

The Turning Points of Pentecost (Part 2) – Acts 2:1-13

Acts 2:1-4. We're working our way through the book of Acts, and started in *this* passage last week. And what we found, was a pivotal event. An event *full* of turning points. Turning points in God's work of redemption, turning points in the church, and turning points for us. In *our* lives.

The first of which, is that . . .

1. At Pentecost, the gospel became central (v1)

The good news of Jesus took center stage. And all that it means for life and godliness. It became central in God's *kingdom*, central in the church, and central in his people.

For 3 reasons:

- **Because the Law was giving way to the Spirit.**

As God's primary means of leading and guiding his people.

- **Because the Old Covenant was giving way to the New.**

God's promise to save us from our sins by virtue of our faith in Christ.

- **Because food was giving way to people.**

Until then, Pentecost celebrated the firstfruits of *harvest*. Now, *people* became the focus. So that we would make the gospel central in *our* lives.

That's the first turning point we found. And I trust you've had it.

The 2nd, is that . . .

2. At Pentecost, God's presence became palpable (v2-3)

As in so intense, so obvious, and so profound, he could almost be touched. Physically. It was God's effort to make sure they didn't miss his new work. And ensure that we don't either. In our day.

Which brings us to the 3rd turning point, from v4.

3. At Pentecost, God's Spirit became personal (v4)

Acts 2:1-4. [1] *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.* [2] *And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.* [3] *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.* [4] *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Tongues like fire rested on each one of them, v4, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit. All of them. Filled from the inside out.

So the Holy Spirit became personal to *everyone* who believed. No longer just leaders or *exceptions* experienced him like we saw last week, but *all* of God's people.

Everyone who trusted in God's Son received the personal presence of God's Spirit. That much is clear.

➤ But some of the details aren't. And beg some questions.

Like who *is* the Holy Spirit? How and when do *we* receive him? And what *happens* when we receive him?

Huge questions. That we need to answer not only to understand *this* passage, but the rest of the *book*. And properly discern how these verses apply to *us*.

➤ So let's start with . . .

A. Who *is* the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes called the Holy Ghost in older translations of the Bible, he's most often referred to as the Spirit, God's Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit. All one and the same.

Beyond that, he's only vaguely understood. Even, I fear, by most Christians. And just as well be the Christian Boogeyman.

A kind of mysterious power that's not quite real, and not quite imaginary.

Existing somewhere between the shadow and the forethought. Thank you T.S. Elliot.

➤ I'll never forget praying with our daughter Julia one night before bed, when she was really little. Maybe 3 or 4. Becky and I were *both* there on that particular occasion. And she started her prayer, "Dear God, dear Jesus . . . and who d'other guy?" And it was all we could do to keep from bursting out laughing.

But truth be told, that's exactly where most of *us* are.

We either don't *know* who the Holy Spirit is, or think we do, and don't.

And certainly don't know him *personally*.

So let me give you 2 truths to help with that. First . . .

- **He's a person**

The Holy Spirit is not just a force, Star Wars style, he's a person.

That's the implication of verses like **John 16:13-14**. Where the masculine pronoun "he" is used when referring to him.

Jesus is speaking, and says – *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

Jesus could have used "it" as a pronoun, but didn't. Implying, that the HS is *person*.

And all the more so in Greek, b/c the word for spirit, is neuter. It's neither masculine or feminine. And based on the customary rules of grammar in Greek . . .

A neuter word would ordinarily be referred to with a neuter *pronoun*. Like "it."

But that's *not* the word Jesus used. 8 times in 2 verses, he used a masculine pronoun for a neuter word. Drawing attention to the *personhood* of the Holy Spirit.****

➤ In addition to that, the biblical writers ascribe multiple *activities* to the Holy Spirit, that are normally *associated* with personhood.

Like teaching, and bearing witness. Speaking, praying, and being grieved. A personal emotion. Those are things *people* do.

All of which indicates that though he's spiritual in *nature*, he's a person. And therefore able to relate to us on a personal level.

The question is, is he personal to *you*? Or does he remain a little known, little understood part of your Christian life, somewhere out on the periphery?

I hope he's personal. And if he's not, I hope that today will be a turning point.

2nd, the second truth to increase your understanding and appreciation for him, is that . . .

- **He's fully God**

It's a concept both implicit and explicit in the Scriptures.

Implicit, like when the *attributes* of God are applied to him. **Ps 139:7-8**. Where King

David, speaking to God, says . . .

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol [the grave], you are there!

Do you see it? David applies the attribute of omnipresence, to the Holy Spirit. Implying that he's God. B/c omnipresence is an *attribute* of God. And God alone.

But it's also *explicit* in the Bible. Like in **Act 5:3-4** where the apostle Peter *calls* the Holy Spirit, God.

Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit . . .? You have not lied to man but to God." He actually *calls* him God.

It's implicit and explicit. He's fully God.

➤ Which means, we can have complete confidence in his work.

Like his work to perfectly inspire Scripture. And lead us through life. And *relate* to us personally.*****

B/c he's fully God, we can *trust* him fully. And b/c he's a person, we can *know* him personally.

How about it? Is he personal to you? Or is he a vague "force" only vaguely there?

If so, your turning point awaits.

The 2nd question that begs to be answered is this:

- **B. How and when do we receive the Holy Spirit?**

If the believers at Pentecost received him through a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire, how and when do we receive him?

And oh how confusion reigns on this one. Clouded by "spiritual experiences," and then cloudy interpretations to back them up.

So let's start with the "how."

- **We receive him through belief in Jesus**

Just like he said. **Jn 7:38-39**.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water [abundant blessings of life and godliness].'" [39] Now this he said about the Spirit [the source of the living water], whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified [he had not yet risen from the dead and ascended back to heaven at that point].

But when he did, the Spirit was given. How?

Through belief. **V39 – this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.** Believe in Jesus, receive the Spirit. It's that simple.

Just like the Apostle Paul said in **Gal 4:6 – Because you are sons** [b/c you're a part of God's family through belief and repentance], *God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*

If you're a child of God, you have his Spirit. Through belief.*****

It's the turning point of *all* turning points.

2nd . . .

- **We receive him within us**

In our hearts, as we just saw. Something the prophet Ezekiel spoke of 600 years *before* Pentecost. **Ez 36:26-27**.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you [within you], and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

We receive the Holy Spirit *within* us.

Then Jesus *himself* expanded on it, just 51 days before Pentecost. **John 14:15-17**.

If you love me [he said], you will keep my commandments. [16] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him [personally], for he dwells with you and will be in you.

We receive him *within* us.

And the Apostle Paul affirmed it, 20 years *later*. Under the *inspiration* of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 6:19 – Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?*****

It doesn't get any more personal.

We receive the Holy Spirit through *belief* in Jesus. We receive him *within* us. And . . .

- **We receive him at conversion**

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the moment we're saved. Otherwise we're *not* saved. To see it, turn with me to **Rom 8:9-11**.

Having just said that those in the flesh, those who *aren't* saved, cannot please God . . .

He says in v9 – *You, however* [speaking to believers, the church in Rome], *are not in the flesh but in the Spirit* [you're saved], *if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* Is not saved. Is not his son or daughter.

No Spirit, no salvation.

10 But if Christ is in you [referring to the *Spirit* of Christ as he just said in the previous verse], *although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness* [you're alive b/c of his holy presence].

No Spirit, no life.

And then he says it again.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

With the Spirit, there's life. Without the Spirit, there's not.

So by definition, we're saved when we receive the Holy Spirit. And we're not saved, until we do.

Which means, that salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are simultaneous. We receive him at conversion. Within us. Through belief in Jesus.

Have you *had* that turning point? If not, God's Spirit will *never* be personal to you.

Believe and receive.

And then 3rd, the third question that arises from this passage, is . . .

C. What happens when we receive the Holy Spirit?

Anything? Everything? Is it massively momentous or dolefully disappointing?

Mysteriously meaningful or essentially empty? Which is it?

I would argue meaningful and momentous. Even if you *don't* feel anything..

B/c first of all . . .

• We are brought under his influence

When we receive the Holy Spirit at conversion, the moment we're saved, we're brought under his influence.

Or as Jesus said it in Acts 1:5 – *John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.* You will be immersed in *him*. Brought under *his* influence.

Which happened first at Pentecost, and now at conversion.

We are brought under the Holy Spirit's influence, just like *they* were.

➤ Now, there's one exception to that. At Pentecost, that influence included speaking in tongues. Unintelligible syllables, or foreign languages.

But that doesn't happen *now* necessarily. It did then, but not now. Not necessarily. And we'll *talk* about that in weeks to come.

For now, suffice it to say that it was part of the power that came upon them to be his witnesses at a very important, very transitional time.

But in terms of effectiveness and influence, it's no different than his power in *us*.

His power to sanctify us, energize us, assure us, cleanse us, comfort us, empower us, move us, prompt us, and remind us.

Not to mention bear fruit within us. Fruit of the Spirit. *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* (Gal 5:23-24)

That's influence. B/c those things don't *come* naturally. Only supernaturally.

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit's overwhelming, all-consuming, life-altering presence.

➤ Does that describe you? If not, you're due for a turning point.

You're due to get with God in prayer, and let the Spirit speak.

You're due to forsake your sin, and get out of the way so he can move.

You're due to study his Word, and let him change you.

If you're due for a turning point, do that. Pray, forsake, and study.

2nd, the second thing that happens when we're brought under the Holy Spirit's influence, is that . . .

• We are sealed by the him

Which comes from **Eph 1:13-14** where Paul says . . .

In him [in Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, [when you heard and believed, you] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance [our inheritance of life, forever in heaven] until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

When you heard and believed, you were *sealed*. That is, you were preserved for all eternity, as heirs of God's inheritance. Heirs of his kingdom. Heirs of his promises. You were sealed, I was sealed, we were sealed. Never to be spoiled and never to be trashed. Never to be lost and never to be forsaken.*****

Sealed, by none other than the Holy Spirit. God himself.

He both *promises* us an inheritance, and ensures we'll get it.

Basically saying to Satan and the world, "Hands off. Can't touch this."

And to us, "I got this. I got you."

➤ When you heard the gospel and believed in Jesus:

You were born of the Spirit (Jn 3), indwelt by the Spirit (Rom 8), washed by the Spirit, renewed by the Spirit (Titus 3), and sealed by the Spirit (Eph 1).

That's what *happened*.

So maybe it's time you got to know him. Personally. (**Summary**)

Maybe it's time you took him seriously.

Maybe it's time you gave way to his power. And presence. And influence.

Maybe it's time you had a turning point.

B/c at Pentecost, God's Spirit became personal, and still is.

Pray – Oh God, may you sensitize our hearts to know you more. May you overwhelm our lives, *all* the more. And may you have your way, more and more. By your Spirit, Lord. Change us. Move us. Mold us. And shape us. (No amen. Worship song starts.)