

God is pouring out a fire!

Text: Acts 2:1-21 for 5/20/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia 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!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." ¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

When you are out in public what are some sounds that would get your attention? A police siren? What about a car horn or a fire alarm? How about a tornado siren? When we hear those sounds they cause our ears to perk up and listen. These sounds are trying to make us aware of something important. On that first Pentecost God wanted to get people's attention. To do that Luke, the author of the book of Acts, tells us God used **"a sound like the blowing of a violent wind"** (v. 2). Luke goes on to say that when the people who were there in Jerusalem **"heard this sound, a crowd came together"** (v. 6). This is exactly what God wanted. God gathered these people together because he was about to do something amazing. But the amazing thing that God did on that first Pentecost was not a 'one time' event. God continues to do the same thing even today! So, what was God doing on Pentecost that God is still doing today?

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1. He fires us up with his Spirit-filled word
2. So that we can light up the world

God fired up his disciples on that first Pentecost by pouring out his Holy Spirit on them. As God's Spirit entered each of those men he began filling them with words to speak. These were not new words regarding some new message. No, the Holy Spirit was simply doing what Jesus said he would do: **"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you"** (John 14:26). The Spirit was bringing back into the minds of these men all that Jesus had said and done in connection with his saving work. Then the Spirit gave these men the ability to speak those words in different languages.

And the Spirit did not just remind the disciples about Jesus' words. The Spirit also reminded

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these men of all the Hebrew scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) which pointed ahead to Jesus' saving work and the fulfillment of God's promises. We see this in Peter as he explains to the crowd what was happening that day. Peter goes back to the Hebrew scriptures and says, **"this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel"** (v. 16). The Spirit was helping the disciples understand God's word, so they could then help others understand God's saving message.

The disciples would have been taught the scriptures while they were growing up. These men had also spent three years learning God's saving plan from Jesus himself. So why did they need the Holy Spirit? Because they needed the reminding. Remember, these men did not have Jesus' words written down for them. They did not have Bibles like you and I do. Most people at that time could not even afford a copy of the Hebrew scriptures, and the New Testament had not been written yet. How easy it would have been for Satan to get inside of the disciples' heads and say, "You don't need the Holy Spirit to tell you anything. You don't need to listen to him. You already know all that. You were there; you were with Jesus. Just go out and tell people what you know." How dangerous and devastating that could have been. These men needed the guidance of the Spirit because the words that they would speak would become a part of the God's scriptures. God poured out his Spirit on these men reminding them of his truth and filling them with words to properly communicate that truth.

The Holy Spirit wants to fill us up with words to speak. But for the Spirit to fill us up we need to be listening to him. Are we listening to God's Spirit, or are we listening to others? Whoever you are listening to is the one who is going to fill you up. They will fill you up with their thoughts, their words, and their ideas. So, who are we listening to? The thoughts and ideas the world proclaims often seem so much more interesting and exciting than what the Spirit has to say. Worldly words can become even more appealing when we are facing fears, troubles, and problems that are completely out of our control. When that happens who are we listening to? Talk show hosts who give their advice on our relationships? Our favorite sports star who tells us we have the power to overcome anything? The news media? Maybe we find ourselves listening to the so called "experts": medical and science experts who promise us miracle cures for anything that ails us. Or are we listening to financial experts who promise us that with the right investment we can live a better life now and retire wealthy. Why are we listening to them? Is it because they tell us what we want to hear? And if we spend all our time and energy filling ourselves up with their words and knowledge what time is left for us be filled up with God's saving word? When we close our eyes and ears and minds to what God wants to fill us up with then the Spirit is not able to work in us!

God pours out his word into our lives because it is through God's word that the Spirit "fires us up!" Through the holy scriptures the Spirit comes to us, reminding us of everything the Father and Jesus have said to us and have done for us. With the Word the Spirit shows us our sinful deeds and desires. And by that same word the Counselor fills us with the knowledge of God's saving plan which he carried out through Jesus life, death, and resurrection. It's a plan that saved us from all times we chose not to listen to God's saving word. Knowing what Jesus has done to pay for our sins the Spirit fires us up with the joy of Christ's forgiveness. The Comforter gives us the peace of knowing that Jesus' forgiveness really is ours, and that God now call us his own dear children. God fires us up with his Spirit-filled word, so we can think and live and speak to the glory of God.

That word truly is a fire within us. It is a fire that lights up our lives. It is a fire that makes us stand out from rest of the world. And that is what God wants. God is pouring out a fire. By his precious word God pours out the fire of his Spirit into our lives so that we can light up the world.

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When God pours out his Spirit his believers prophesy. On that first Pentecost Peter helped the people understand this by speaking the words of the prophet Joel. **“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy”** (vs. 17, 18). God wants us to prophesy, he wants us to proclaim his life saving message. Yet, too often we look for excuses to not prophesy. We might say, “I don’t have that gift,” or “I’m just not good with words,” or “People won’t listen to me,” or even “People will think I’m weird if I do that.” Well, guess what? People are going to think you’re weird anyway because you’re a Christian and you’re not like them. If you’re so much like world no one can tell that you’re different then you need to ask yourself, are you really a Christian?

God has poured out a fire into our hearts and lives. It is a fire that makes us different. Did you catch what God said through his prophet Joel? God said, **“I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy”** (v. 18b). They *will*! This not something that might happen or something that may possibly take place. It WILL happen!

So God wants us to prophesy? Yes. But isn’t prophesying for prophets? Isn’t prophesying telling the future? No. To ‘prophesy’ simply means to proclaim God’s word. The prophets of the Bible only spoke the words that God gave them. Sometimes those words may have been about things in the future. But more often prophets spoke about things that people already knew. Yet regardless of whether prophets spoke about the future or about things in the ‘here and now’ it was always the Spirit who enabled those people to speak those words (see v. 4).

The Holy Spirit creates in us a fire so that we can light up the world around us. The Spirit does that with the Word of God that we read and hear. As the Spirit reminds us of what the Bible says the Spirit uses the Word to ‘fire us up.’ That Word of God wants to shine out in our lives through our words and actions. Jesus spoke about this light when he said, **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”** (Matthew 5:14-16). It is the Spirit who fills us with ‘light’ to be able to shine Jesus out into the world so that, **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”** (v. 21).

So how does the light within us help others to call on the name of the Lord? The Apostle Paul answers that question with a question when he writes, **“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”** (Romans 10:14). The Spirit fires us up to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people in our world, and in our lives, so that the Spirit can move their hearts to call on the name of the Lord. Those people could be children or grandchildren, family or friends, neighbors or co-workers. And what if we are not sure what to say? That is when we put ourselves into the hands of the Spirit. The Spirit gives us ability to remember Jesus’ words. Then he gives us words to speak, as Jesus said, **“Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit”** (Mark 13:11). Through his word God pours out on us the fire of his Holy Spirit. With the Spirit’s fire burning within us we can light up the world.

God is most certainly pouring out a fire. Using his word God fans into flame the fire of faith in the hearts of people. That burning faith, fired up by the Holy Spirit, shines out in this sin darkened world with the light of Jesus Christ. Let the Spirit-filled word of God fire you up, so with

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your words and life you can light up the world around you with the hope of Jesus. May the light of Christ's love shine out from us so that many others may call on the name of the Lord, and so like us, many others may enjoy Christ's eternal salvation. Amen.