

The Turning Points of Pentecost (Part 3) – Acts 2:1-13

Welcome. Live Stream.

I'm thankful for Pastor Garth who preached in my stead last week.

Becky and I were in Memphis at MLK50. A conference about racial issues on the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination.

It was challenging, convicting, troubling, and good all at the same time.

And I would appreciate your prayers as I think through these things, and prepare to talk about them in the near future.

We also visited my parents in Nashville. My Dad just turned 79 and my mom 77, and life's not getting easier for them. So it was good to be with them for a few days.

➤ But I'm glad to be back and ready to dig in. So let's turn in our Bibles to Acts 2:1-4. We're working our way through the book of Acts, and are currently camped out in *this* passage, b/c in it, we find some major turning points in God's work of redemption. Turning points that continue to affect us today.

Acts 2:1-4 (Outline). [1] *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place [the believers].* [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.*

The **first turning point** we found, in previous weeks, is that . . .

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

The good news of Jesus, and all that it means for life and godliness, became central.

- Because the Law was giving way to the Spirit.
- Because the Old Covenant was giving way to the New.
- Because food was giving way to people.

It was no longer about the firstfruits of *grain*, but the firstfruits of souls. (**Next**)

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

As in, so intense and so obvious, as to be almost physical. Indicated by the *wind*, the *fire*, and the *speech*. It was palpable.

B/c something new was going on, and God didn't want us to miss it.

Third, and this is where we left off . . .

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

Tongues like fire *rested on each one of them* [it says], and they were *all filled with the Holy Spirit*. IOW God's Spirit became *personal* to everyone who believed.

A turning point we fleshed out with a series of **questions**. Like . . .

- A. Who is the Holy Spirit?
- B. How and when do we *receive* the Holy Spirit?
- C. What *happens* when we receive the Holy Spirit?

Finding, among other things, that when we believe in Jesus and repent of our sins, we receive the Holy Spirit at the same time. The moment we're saved.

Personally sealed by him for all eternity.

But there's something else going on here, that also begs to be explained:

D. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

A question that literally, could not be more pertinent to our lives. V3.

Divided tongues as of fire appeared to them [indicative of God's presence] and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Meaning what? Meaning they were not only overwhelmed by the Spirit from the outside in, but filled from the inside out. Let's break it down.

To be filled with the Spirit, first of all, means:

• Overwhelmed by him from the outside in

Exactly what Jesus *said* would happen. Acts 1:5. Speaking to the Apostles, he said, "John *baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*"

You will be brought under *his* overwhelming influence. You will be immersed in *him*. From the outside in.

And that's exactly what happened at Pentecost. From the hurricane sound that filled the entire house (2), to the tongues of fire and *speaking* in other tongues (3-4).

It was overwhelming. From the outside in. *External* phenomena.

Not that those things happen when *we're* filled with the Spirit necessarily. But that they emphasize and draw attention to a massive transition.

The transition between the Old and the New.

And, they illustrate the *effect* of the Spirit on our *lives*. Today.

➤ Think of it this way. When we believe in Jesus and repent of our sins, every single aspect of our lives is *enveloped* by the Holy Spirit.

Immersed in his very presence. Overwhelmed by his power.

That's what it means to be *baptized with the Holy Spirit*. (Acts 1:5)

We're like kids immersed in the cool water of a swimming pool on a hot summer day. With every other aspect of our lives, in there with us. Our thoughts, our dreams, our inclinations – everything.

We're *overwhelmed* by the water. In the *best* sense of the word.

Just like we're overwhelmed by the Spirit. Even though we grieve him from time to time. By what we *do* in the pool. By what we *do* in life.

When we're saved, we're *baptized with*, and *in*, the Holy Spirit. Overwhelmed, from the outside in.

But we're also *filled* with him, from the inside *out*. That's the 2nd part of what it means to be filled with the Spirit. We're . . .

• Occupied by him from the inside out

Occupied. Fully so. Completely. Pervasively and thoroughly.

It would be like occupying all the rooms of a house, all at the same time, all by yourself. And filling them to the *limit* of their occupancy.

Only the house is our soul. That all-important *immaterial* part of who we are.

And the occupier is the Spirit of God.

So to be filled with the Holy Spirit, means to be *overwhelmed* by him from the outside in, and *occupied* by him from the inside out. At the same time. Both/And.

➤ It's something I think of, when I plunge an empty glass into a sink full of water. Or a bowl, like this one. (Empty glass)

When I plunge this glass into the water, it's overwhelmed and immersed from the outside in.

And, it's filled up, or *occupied*, from the inside out. Do you see it?

The glass is *full* of water, and *surrounded* by water. All at the same time.

Just like we're full of the Holy Spirit, and *surrounded* by the Spirit at the same time. Occupied and overwhelmed.

And notice, we're not completely immersed, unless we're filled (empty the glass).

This glass isn't completely immersed (hold it under the water just shy of the rim) . . .

Unless the top edge goes under the surface of the water (push it under).

At which point it's also *filled* with the water (leave it under).

➤ Here's the point: We're not completely immersed unless we're filled, and we can't be *filled*, unless we're immersed.

Or to use the biblical terms, we're not *baptized* in the Spirit unless we're *filled* with the Spirit; and we can't be *filled* with the Spirit unless we're *baptized* in the Spirit.

All of which results in a close, personal relationship with God. A relationship that doesn't *get* any more personal. Doesn't *get* any closer.

Where he knows and discerns the very thoughts of our heart from the inside out, and leads us in the course of life from the outside in.

We're overwhelmed and occupied.

➤ And yet, that's *still* not it. There's one *more* aspect of being filled with the Spirit, that we find from the Apostle *Paul*. Later on.

One that has less to do with the *moment* of our salvation, and more to do with our ongoing *sanctification*. Our spiritual *growth*. Our *life* in the Spirit.

Namely, that we should be . . .

• **Controlled by him more and more**

To be *filled* with the Spirit, also means to be *controlled* by the Spirit.

And not just once, but ongoingly. And not to the *same* extent, but more and more.

It's found in **Eph 5:18**. *Do not get drunk with wine* [it says], *for that is debauchery* [sin of the worst sort], *but be filled with the Spirit*.

Do you see the comparison and contrast he sets up?

Don't be drunk with wine, filled with wine, to the extent that you're controlled by *it*.

But be drunk with the *Spirit*. Filled with the Spirit. Controlled by the Spirit.

That's the idea. Don't be filled and controlled with wine, but be filled and controlled by the Spirit.

➤ But the part we *miss* in English, as opposed to the original Greek in which it was written, is that it's an *ongoing* thing. More and more.

That's the sense of the verb, *be filled*. It's intended to be an on-going, never-ending, ever-increasing sort of thing. So that, as followers of Christ . . .

We are to be *continually filling* with the Holy Spirit. Continually controlled, more/more.

Or, in keeping with the analogy: Just like we *shouldn't* be increasingly *drunk*, increasingly controlled by *alcohol* . . .

We *should* be increasingly filled with the Spirit. Increasingly controlled by *him*.****

And most of the time, that's a *long-term* process . . .

• **Over the course of your entire life**

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is both an initial *event*, at salvation, and an ongoing *process*. And *has to be*.

Otherwise, how can you possibly obey the command? To be *continually filling*.

It's an everyday thing, until the day we die. Sometimes slow and gradual, and sometimes sudden and dramatic. But always progressing.

➤ These last two aspects, are illustrated best I think, by a balloon.

❖ Before Christ, and *apart* from the Spirit, we're like a limp balloon.

But when we're saved, we're filled. Filled with the *Spirit* (inflate balloon). Completely and immediately. Just like that.

At conversion, we're occupied and indwelt, once and for all, with *all* of the Holy Spirit. *All* of him. Even though the balloon of our life isn't very big.

Even though we haven't been stretched. Even though our heavenly perspective is small. We're *still* filled.

❖ But we also *continue* to be filled. Not with more of *him*, but more of his *power*. More of his *influence*. (Slowly fill the balloon.) We continue to be filled.

Especially as we grow in our knowledge of his ways. And sensitivity to his leading. And submission to his control.

We're already filled with his *presence*, but we *keep* filling with his *influence*. His control. More and more.

❖ And sometimes, we experience sudden fillings along the way.

Sudden increases in his empowerment. *Sudden* increases in his control.

But either way, sudden or slow, being filled with the Holy Spirit is a life-long *process*, in addition to an initial event.

So from glasses to balloons, Pentecost was a turning point. Where God's Spirit became personal, by *filling* us.

Overwhelming us from the outside in, occupying us from the inside out, and controlling us more and more over the course of our entire lives. (**Summary**)

It's what he does.

➤ But it's quite possible, that you're sitting here and you're not feeling it. You're not experiencing it.

You well *know* that you're not filled and fueled like you should be. And *want* to be. Is that you? If so, let me encourage you to do 4 things. Starting with repentance.

(How to be filled with the Spirit)

1. **Rid your life of ongoing sin.**

That's the first key to unleashing the Spirit's power in your life. The first "how to".

Repent. Confess your sin and turn from it. Root it out. Crucify it. Do whatever you have to do to get rid of it.

For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has God with Satan? (2 Cor 6:14-16)

None! None, none, and none.

If you want to be filled and fueled by the Holy Spirit like those at Pentecost, rid your life of ongoing sin, and stop quenching him. Stop *grieving* the Spirit. Repent and turn.

2. Yield to the Spirit's impulses.

As in, follow his nudging and obey his commands.

If he says go, go. If he says speak, speak. If he says listen, listen. If he says stop, stop. Not that we have perfect *clarity* on what the Spirit says, but if it lines up with Scripture, and wisdom, and the counsel of God's people – do it. Get after it.

Whether he's calling you to be a missionary, a pastor, a deacon, or a plumber – yield. For the glory of God and the joy of your soul, yield. For the sake of sinners and blessing of saints, yield.

And see if his influence and control isn't all the *more* overwhelming in your life.

3. Get in over your head.

You want to be filled? Get involved in people's lives, get involved in ministry, and get involved in situations that require more than what you have to give.

More money, more time, more energy, more strength, more intellect, more compassion, more capacity, more joy, and more love than you have to give.

I'm convinced – especially in this day and age where we have the means and desire to do everything ourselves – that the only way to depend on the Spirit's power . . .

Is to get in over our *head*, so that we *have* to. We *have* to depend on him. B/c we're beyond ourselves.

4. Ask for his filling.

And do so every day. It's something I do every time I step in this worship center to preach.

"God, fill me with your Spirit. Take over my thoughts and my mouth, and use me to the utmost. For your glory."

And while we *worship*, I pray the same thing. "Fill *us* with your Spirit, God. Fuel us. Overwhelm us. Fire us up and be exalted."

If you want to be filled and fueled like the believers at Pentecost, if you want to be under the Holy Spirit's control and influence like they were . . .

Rid your life of ongoing sin, yield to his impulses, get in over your head, and ask for it. B/c at Pentecost (**Summary**), God's Spirit became *personal*, and still is.

➤ Let's pray.

If the Spirit's speaking to you, and you well know you need a fresh filling of his power and presence, let me invite you to join me up front. Right now.

Just slip out of your row, get on your knees, and start asking. "God, fill me. God, use me. God, forgive me. I'm yours."

We're going to spend some extra time on this, and you can return to your seat any time.

But whatever you do, don't resist him. If he's nudging, get on your knees. Whether you're busting at the seams with his power and presence, or so empty you're nearly limp.

If he's nudging, come. If he's calling, respond. If he's wants you to make some changes, start yielding. If you're in sin, start confessing.

If you need clarity, start asking.

Let's do that now.

Pray – Oh God, by your Spirit, would you purge our hearts of sin? By your Spirit, would you move our hearts to respond? By your Spirit Lord, would you tune our hearts for your work, your kingdom? Fall fresh on us, we pray. (Stand and worship)