

## **THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

### **Acts 2**

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Last week we sort of strolled through Acts 1, which is a period in the Book of Acts which deals with the theme from resurrection to Pentecost. It involves a period of some fifty days following the resurrection of the Lord, and His appearance for forty days to the disciples, where He again teaches the principle themes that had occupied Him in His earthly ministry. Then, following His ascension into heaven, there was a period of ten days in which the church was waiting in prayer. When we come to the second chapter of Acts, we come to a chapter which we may simply title, “The Day of Pentecost.” If you are keeping notes on this, I’m not trying to be the most organized and clear in this message as with last Sunday night, I don’t have four points or seven points or whatever, as I normally do in a teaching series. I’m simply trying to look with you at the text. But at the same time, I’d like to keep before you a context so you don’t get lost in this Bible study. Therefore, if you’re doing some headings, the first chapter is simply titled “Resurrection to Pentecost” and this second chapter can be titled “The Day of Pentecost.” I’d like for us to join a moment in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts this evening:

“Our Lord, as we come to Your Word this evening, we come to it on several levels. We come to Your Word, first on the knowledge level, where we simply want to have before us the data of Scripture in a more accurate way, so that we might not be deficient in our understanding of truth. But we come with far greater needs than simply the needs for rational inquiry. We come with the need, spiritually, to encounter You in the same manner as those who encountered You in these pages. We want to open our hearts, right at the beginning this evening, and lay aside every preconception that we may have formed about this wonderful chapter of Your Word, and simply

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open ourselves to You and to the truth that You might have for our lives this evening. It may be that the truth that You might have for us tonight is different from the truth that we have experienced in times past. Not different in terms of heresy, but the fact that tonight You will apply something to our life in a special way that we have not seen before in our own walk with You. We're open to that Lord, for we've come this evening to be fed by You. We believe that, since the Holy Spirit has come, as You had promised, that He will lead us into all truth and that the truth in which He leads us will be satisfying and sufficient for our hearts. We seek this in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen."

I'm going to spend quite a bit of time just on the first phrase. I'm not sure just how far we'll get. My goal is to get all the way through forty verses, but I'm also realizing that, while I can talk endlessly, you cannot listen endlessly and there must be a balance to all things. Someone has said that lecturing is the transmission of what is in the teacher's notebook to what is in the student's notebook without it going through the head of either. Maybe that's a good reason why, in this series, I'm laying aside my notes so that I can share with you, not out of cognitive levels alone, but out of heart levels and kind of lay aside those trappings of nicety and organization in order to get at more gut and fundamental things. And two, I didn't want to use notes so in case we do get carried away with a phrase, I won't feel like I've got to be bound, that I have to get all the way through.

The text says, "When the day of Pentecost came." That's a very flat reading, actually. A more literal rendering of the Greek text and you know I'm loath to use that reference "the Greek text," because it immediately puts all of you who don't have the ability to work with the Greek text at a disadvantage. And it allows me to be the custodian of the sacred knowledge. Don't you hate ministers who settle arguments by saying, "But it really says in the Greek..."? It's really us

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doing a one-upmanship on the laity and it's grossly unfair, and I try to stay away from it. One reason is that I don't know the Greek that well so it is not to my interest to be able to pass myself off as a Greek scholar. However, when I am in trouble, I will use the Greek in order to win the argument—you should know that in advance. That is one of the tactics we have in the ministry for sustaining our position.

But this is a rather flat interpretation. The literal rendering of the Greek here would say something like this, “And in the filling up of the day of Pentecost.” That's a rather intriguing phrase. What could that possibly mean? Is Pentecost empty? What is it that is filling it up? And how does that relate to the word? How does the concept of filling up relate to the word “Pentecost” itself?

The word “Pentecost” has come widely into vogue in this century, especially since 1901. It was actually the first day of this century—January 1, 1901—that a group of believers were meeting at a place called Stone's Folly in Topeka, Kansas, a Bible School. There was a small group of believers who were attempting to see if there was anything deficient in their Christian experience or the Christian experience of their church, which was taught in Scripture but was presently deficient. They came to a conclusion on the basis of their study, especially of Acts, that the one element that was deficient of their own church experience and personal experience was that what is described in the Book of Acts as the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” with speaking in other tongues was a phenomena that they had not observed or seen. Yet they became persuaded by studying the Book of Acts that this was an experience that was a pattern in the Early Church. And they simply opened themselves up to receive again that same blessing of the Spirit in the present that He gave in the apostolic era, if it so pleased the Holy Spirit.

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It was as a result of a number of days of fasting and praying that, in accordance with their request, the Holy Spirit came upon that small group meeting in this unfinished mansion called Stone's Folly; and the Pentecostal movement in this century began. It is now estimated that this movement embraces hundreds of millions of people worldwide under the general title "Pentecostal." And, of course, the newer phrase begun in the 60s for this movement, which emphasized the baptism in the Spirit, with speaking in languages not learned or speaking in other tongues, the more modern name has been the charismatic renewal. Both the words "charismatic" and "Pentecostal" are biblical words. "Charismatic" comes from the Greek word *charismata* or *charisma* meaning in the singular "charisma," "spiritual gift." It's always used as a reference, not to a gift given by man to man, but a gift given by God to man. Or a gift from the greater to the lesser. It is, therefore, a free gift, a beneficent gift, charisma. And the plural is *charismata*, from which we derive "charismatic."

The older word that has been in use is the word "Pentecostal." It also has a very rich history and, in fact, it has a rich biblical history. That's what I want to key in on for just a moment, because it is that word, "Pentecost," that was in the process of being filled up on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2. There's no real mystery about Pentecost. I would like to say to you that the word has some splendid hidden spiritual meaning and that when I decipher it, I'll send you away with goose bumps, saying, as you smack your head on the pew, "Why didn't I ever see that before in the meaning of that word in Scripture?" But it simply is a word which means fifty. It's from the Greek *pente*, which you'll immediately recognize as the word for five. "Pentecost" meaning fifty. In the Hebrew usage, it was a festival of the Hebrew year which, to the Greek speaking Jews, acquired the name Pentecost.

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The actual word for the festival in the Hebrew language is *Shavuot* which is still the custom in Israel today—the Feast of *Shavuot* or the Feast of Weeks as it is called. It is called the “Feast of Weeks,” because there are seven weeks plus a day—hence the name “fifty.” Seven weeks plus a day, from the Feast of Firstfruits until the Feast of Pentecost. That means that if I’m going to define Pentecost, I need to define the Feast of Firstfruits. That’s what I want to do for a few moments.

If you read Scripture closely, the Scripture itself is its own best interpreter. Scripture tells us what Pentecost is. But in order to understand Pentecost, we must get more than a lexical definition of the word. You can’t simply go to a Bible dictionary or to an English dictionary and look up “Pentecost” and think that simply by looking at the dictionary definition we have grasped what the concept is. The concept is revealed from within the context in which the whole meaning of Pentecost is laid out.

I want to take you to one of the esoteric books of Scripture which I know you spend a lot of time reading and pouring over the details in this book. It’s the marvelous Book of Leviticus, the third book of the Bible. It is Leviticus 23 that tells us the contextual meaning of what Pentecost is. Where I’m ultimately going, you’ll see when I get done. One of the things I’m going to try to answer in this discussion of Pentecost is whether or not what happened on the Day of Pentecost was a one-time event, meant for those people back then alone, or if it is meant to have continuing significance for us today, and for the whole church all over the world today. I’m suggesting to you that the answer to that question is bound up intricately in the meaning, the very meaning of the word “Pentecost,” and that the Scriptures themselves give us, through prophetic typecasting what that word is meant to represent.

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Leviticus 23 sketches out the seven feasts of the Jewish year; “God’s calendar of time” is a good way to identify this chapter. It was meant to be a calendar whereby God’s people would have seven moments, through every twelve-month period of time, to stop and reflect on their special relationship with God. One of the Jewish writers, in commenting on God’s calendar of time says that the Jewish people were not great in being remembered for building great monuments or sanctuaries, but God chose to mark His presence among them by covenant and by calendars of time. Time comes to us inexorably, and those seven feasts that were celebrated through the year, whether one wanted them to come or not, they came. Because time does come inexorably and God chose every year to have seven aspects of His relationship to His people marked in truth by the content of those festivals.

To briefly run them by you, because Pentecost fits as the middle of those seven festivals, it is the fourth festival, it belongs to the set of the first three. Here are the festivals.

The first festival is the Festival of Passover. The fourteenth day of the first month. It is a very significant time in Hebrew. Hebrew uses double sets of sevens and threes and things like that. But just the double set of seven, the fourteenth day of the first month, God’s people find their identity through His act of deliverance. That’s what the Passover was all about, the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb—the death angel going through and passing by so that the firstborn of the family did not die. It signified God’s great deliverance out of Egypt. The Passover lamb has been sacrificed.

The Feast of Passover was then immediately made to be concurrent with a feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which began the night of Passover and, unlike Passover, which lasted just one night (the fourteenth day), the Feast of Unleavened Bread ran from the fourteenth day and runs today still in Israel from the fourteenth day to the twenty-first day of the month. It is meant

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to commemorate the fact that God's people are to purge their houses and homes of leaven, leaven being a type or figure of contaminating influence. So, still today, an Israeli home, a Jewish home here in America, as an observant Jew, you will have the ritual search for leaven in the house and the removal of leaven as an event.

The third feast that interposed itself was called the Feast of Firstfruits. It occurred the seventh day or the twenty-first day of the first month. The seventh day after Passover. It was primarily an agricultural feast, which said it is time for the barley crop to begin to be harvested. The wheat is standing in the field. It's ready to be harvested. But before any of it can be harvested and eaten by the people who have sown the seed and tended the fields, there must be a gathering of the firstfruit of that harvest. The first standing shocks of grain must be identified. Those standing shocks of grain must be cut down and brought as an act of celebrative worship in Solomon's or David's time to the temple. And in Jesus' day, again to the temple where, in a special wave offering, that sheaf of grain was, as you will, waved before God. In fact, it was the law within the Old Testament that no one could eat of the spring crop until the very first of the crop had been offered to God. When the crop had been offered to God, then the rest of the people could partake in the entire remaining crop that was to be harvested; signifying a great biblical truth: that the first things always belong to God. In the Old Testament, it was the first child that belonged to God, the first of the income belonged to God, the first of the crop belonged to God, the firstfruits. In fact, when you read the Book of Joshua you discover that the first Feast of Firstfruits that Israel kept in its new entry into Canaan, on that day, the manna stopped. God's provision under the old system ceased as they began to reap the product that was in the new land.

That is then followed by the fourth feast, the last feast of spring, the Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks. Seven weeks and a day afterwards, which marked the completion of the spring

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harvest. Firstfruits marked the beginning, Pentecost marked the completion of the spring harvest and all was gathered in. At this time, instead of a raw sheaf of grain being waved to God, the people were instructed along with the animal sacrifices that were to be brought, they were instructed to bring loaves of bread that had yeast or leaven in them. That's the only offering I think you can find in the Old Testament where leaven or yeast is required in the offering normally, since leaven is a type of sin and evil that must be purged out. But in this particular case, leaven was in the bread. It was offered as an offering, as a kind of wave offering to God, a presentation of labor to God. That was the end of the spring feast.

We talk about how the New Testament fulfills those Old Testament feasts, they were like an empty container—a pitcher or a can or a great big receptacle of some kind—without New Testament truth being poured into them. Some of you have poured concrete. I'm not into construction, but I've seen them do it. You lay out the forms then you pour in the concrete. Then, when the concrete is poured and set, you can take out the forms. But the forms are necessary in order to guide the content of what is being poured into the form. That's the same way with these old feasts within our Christian observance. Once the truth is poured into the form, the form represented something. Then, Christians no longer kept a calendar year where the first month of every year, the fourteenth day, they had Passover, etc. We keep these feasts, not as observance once a year, but we keep them perpetually in our hearts as an ever-present observance. But the New Testament truth that fills up the Old Testament form is what is at stake here.

Of course, when we look at the spring feast, these four feasts I've enumerated are kept within a New Testament perspective. The first: Passover. In 1 Corinthians, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." The fulfillment of the Feast of Passover within a Christian sense was that Christ's blood on a cross was sufficiently applied to the door posts of our life so that the death

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angel passes over and our life is hid with God in Christ, so that there can never again be an alienation of our life from God. And we are kept by God, protected by Him because He is the type. He is the one who fulfills the type that the Passover lamb represented. Then, when we have communion, or whenever we remember Christ's sacrifice, we are keeping that feast in our hearts. Christ was offered up for us. So the Feast of Passover was fulfilled in Christ and we perpetually observe that feast whenever we remember Christ's sacrifice for us.

In regards to Feast of Unleavened Bread, Paul tells the Corinthians, "Purge out the leaven." By this, he is talking about the responsibility we as Christians have to actively seek the rooting out and eradication of sin in our life; malice and evil and immorality and impure thoughts and impure language and the like. That it is part and parcel of the Christian life to get serious about the removal of leaven from our life; that the keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread occurs, whenever and if we consciously set out to seek God's holiness in our life. Seeking for our life to be better conformed to the personality and character of God. That's keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The third spring feast is the Feast of Firstfruits. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 15, "Christ, the first fruit, was raised from the dead." There's a precise fulfillment of that feast in Christ's life because He rises again from the dead on the literal day of the Feast of Firstfruits. [Did I say Feast of First Fruits was seven days after Passover? I'll take that back. It was not. It was the first day after Unleavened Bread, which would make it the second day after Passover. Then Unleavened Bread continued through the week.] Christ rose from the dead on that day, the day of Firstfruits.

Get the picture for just a moment. Think of two locals in Jerusalem. One local is out in a barley field. It is early in the morning. The sun has not yet come up. In accordance with the custom, the high priest is going out with his top henchmen and has gathered in a field where some shocks of

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grain have been pre-marked and pre-roped. They have come out there so that, the minute the sun rises on that day, they may cut down that sheaf of grain and ceremoniously carry it back to the temple to wave it as a firstfruit to God, signifying that now the first of the crop is being harvested for springtime. The moment they are putting the sickle into the crop in another part of town, in a tomb where a stone had been rolled against it which was being guarded by soldiers, Jesus Christ comes out of the grave, marking the fact that He is the first from among the dead to rise. Just as the agricultural Feast of Firstfruits signified that it was ok for the rest of the harvest to be gathered, so Christ's rising from the dead is a guarantee to us that Christ—who is the Firstfruit—being the lead, will allow all who follow after Him to also be incorporated in the act which He does. That is, His resurrection is not singular and alone and only for Himself. It embraces all of us. He's the first. But once He has risen from the dead, then the door is open for all of us to likewise go through resurrection. None of us can have resurrection life until He's been resurrected. Just like no one could eat the grain until the Firstfruit was offered. But when the firstfruit has risen from the dead, then the rest of us begin to have the opportunity to participate in the resurrection life.

So whenever we celebrate Christ's resurrection, we are keeping the Feast of the Firstfruit.

That brings us, then, to the Feast of Pentecost and what's being filled up. Pentecost was at the end of the harvest, the completion of the harvest. It was all in. It was the product that was now being presented to God, the baked loaf with leaven, an excellent type of the fact that, all during the age of the Christian church, there was going to be a harvest. And that harvest is represented by a loaf of bread which is a combination of flesh and spirit. We have yeast in us, the leaven of unrighteousness. But it's not the raw product but the product that is being formed from the harvest that is presented to God. Pentecost is a harvest festival, a spring harvest festival.

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I would submit to you, if we really want to understand the meaning of Pentecost it must be related to the whole understanding of the fact that God, in this world, is gathering for Himself a harvest of people; and that harvest of people is to continue until the day of Pentecost is over. I would submit to you that just as the concept of the day of Passover, the day of Firstfruits, the day of Unleavened Bread is a perpetual observance, so Pentecost is not just a twenty-four-hour period of time. It is meant to describe a whole era in which the church is at work in the harvest and the harvest, the product of Christ's finished work, is being gathered to present to God. The Day of Pentecost. After the Day of Pentecost, there is a whole period of four months where there are no festivals.

Then in the seventh month, the last three festivals come, one right after the other—the Feast of Trumpets, which is a summoning of the people to festival and joy, and then after the Feast of Trumpets is Yom Kippur, which is the heaviest day, the Day of Atonement. It occurs on the tenth day of the seventh month. After that, comes Sukkoth or the Feast of Booths, in which God's people tabernacle for a week out in lean-to shelters or tents or canopies.

Those last three feasts of Leviticus 23 have not yet been fulfilled within Christian prophecy. The Feast of Trumpets, representing the return of the Lord. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, representing Zechariah 14, the fact that there's going to be a time of cleansing and the household of Israel, when it sees Him whom they have pierced. And finally, the Tabernacles, when we tabernacle with God. Revelation. And He tabernacles with us.

So all we have, at this present moment, for Christian fulfillment are the first feasts of spring. It is still the springtime within Christian experience and the Christian life. Beginning with Passover, extending through Pentecost.

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Here is where we are in the world today. God did not send the Day of Pentecost so that Christians would feel good. He wants us to feel good. He wants us to have elevation and motivation in our life. But He is concerned that there be a product, an end result to the effort that His Son came into the world to gain. Unless there is a fulfilling of Pentecost, a power of the harvest poured out on the Day of Pentecost, His small band of people will never be effective in in-gathering the harvest to present to God.

So whenever we talk about Pentecost, we must not only talk about blessing, we must talk about duty. Because God never intended His people to simply be charismatic. That is, simply to be a people who have a spiritual blessing and an elevated spiritual experience. We need the elevated spiritual experience. But that comes because we have a duty to do. If we try to do the duty of harvest or evangelism or outreach and have no electrical charge from the Spirit of God, then we're just not going to be able to do it, because it's too heavy. If, on the other hand, we have all delight and no duty, then we're going to wind up as kind of a spiritual bless-me club and not get God's purposes done in the world.

Pentecost joins these elements of God blessing His people and saying to His people, "This is the day of the harvest, the Day of Pentecost is being filled up." God is saying, "I intended Pentecost to be more than just an agricultural feast. I intended it to celebrate the harvest of mankind into the kingdom of God."

The Day of Pentecost being filled up and, therefore, right from the start, I've come to the assumption that this is not something that was just for then. Because the day has never closed. There's never yet been a sunset on the day and the Day of Pentecost will not be over until the Feast of Trumpets, until the trumpet sounds and the Lord returns.

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“When the day of Pentecost came [when it “filled up”], they were all together in one place.

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 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, NIV).

One of the things we have to do when we open the Book of Acts is immediately look at what might be called “unique moments which are non-repeatable in the life of the church” and the experience of believers, and normative experiences, which are meant to be repeated. On the Day of Pentecost, we find both kinds of events present. We find unique events that are never repeated in the experience of the church, as witnessed by the Scripture. And, on the other hand, we find normative events that not only occurred then but continue to occur now.

Let me look at the unique events with you. The unique event is, for example, that they were all gathered together in one place. I submit to you that that will never happen again until we meet at Jesus’ feet. After the Day of Pentecost, the church could never again gather in one room. So that was a unique event. I was a little bit of a mystic. I got this from people who influenced me spiritually. One of the things I like to do in my own worship experience is to take a moment and close my eyes and get back into the biblical picture. I like to do that when I’m taking communion. I’m now in the room, and I now become the thirteenth apostle or whatever. I’m in the room. Kind of in the back row, but I’m in the room, seeing what’s going on. I sort of feel that way on the Day of Pentecost. I’m with those one hundred and twenty. I’m the one hundred and twenty-first person there. It’s sort of like putting myself on the scene. Quite frankly, some of the greatest experiences I’ve had in my life have been in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. The funny thing is, I know that God doesn’t dwell in human places and those who worship Him must

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worship Him in spirit and in truth. And furthermore, the Upper Room in Jerusalem today is not the Upper Room of the biblical period because it's two thousand years after that, even when the building is one thousand years old, which makes it a new building. But still, when I go in that place called the Upper Room, I kind of go crazy.

It had to be a pretty large room to hold one hundred and twenty people. They'd been camping out there for ten days. They were all there together in one place. I guess one of the things that really shines in my heart is the fact that there's going to be, someday, a moment in which God allows us to have an experience of being in a room again where the whole church of all times is gathered in one place. It's going to be a vast hall. But it's going to be intimate and personal, nevertheless.

I have a lot more people who are already in that room than I did twenty years ago. I'm sure all of us do as well. It's a great day, we're looking forward to. But that's unique. Never again will the church be gathered in one place.

Another thing that is unique, that we do not find repeated in Scripture, is the sound of a mighty rushing wind. You look at the experiences where the Holy Spirit is received in later passages in the Book of Acts and you do not find any reference to a "mighty rushing wind," which is a sign that here is a unique event. The Holy Spirit was, through the symbol of the sound, saying to the church that there is going to be an invasion of the Spirit. The word for "wind" and "spirit" in the Hebrew and the Greek is the same. They're synonyms.

What the Holy Spirit is saying, through this presence of wind, is that He is going to move through His people in an unseen and invisible way and is going to do some powerful pushing of them into the world. It will take the wind of the Holy Spirit to scatter the disciples into the world. Already in the room they're picking up the sound of the rushing wind. The very fact that the

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wind is rushing and violent suggests that God is about to do something very turbulent and powerful, sweeping into their life.

The tongues of fire that are resting on each of their heads, which first appear then, break up and distributes over them, are not as one biblical commentator says, that they had seen a sudden beaming of the sun rays that were streaming into the windows which de-miraculacizes this event. It is, instead, a sign that the Holy Spirit, when He comes, is a purifying instrument. So fire comes.

Then there comes this other element. That all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them—Acts 2:4. As we look at that particular verse of Scripture, we ask ourselves, is that also unique, like the fire and the wind and the fact that they're gathered in one room? Or was that meant to be a normative and ongoing experience of the disciples? We'll see, in later texts of Acts, that phenomenon occurring again.

I realize that there has been, in the modern day, a lot of comment on whether or not there is a subsequent experience of the Holy Spirit called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" separate from conversion. That's question number one. And question number two: If there is a subsequent experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit different than conversion, must that experience of the Holy Spirit be witnessed to by the presence of other tongues, as it is here in Acts 2:4?

I know that there have got to be people here who are interested in those two questions. I'll take just a moment for each.

#### **I. First question: is there an experience called the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is subsequent to the receiving of the Holy Spirit at conversion?**

The Gospel witness is clear. John 3:5 says, "Whoever is born again must be born of water and of the Spirit." You must have a natural birth and a spiritual birth. "And no one can call Jesus,

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‘Christ’” Paul says to the Corinthians “except by the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” John 20 says that, after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Spirit.”

Therefore, the conclusion is that, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We are not two-thirds indwelt by the Godhead: “The Father’s presence is upon us; the Son comes to live within us. But the Holy Spirit hangs out for a while.” As a kid growing up in a Pentecostal church, somehow in the preaching this never came across to me quite accurately, because I struggled to get the Holy Ghost, not realizing that at conversion the Holy Spirit indwelt me. John 20:22 says, “Jesus said to them as He breathed upon them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” These same people who in John 20 received the Holy Spirit are in Acts 2:4 being filled with the Spirit.

I would submit to you that the fact that seven weeks earlier they had received the Holy Spirit makes it a subsequent or different experience than the subsequent Acts 2:4, where they are filled with the Spirit, or baptized in the Spirit. The two are distinct events. The same people who received the Spirit seven weeks earlier do not repeat that same conversion experience in Acts 2:4. It is a subsequent experience for them.

What the John 20 experience says is that the Lord is re-enacting creation, when God bent over lifeless Adam and breathed into him the breath of life. Now the risen Christ, the second Adam, is taking His immortal life, given to Him by the benefit of His own resurrected body and breathing symbolically into His disciples, who have Adam’s nature but not God’s nature and saying, “Because of your faith in Me, I now breathe into you eternal life.” Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, in that act of confession and conversion, receives the Spirit.

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I think one of the things we really have to do in biblical understanding is to be careful with our terms and not intermingle them. I recall the first time I ever publicly preached along these lines, I was at my home church of Central Assembly in Springfield, Missouri, which is the headquarters church for the Assemblies of God. I was twenty-four years of age. I've always been the kind of person who walks in where angels fear to tread. So I'm waxing away on a Sunday night at Central Assembly, talking about the fact that in conversion we receive the Holy Spirit. It's not that I receive God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit is waiting to show up down the road. In fact, I used the illustration that when I was a kid growing up in church the term "Holy Ghost" really spooked me. There were two things I had against the term "Holy Ghost." One was the word "holy" and the other was the word "ghost." I wasn't "holy" and the idea of holy sort of scared me. I was unworthy of whoever this was. And "ghosts" were things that hung around graveyards and haunted houses. I wasn't sure I was into that, either. The fact that I could be saved, meant that the Lord loved me. The fact that I kept having to ask for the Holy Ghost meant that, somehow, He really wasn't interested in taking possession in my life. I was confused. I went into this whole story and then I said that, at conversion, we receive the Spirit.

I remember after the service, two of the founders of the Assemblies of God were waiting to see me. They founded our magazine, *The Pentecostal Evangel*. Here was the Pentecostal theologian, and they're wanting to see me and I am now going to get my theology corrected. So I went with fear and trembling. He looked up at me. He was much shorter man than I am. He said, "George, I just wanted to call you over to tell you that I approve of what you said tonight and I just want you to know that that's the way we preached it at the beginning and I haven't heard it preached like that for a while. I wanted to commend you." I thought, "Praise God! I'm not a heretic after all!"

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But there is this experience subsequent to conversion. Sometimes, it's parallel to conversion, as we will see later in Acts 10, especially the salvation of Cornelius and the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred simultaneously. But here, there was now, not the Spirit being placed in them, which happens at conversion. The Spirit takes up residence in us. But in the "being filled with the Spirit" or "being baptized into the Spirit" (synonymous terms), there is that element of being placed into the life of the Holy Spirit and into the miraculous and powerful dimensions of the Spirit's work on earth. It is in keeping with the promise that Jesus makes in Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you." The reason why the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given was not so that people could have a feel-good experience or not even so that they could speak in tongues. This experience was given in order that God's people might have authority and power to live the Christian life and share their faith with other people. It is related to witnessing, and not to "bless me," although it feels wonderful it was never meant to be a dead end kind of street.

I hate to use this illustration because we have people who have different political views here. But when a person is sworn in as president of the United States, they have power by virtue of office. Not every president has exercised that power equally well. We had a president a few years ago who was criticized because he somehow didn't seem to ever have the clout of the office. He had all the authority, but somehow, Jimmy Carter didn't have the magnetism. He was a decent guy and all that and seems like a wonderful Christian brother. But somehow the nation said, "You're not dynamically leading us." Under his leadership, the nation began to sink under a lot of economic problems and overseas problems, till finally the voters threw him out of office. A far different thing happened with Abraham Lincoln, for example. He probably legislatively had less

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power than Carter, but he had a power that was in his life and personality that guided a divided ship of state and brought unity to a divided federation.

What the Lord is saying is that He recognizes that when He leaves these disciples behind, they can function as people who have authority. He tells them, "All authority in heaven and earth is given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19). That's the chart, the plan of advance. But if people aren't energized to carry that out, then it's simply a weak and ineffectual and insipid body of Christ. It cannot get Christ's work done in the world.

That work can't be done by simply reading a bunch of books on how to do it. I think I've had my whole life as demonstration to commitment to education, but you cannot have a revival by getting the books out and mastering the principles of revival simply intellectually. You cannot get the world evangelized by reading a book on personal evangelism. You can learn all the data and the concepts, but there must be something that goes beyond that. There must come a personal white-hot core of relationship that synchronizes the heart of man to the heart of God and gives an inner dynamic and power to effectively witness. It can come only from God.

When people somehow get hungry enough for God to do that, God does that all over His church. He does it to the most unlikely people, from the human point of view. He's got His Davids out there that don't look so hot and don't have all the impeccable credentials that we think are needed to do the work of God. But He raises up a person and energizes them with the power and capacity, far beyond their natural abilities.

If I understand anything about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, if I grasp it theologically, it's that this experience was meant to cause us, in our Christian life, to walk in a co-spiritual power that is beyond our native abilities. We talk a great deal, in contemporary time, about developing our spiritual gifts. I've kind of had a little adverse reaction to that. I think, so many times, spiritual

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gifts are confused with natural talents and there is a continuum between natural talents and gifts.

We see the function of the spiritual gifts as a continuum that is consistent with our natural talents so that, for example, if naturally we are a speaker, we tend to exercise prophetic gifts. If we tend to be a non-verbal a person, we more easily exercise gifts of service and mercy.

But yet, there must be a distinction between the natural and the supernatural for these people, these hundred and twenty people were not qualified world-changers. They were more like qualified world dead-beats in a certain respect. I always take my hat off to those people because to me, the hundred and twenty are the honest, ordinary citizens who are paying taxes, holding a middle income job, working out of a blue collar job, going to Kiwanis club or PTA, and they operate in that milieu. They're not in the philosophical centers of major universities, of the power lobbies of economic grandeur. They're common, ordinary people who are not expected to radically shape the world. The fact that these hundred and twenty go out and radically reshape the world and in thirty years, turn the world upside down, is not a tribute to their natural ability. They didn't have that natural ability. They had a supernatural power that came upon them through the Holy Spirit.

Unless we as individuals and the church collectively get hungry for God to do something that's beyond our natural ability, we will sit and rot till Jesus comes. We'll not get anything done in our generation if we rely upon our genius or our intelligence, however little of it there is, or our natural ability or whatever. It simply will not happen. God's work must be done with God's power. God's power goes beyond our natural ability. So we have to open ourselves up to the Lord.

That doesn't mean opening ourselves up for heretical experiences. Scripture creates the channel in which the Holy Spirit flows. The Holy Spirit, in experience, is not going to jump out of the

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channel of Scripture. That's why I have so many problems with some of the heretical moments of charismatic theology today, because they have gotten so far away from the channel of Scripture they don't even know where it is anymore.

The Spirit who caused the Word to be written is the Spirit who is in agreement with His Word. You will never find the Holy Spirit disagreeing with His Word. So they must line up. Experience is subordinated to Scripture. Unfortunately, it has been so true, a just charge laid at the door of charismatic and Pentecostals, time and again, that without knowing the Scripture, they have elevated experience to a condition that is higher than the Scripture. That ought never to be. Scripture must always be front and center. It is the basis of all faith and conduct and experience. I would simply point out that, in giving the disciples a promise that they were to be filled or baptized in the Spirit, Jesus was holding out before them an experience subsequent to conversion or, in some cases, simultaneous to conversion—as we'll see of Cornelius—that gave them a power to develop their potential.

We talked this morning in the sermon about the difference between intent and express action. Intent is something we intend to do, but the express action is what actually takes place. The power that is brought into our life by the Holy Spirit takes the unique potential that is ours, both the native human potential and the potential that God sees in us that we do not see, and develops that. That's power. Power is not walking around like you're holding on to a raw electrical plug and all your hair is standing out on end. Again, that's a confusion with Pentecostal charismatic people; thinking that when we go around places we are so powerful that people are knocked down if they come close to us.

Power is what God gives us to actualize this potential in us. Since the Day of Pentecost is filling up, we must hold to the notion that what it is filling is different sized vessels. Peter, for example,

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appears to have a rather large capacity for the Holy Spirit. We'll see, as we move through Acts 2, how in that largeness of his capacity he does more things than other people. He not only preaches powerfully and has great results, more than anybody, but also, through his hands, come incredible miracles. And finally, people are getting healed while his shadow passes over them. That doesn't happen to any of the others. He has a great capacity within him. There are other people who have smaller capacities.

Whether our capacity is the size of a cup or a glass or a pitcher or a pail or a great big container, whatever, we cannot say that we are full by simply comparing ourselves to what someone else is doing or is being filled with in the kingdom. We must ask, am I filled? The whole beauty of the word "filling," we'll see it developed as we go through Acts, is that filling is not only a one-time experience brought by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But there are subsequent fillings; because there are subsequent stretchings in our life.

What the Holy Spirit is interested in doing is filling us up when life's experiences are stretching us. I know that there is more need of me for the Holy Spirit at the age I'm at than there was twenty years ago, because life has stretched me in a lot of ways. And there's more of me that needs to be filled than there ever before. So filling is an ongoing thing. But it must start somewhere. And it starts in this baptism in the Spirit, which links us to the dynamic power of God that thrusts us beyond our native potential.

**II. Must this experience be accompanied by speaking with other tongues? Is the second question, which, of course, immediately comes to the fore.**

It might be simply noted in the text here that it says, "All of them began to speak in other tongues." I realize that one of the things that is frequently said is that, if the baptism of the Holy Spirit is valid, it does not necessarily follow that everyone must speak in tongues. After all, does

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Paul not say that some have the gift of tongues, some administration, some teaching and the like?

And that is often used as a phrase against everyone speaking. Also, it is said from Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14, that when we speak in tongues, we are to speak one at a time and there is to be an interpretation. However, the context of 1 Corinthians 12–14 must be separated from the context here. For the context of 1 Corinthians 12–14 has to do with the functioning of the spiritual gifts when the body is meeting as a body and being edified and encouraged and built up. In that particular situation, it is not edifying, when we're in the course of a service, for five people to jump up at the same time and start speaking in a language no one knows.

But here is a prayer meeting. All are praying together. One of the things I've discovered by going to Israel is that Pentecostals are really orthodox Israelis. I never knew that. But you go into an orthodox meeting, like for example the Western Wall (it's mistakenly called the Wailing Wall), and there's a men's area. It's a synagogue right off to the side, under cover by the Western Wall, you go in there and there are numbers and numbers of men in there and they're praying. Some praying in groups and some praying alone. But the sound is the sound of a Pentecostal prayer meeting. All the voices going at one time, and there's this beautiful combining and joining of the sounds of prayer. All audibly, but yet individually. They're not doing it as a corporate experience of worship. They're all just being built up personally, as they pray to God. There's this wonderful symphony of the sound of prayer and praise coming out of the room. It's not out of order or anything. What a place! It's community prayer.

This was happening here in Acts 2. Community prayer. They were praying. They were not praying like Americans pray. Our prayers seem so surface. And we're waiting for somebody to begin. Here's a different prayer meeting.

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And by the way, if I can give some instruction here, when we're in worship together, don't be reticent to do that. There's nothing unbiblical about that. When we're all praying together, it doesn't mean we all have to be silent at the same time. We can all, as an individual, join our voices and become a corporate symphony of praise and adoration to the Lord. That's one of the marks of Pentecostal worship. We can do that. It's a biblical pattern. In fact, I even thought that I would pick out passages from about ten psalms and distribute them and say, "Let's all begin to sing these free form at the same time!"

It was in the course of, I believe, that kind of praying (the Scripture doesn't tell us but they were all in prayer) that suddenly they break out in languages that they don't know. They go from their Aramaic or Hebrew, which they did know, and they find themselves speaking in the language groupings that are given in Acts—fifteen specific language groups. Specific languages that are being spoken. Suddenly, the whole town has gathered to hear these Galilean people speaking articulately in the languages of the world. They were all speaking. It was not that some were speaking in tongues, some were prophesying, some were doing works of healing, some were doing works of mercy, some were doing works of miracles. But they were all doing it.

Why did the Holy Spirit give them tongues? Why not give them the ability to smile clearly or have a halo on their heads or something like this? Why tongues? I've asked that a million times. I have to come back to the data of Scripture. The Scripture says, whether I understand it or not (so I guess I don't have to understand it), and God does choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. So I suppose that that would be really a way to confound thinking people with something like that. But on the other hand, God knows the construction of the inner life and He knows that there is a non-verbal and a verbal side to us. In worshipping Him, basically, all we have is the verbal side. We can't reach out and hug God. We can't reach out and show a facial

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gesture to God. We're limited to our words. We come to God verbally. Yet, when we're in love with someone else, we love them in more than verbal ways. In a marriage relationship, for example, God appointed sexual intercourse to be the most powerful way of communication between a husband and a wife. And that act is a non-verbal act. And it's a powerful act of communication and of tenderness and the uniting of both body and heart together in love. God, in His appointed dealings of man with man, realizes that we have a need, not only to say, "I love you," but to, within a marital context, experience that in the deepest core of our being in a non-verbal way.

I would submit to you that what God knows about us sociologically, He also knows about us psychologically and theologically. And in relating to Him, He knows that the deep core of our personality cries out for Him in nonverbal ways. But since God cannot be hugged, how do we then communicate to Him in a way that is from a center core of our being? I believe that He gave tongues as the divinely appointed answer to that, because, just like nonverbal love between a husband and a wife, where there is no articulated communication, yet the transmission of love is powerful and real; so, when a person speaks to God in a language they have not learned, as the Spirit enables them, they are communicating with God in a non-verbal way, where, for a time, the mental faculty is parked and resting. At a deeper level, at the core of being, that inner core might also be resting and communing with God and that is out of the context of the security and the profundity of that relationship with God in the Holy Spirit; out of that context emerges the power to live the Christian life.

Because that's all, our problem in living the Christian life and witnessing to others is lack of confidence. It's wondering if we really are acceptable to God. It's wondering if God can use anything of these clay jars that have a bunch of water sloshing through the veins, that constitutes

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us. Can God use that? And what the Holy Spirit is communicating to us, as we begin to communicate with the Lord in this powerful non-verbal way, is that our heart and our deep inner core is being ministered to and loved and responded to by God, and there is something powerful released. There is a catharsis that occurred.

That's why Paul is able to say to the Corinthians that when one prays in an unknown tongue, he edifies himself, he builds up himself. Because there is this cathartic effect that is taking place in the life, where there is a release of the soul to God in a way that words could simply never accomplish.

The Scripture doesn't go into all this kind of explanation. I'm just trying to set a context. Why would this happen? "They all"—not a single person was exempt—"they all." It wasn't "some did this and some did that," but, "they all." I'm suggesting that that phrase, "they all," is meant to be normative in the church rather than a unique event. I'm also suggesting that the minute we start arguing about it, we'd probably ruin the preciousness of the truth. But the nature of doctrinal controversy is sometimes that we have to argue from a position in order to let people know that it is a secure position, so they can trust their experience with it. Because, as I said, my experience cannot go where the Scripture doesn't go.

But I encourage you, in the core of your being, to reach out to God. I believe that, as we collectively reach out in a prayer meeting to God, we will find the same phenomena taking place. That we will all find ourselves in that kind of context, praising God in languages we do not know. It will not be because the Lord has rendered us unconscious. In fact, it was as the Spirit caused them to utter ... and by the way, the phrase "utter" there is precisely a phrase that means "speak forth boldly." It carries the idea that the words were being spoken by the person, but the generation of those words and the instinct of those words came as a result of what the Spirit was

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putting within the mind and the voice to say. That it was not speech-babble. That's why I have a problem when people say, "Start babbling and anything you say is tongues." That somehow deprecates and diminishes and cheapens the work that the Holy Spirit is doing here in the Book of Acts, where the Spirit causes it to happen.

Will it always be a real language? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Sometimes a language of men, sometimes a language of angels. We honestly don't always know. On the Day of Pentecost, those fifteen languages were recognized because there were Jewish people who had lived in all parts of the world. They're in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. I would suspect that, if we had a hundred and twenty people who were all speaking in tongues and had people in the room who knew a gob of languages, we would pick up, in any meeting, clearly identifiable languages.

I think one of the most sacred moments in my life was at Yugoslavia, when the little congregation was a handful of people. The pastor's husband was a member of the Communist party. This little uneducated Pentecostal woman had gone to start a church in this beautiful little town. There had been some fruit for her labor. In the service, one Sunday evening, a Jesuit priest, highly educated and with a powerful command of the Hebrew language, not only was he able to read the biblical text, but he was able to speak fluently in Hebrew and understand fluently in Hebrew. He himself, in his own personal spiritual experience, was walking away from God. He had an intellectual knowledge of the Bible, but did not have a vibrant personal experience with God.

For whatever reason, when there was a call given that night to come forward for prayer because everybody else moved toward the front, he did as well. As he was sitting by a little peasant woman who was praying, he was startled to hear her speaking in very clear and distinct Hebrew, praying to God in Hebrew. It so overwhelmed him, because he realized intuitively that this

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woman had never studied Hebrew, could not have studied Hebrew. She was a peasant lady.

Here, she was in the most powerful vocabulary that the Hebrew language can muster, giving praise and adoration to God. He came away from that meeting a believer.

You see what tongues is? A speaking of the mighty works of God. What were they doing when they were speaking in tongues? They were telling of the wonders of God in those languages. So that speaking in other tongues is an adoration of God. It is the closest we can get to nonverbal love toward God. It is the closest we can get, if you will, to hugging God. Until we see Him face to face. So the Lord allowed this experience in the Early Church to give it, at its very center, a core, a psychological and emotional and spiritual power to put the heart strong right at the beginning. God's people can always do great exploits when their inner core is strong. It's when the inner core has grown weak that the exploits die. If we want to see God do exploits in our day, we must come to Him and present the core of life to Him and ask Him to quicken us anew.

### **Closing Prayer**

Holy Spirit, fulfiller of Pentecost, the one sent as the promise from the Father to help us to announce the good news of Jesus to the waiting harvest of the world, we bless Thee. We bless Thee, Holy Spirit. We bless Thee, Lord Jesus. We bless Thee, heavenly Father. And this evening, we simply want to make ourselves available, as individuals and as a congregation, to Thee. Lord, we simply pray that, from our own heart, You may witness a hunger for You and an openness to You. That, in our time, we may see Your acts done once more in our generation. Even as in these days in California the earth has shaken, let there be in us a spiritual shaking, a new and profound sensitivity to You. Let the Holy Spirit fall upon us as well.