounter Philip the Evangelist. Samaria received Christ as he boldly proclaimed the gospel, and everyone is healed. Again, Luke stresses the fact that through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, an unprecedented anointing comes that brings about signs, wonders, and miracles.

Finally, we are introduced to the man showcased throughout the rest of Luke's narrative— the Apostle Paul. On the road

to Damascus, Paul had an encounter with Jesus Christ. He was blinded. This brilliant man had to be led away and cared for by others. This once zealous 32 teacher of the Torah had now come to understand the truth of the divine nature of Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, a word of knowledge was given ot Ananias with instructions to pray for Paul and

where to find him. "Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 9:17 NIV).

Paul was indeed filled with the Holy Spirit and as a result, what happened? He immediately began to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Empowerment for Today

I want to submit to you that the Devil has deceived many believers, time and time again, when it comes to this simple truth. Some have bought into the lie that an unusual encounter, or an 80 day fast, or hours of Bible study and prayer each day is what God requires of us in order to be used in a special way.

But know this! If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you have everything you need to share the gospel effectively. The same Spirit that filled the Apostle Paul, that filled Peter, that filled Jesus and John the Baptist is on the inside of you right now. You are not filled with the Spirit just to enjoy your church service or live a depressed free life. The Spirit of God has empowered you to proclaim the gospel to people who are lost and bound in spiritual captivity. You have been empowered to witness to Muslims, Buddhist, atheists, drug addicts, and to anyone who does not know Christ.

Your effectiveness is not built upon your persuasive abilities. You may share the gospel with a soft approach or in a robust manner. You may share the gospel sweetly, or you may share it with a strong voice. The method in which you choose to articulate the message is not what makes it effectual. The power is in the anointing of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please be encouraged that before you witness, just as the disciples modeled, lift your hands and ask God to empower you and to fill you afresh with the Holy Spirit. If you've never been empowered by the Holy Spirit, lift your hands and ask God to fill you even now. It will give you the confidence and the foresight to know that as you step out and share the gospel with someone, that it's not about your abilities. It's about the Holy Spirit who resides within you. As you do that, you will see the captive set free. You will see people bound or oppressed by the Devil loosed in Jesus Name. You will see the sick healed.

I want to encourage you to take hold of this truth, whether or not you feel it or sense it. Take the truth of God's word and pray to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. As you step out to share the gospel, you will see the kingdom come in power in Jesus Name!

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| **Savannah Wright**Administrative Assistant to Joe Oden*AG World Prayer Center | (417) 763-5757* |