

44-02-01.wpd—The Outpouring at Pentecost

Holy Spirit, power, Pentecost

Acts 2:1-13

What the Church *is* and how it *grows* is dependent on the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture reading)

–We don't know the exact date of Jesus' birthday, but we celebrate it on Christmas. There are many opinions about when *the Church* was born: Was it the day Christ died on the Cross? The day He was raised from death? The day He breathed on the apostles, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"? Was it the day of His Ascension? Whatever day it really was, we generally celebrate the Church's birthday on the Day of Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit came to fill the believers.

–No matter when it actually began, **HOM.idea**. This passage points out two aspects about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The 1st aspect is about *what the Church is*:

I. The Church's Nature is that of One Body

A. **v.1**, "*all together in one place*"– This is God's pattern for the church (All the walls that sin builds between people are confronted by God's corporate intention for the Church: "I believe in one, holy catholic church.")

1. God wants the Church to be a miniature of Heaven [our church at EVCC: an interdenominational church especially does this].
2. God has a special blessing for us when we gather– **Mat 18:20**, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

B. **v.4**, "*all of them were filled*"– This is God's plan for the church (**Egocentric plans and purposes of people** are conquered, melted, molded, and sometimes eradicated, by **God's plan** to fill people with the Holy Spirit for His purpose of building one Holy Kingdom: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.")

TRANS: The Holy Spirit belongs to the Whole Church. Each denomination's claim to fame is its faithfulness in holding and teaching certain aspects of theological truth that other churches have neglected. Praise God there are these doctrinal experts in the one Body of Christ! Praise the Lord that we can learn from each other! But no single church has a corner on the Holy Spirit. We **might try to capture past glory**, or a *time-honored liturgy*, or a *revival history*, or a *special doctrinal concept* **by building four walls around it and boxing it in**. Denominations often try this. But the Holy

Spirit is not limited by our walls. He is always climbing out of the boxes we make for Him. He won't be maintained or contained or detained by human organization. He is as Sovereign as the other Members of the Trinity. He works with all parts of the Church, **where** He wills, **when** He wills, and **how** He wills, in spite of our opinions about it. **What the Church is (One Body) and how it grows is not dependent on human ideas and plans, but on the Holy Spirit.** How the Church grows is the 2nd aspect of the *Holy Spirit's outpouring*:

II. The Church's Nurture is by Holy Spirit Empowerment, v.2-4

- A. A question: What's passing about Pentecost and what's permanent? (the *passing symbolically* reveals what's *permanent*)
- B. The visible signs of Pentecost point to the Spirit's lasting work:
 1. **A symbol of power:** "*a violent wind*" (**Why wind?** What's the common element that changes weather from a still summer day to a *hurricane*, a *tornado*, a *monsoon*? **The wind!** And as *wind* powerfully changes the *condition of the weather*, the Holy Spirit can powerfully change the *condition of human hearts and lives*.)
 - a. This *wind* came "*from heaven*"-- earthly forces affect us for the time being; but "*power from on high*" can change us for eternity.
 - b. This *wind* "*filled the whole house*"– the Holy Spirit can fill places as well as people. [**Flowers, Xmas trees, or incense** will fill a house with distinct odors for all who enter, unless they are totally preoccupied.] (We should pray that our meetings be filled with Him, and that people be open to Him when they visit our church services.)
 2. **A symbol of purity:** "*tongues of fire*" (Scripture connects our language with our life, our words with our walk)–
 - a. The tongue symbolizes our verbal communication, and how and what we communicate reveals what we're like on the inside– **Mat 15:11**, "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"
 - b. God uses fire to symbolize cleansing. God's fire cleanses us to make us fit for service– **Isa 6:5-7**, "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Isaiah knew his need for that cleansing in order to be a voice for God.
- c. The Church needs that baptism of fire-- **Luk 3:16**, John answered

them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. [Grk. *baptize* = "to dip," as a garment to be dyed: totally transformed to a new color, a new beauty.] The Holy Spirit transforms us in the same way, from the inside out!

3. **A symbol of possession:** "*filled with the Holy Spirit*"—
 - a. *A common worry about being controlled:* "*I don't want another person to run my life!*" (Yet people often allow other spirits to ruin their spiritual life [C. S. Lewis's book *The Screwtape Letters* is a great description of how demons try to manipulate the lives of humans.]
 - b. *There's an uncommon wonder when we are controlled by God:* it's not so much *control* as it is *leading* [In dancing a waltz, the lady follows the lead of the gentleman.] Christ is supposed to have the lead in His waltz with the Church, His Bride!
4. **A symbol of proclamation:** "*to speak in other tongues*"—
 - a. [*"tongues"* = enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak in foreign *languages*], the purpose of miraculous "tongues" was not for a charismatic "tongues experience," but for proclaiming a special message— **v.11b**, *we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!*
 - b. The point is not to seek or promote a thrilling religious experience, but to allow the Holy Spirit control of our tongue so that we can speak about the wonders of God in a way people will understand [The KJV Controversy: the purpose of the KJV was to put the Heb. & Gk. Scriptures into a language the people could understand; those who resist new or revised translations of the KJV are at odds with the spirit and godly intentions of the original KJV translators. The same can be said of those who insist that the Church's use of language for worship and theology remain set in concrete. Each generation needs the concepts and principles of God made available to them in a way they can understand.]

CONCLUSION:

--Two responses: **v.12-13**, "*What does this mean?*" (to my life, to my walk?), while others "*made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'*" **Never ridicule God's outpouring of the Holy Spirit**, for you know in advance that the Spirit's power changes the ordinary life to an extraordinary life. **What the Church is and how it grows is dependent on the Holy Spirit**. As a corporate body, let us seek and be open to the filling of the Holy Spirit to change our life and our walk, so that others will hear us "declaring the wonders of God" in a way they will understand.

Acts 2:1-13 (NIV)

1When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

6When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

7Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"

8Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?

9Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10Phrygia 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!"

12Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."