

**SERMON NOTES**  
**Acts 1-2**  
**“When the Spirit Comes in Power”**

**Intro:**

The noise was like that of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm. I counted seven ministers, all preaching on stumps, others in wagons and one standing on a tree which had in falling, lodged against another.... Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting most vociferously. While witnessing these scenes, a peculiarly strange sensation such as I had never felt before came over me. My heart beat tumultuously, my knees trembled, my lips quivered and I felt as though I must fall to the ground. A supernatural power seemed to pervade the entire mass of mind there collected.... I stepped up on a log where I could have a better view of the surging sea of humanity. The scene that had presented itself to my mind was indescribable. At one time I saw at least five hundred swept down in a moment as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them and then immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens.

- *Is this the work of the Spirit of God – or is this just the emotional excesses of an out-of-control mob– or is this kind of weird behavior demonic in origin?*
- **Revivals and spiritual awakenings have always been controversial & divisive**
- **Would you have been an active participant & supporter? Or a critic? Or an indecisive bystander?**
- *What are the limits and boundaries within which God operates today?*
- *What happens when the Spirit comes in power?*
- **Acts 1-2**

**I. THE CONTINUING ACTS OF JESUS BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS BODY**

**Acts 1:1 - 2 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach <sup>2</sup>until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

- So Luke is saying: *In my former book – the Gospel of Luke – I wrote about all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach*

- Now, let's stop there lest we miss this most important point made by this simple word: **began**
- We would expect that Luke would begin Volume II by saying something like this: *In my former book I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught until he ascended into heaven*
- But Luke doesn't say that – nor did he intend to say that
- He carefully says that the Gospel of Luke is the record of *All that Jesus **began** to do and to teach **until** he was taken up to heaven*
- The clear inference being that Volume II would be the record of what *Jesus **continued** to do and to teach **after** he was taken up to heaven*
- Which immediately begs the question: *How can Jesus continue to act and teach on earth when he is at the Father's right hand in heaven?*
- **The ministry of Jesus had only just begun when he was taken up into heaven 40 days after his resurrection**
- *Jesus is not a far-away, long-ago Savior who used to do a lot of cool stuff on earth 2000 years but now has entered into retirement in heaven – waiting around until he comes out of retirement at the Second Coming*
- **The risen and ascended Lord Jesus continues to act and to speak today**
- **Just as Jesus did not cease his activity in 30 AD when he ascended into heaven – neither did he cease his activity at the conclusion of the book of Acts in 60 AD – or when the NT was completed in 100 AD!!**
- *His ministry and mission and activity continue to this day – indeed until He returns in the flesh at His Second Coming*
- **Jesus now accomplishes His work by the Spirit through his body on earth, the church – but it is still Christ's activity / Christ's ministry / and Christ's mission – done in the power of the Holy Spirit**
- *Do not miss this point: **Church work is not what we do for Christ – the true ministry of the church is the continuing activity of Christ in the world – by the Spirit – through his body, the church***
- *Just as the Father was accomplishing His work through His Son's physical presence on earth – so also now the Son is accomplishing His work through his body on earth – the church*
- **But the church would not be able to continue the reconciling ministry of Jesus until the Holy Spirit came in power**

Acts 1:4-5, 8 (NIV) <sup>4</sup>On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: **“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup>For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

## II. PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRIT'S OUTPOURING

- *When Jesus was about to leave earth and ascend into heaven, what was the first assignment he gave to his disciples?*
- **WAIT** – Jesus commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit to empower them to be his witnesses
  - There was a whole world to be reached with the news of Jesus' death and resurrection*
  - Yet the disciples were told to wait*
  - The disciples had lived with Jesus and had been trained to do ministry by Jesus for three years*
  - Yet the disciples were told to wait*
  - The disciples were eyewitnesses of Jesus' miracles and resurrection and understood the Gospel message*
  - Yet they were told to wait*
  - Because they were still lacking something absolutely essential to the success of their mission – namely, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit*
- **Why is waiting such good preparation for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit?**
  - because waiting creates a sense of dependency / of lack of control / of prayerfulness*
  - and in order to receive an outpouring or filling of the Holy Spirit – we need to get out of the way and let God be God*
- It has been said: *When we work, we work / When we pray, God works*
  - Do you believe that God can accomplish more by His work than we can accomplish by our work?*
  - there is a time and a place for work / there is a time and a place for planning / there is a time and a place for serving*
  - but if we want to see God do what only He can do – we will never substitute work and planning and busyness for prayer*

- We are currently waiting on God to reveal to us His vision for what He is calling us to be and to do over the next 3-5 years
  - *How long will we need to wait before God gives us that vision?*
  - I have no idea – but it looks like a few months more at least
  - *While we are waiting – we are still fully engaged in worshiping God, proclaiming Christ and developing fully devoted followers of Jesus who will extend His love to others*
  - ***And while we are waiting – and praying – and seeking – God is at work***
- **The presence and power of the Holy Spirit are poured out on praying churches**  
*--and an increased level of Holy Spirit activity is like the rain that makes the farmer's hard work be fruitful and productive*
  - How many months – or years -- would it have taken the early church to grow from a group of 120 to a church of 3000?  
*--the Holy Spirit accomplished that through them in one day on the Day of Pentecost*
  - **Sometimes it pays to wait on God before launching forth into our plans & activities**
  - **Jim Cymbala: “The work of the church needs not just the correct message of Jesus but also the power that Jesus promised his followers”**
  - On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon a body of believers joined together constantly in prayer  
*--prayer is how we express our spiritual thirst for God's presence and power*  
*--prayer is how we indicate our sense of neediness and dependence upon the grace and power and guidance and provision and protection of God*  
*--prayer is how we demonstrate our understanding that God's work cannot be done by human effort alone*  
*--prayer is how we align our wills with the will of God*  
*--prayer is how we surrender ourselves to God's ways and God's purposes and God's timing and God's agenda*  
*--prayer is how we acknowledge that God is God and we are not*

Matthew Henry: “When God wants to do something special in the world, He first gets His people to start praying.”

### III. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT'S OUTPOURING

**Acts 2:1-4** On the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the believers were meeting together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them, and it filled the house where they were meeting. <sup>3</sup>Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. <sup>4</sup>And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

- ***Have you ever heard the sound of a tornado – a sound like a train coming right at you?***
- ***Imagine that you are part of a gathering of 120 believers – worshiping and praying – waiting 10 days for something to happen – but not knowing what or when – and all of a sudden – the sound of a tornado interrupts your prayer meeting!***
- The story of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is quite dramatic – *wind, fire, speaking in tongues*  
--it's easy to get lost in the details and controversies and miss the main point:  
--Jim Cymbala: ***Something supernatural came from heaven and invaded men and women on earth, changing them forever***
- **Note the word: supernatural**
- *The Holy Spirit is not merely a spiritual steroid who gives us a boost of energy and strength to enable us to work a little harder for the Lord doing pretty much what we've always done – except now a little better*  
--***an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is something supernatural***  
--*and we don't harness the Spirit's power anymore than we can harness the power of a tornado*  
--***rather, we yield to the control of the Person of the Holy Spirit – and in the process His supernatural power flows through us to accomplish His agenda***
- And that's what makes many Christians nervous about Pentecost  
--*the disciples were not in control*  
--***God was – God determined the timing of the outpouring / God determined the supernatural phenomena signifying the outpouring / and God directed the use of the Spirit's power***  
--*we don't control the Holy Spirit any more than we control the wind*  
--***and when we try to control or manage or restrict the Spirit's power – we just end up quenching the Holy Spirit and diminishing our fruitfulness***

*Did Pentecost include emotional excesses?*

--depends on how you would define that

– *what we do know is that the apostles – filled with the Spirit – acted in such a way as to be accused of being drunk*

*--we also know that 3000 people were saved that day*

- When God finally answers the church's prayers for revival – He often answers “*out of the box*”

*--when God does a new work – he takes His people by surprise and does the unexpected and unprecedented*

*--and those who expect God always to operate within the box of their theology and their traditions and their expectations are often discomfited by the strange – and sometimes even bizarre – happenings during revivals*

During the Great Awakening of the 1730s – 40s, 10% of New England was converted, and many churches doubled or tripled in size from 1740 to 1742.

*--Taverns went out of business. Youth abstained from sexual immorality. Prayer meetings and worship services were packed to overflowing and often went on for hours at a time. Passion for God and compassion for the poor were awakened.*

--This major revival and spiritual awakening resulting in so many conversions was also accompanied by many strange phenomena and emotional outbursts and physical reactions and some excesses.

Consequently, some pastors and church leaders opposed the revivals on the grounds of such extraordinary phenomena and emotionalism.

*--Surely such strange and unusual occurrences could not be the work of the Spirit of God!*

Jonathan Edwards argued that nothing can be concluded from the fact that the spiritual experiences were new or unusual or strange or extraordinary, for the Scriptures record many extraordinary works of God, and we cannot limit God as to the variety of ways in which He works today.

Summarizing and paraphrasing some of Edwards' main points: (*Bulletin insert*)

- 1) It is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the presence of tears, tremblings, groans, loud outcries, or faintings.***
- 2) That some people participating in a revival are guilty of behavioral irregularities or errors in judgment or falling into sin is no argument against that revival being the work of the Spirit of God.***

- 3) *That Satan interjects doctrinal errors or scandalous practices into the mix of activities is no argument against the revival itself being the work of the Spirit of God.*
- 4) **A sure sign that a work is the work of the Spirit of God is that Jesus Christ is esteemed and honored and proclaimed as the virgin-born, crucified, and risen Son of God and Savior of mankind**
- 5) *A sure sign that a work is the work of the Spirit of God is that it operates against the interests of Satan’s kingdom and includes repentance from sin and worldly lusts and a promotion of holy living.*
- 6) **A sure sign that a work is the work of the Spirit of God is that the Holy Scriptures are honored and taught.**
- 7) *A sure sign that a work is the work of the Spirit of God is that it produces a deeper love for God and a more active love for one’s neighbors.*

Edwards’ conclusion: Even with the extraordinary phenomena being criticized by some Christian leaders, the Great Awakening was undoubtedly from the Spirit of God.  
 --“*Let us all be hence warned, by no means to oppose, or do any thing in the least to clog or hinder, the work; but, on the contrary, to promote it. Now Christ is come down from heaven in a remarkable and wonderful work of his Spirit, it becomes all his professed disciples to acknowledge Him and give Him honor.*”

- **Jonathan Edwards’ warning is relevant for Christians of any period of history**

#### **IV. EXPLANATION OF THE SPIRIT’S OUTPOURING**

The outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples was accompanied by the proclamation of the Gospel in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.

--*The crowd was amazed to hear the disciples declaring the wonders of God in the languages of the crowd. Some accused the Spirit-filled disciples of being intoxicated.*

Peter then proceeded to explain to the crowd what was happening. He said: “*This is what was spoken by 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, and your old men will dream dreams...’*”

John Stott: (Acts 2): “*The extraordinary phenomena of Spirit-filled believers declaring God’s wonders in foreign languages is the fulfillment of Joel’s prediction that God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh.*

- (i) *Peter introduces his sermon with the words ‘this is that,’ i.e. **‘this’ which his hearers have witnessed is ‘that’ which Joel foretold;***

- (ii) *he deliberately changes Joel's 'afterwards' (as the time when the Spirit will be poured out) to 'in the last days' **in order to emphasize that with the Spirit's coming the last days have come;***
- (iii) *he applies the passage to Jesus, so that 'the Lord' who brings salvation is no longer Yahweh who shelters survivors on Mount Zion, but Jesus who saves from sin and judgment everyone who calls on his name.*

***"It is the unanimous conviction of the New Testament authors that Jesus inaugurated the last days or Messianic age, and that the final proof of this was the outpouring of the Spirit.***

*--The whole Messianic era, which stretches between the two comings of Christ, is the age of the Spirit in which his ministry is one of abundance."*

What that means for us today is that we are also living in the last days – the age of the Messiah's reign at the right hand of God – the age of the Spirit – the age leading up to the Second Coming of Christ - *the same age as the Christians on the Day of Pentecost*

**The clear teaching of the Bible is that the church age is the age of the Holy Spirit.**  
*--if you have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit to enable you to proclaim the Gospel or teach the Bible or share your testimony or use your spiritual gifts – then you have experienced this activity of the Holy Spirit that Joel and Peter were talking about*

## **V. RESULTS OF THE SPIRIT'S OUTPOURING**

**Acts 2:41 (NIV)** <sup>41</sup>Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- *There are lots of good things that hard-working Christians can accomplish with enough talent, money, organization, strength and dedication through their own efforts*  
*--rescuing people from the dominion of darkness and bringing them into Christ's Kingdom is not one of them*  
*--that requires the power of the Holy Spirit*
- What happens when the Holy Spirit is poured out on a church?
- **A Spirit-filled church will engage in Christ-centered evangelism**
- *Notice the central points of Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:*
  - (1) *The life and miracles of Jesus showed that he was sent from God*
  - (2) *His death on the Cross was God's plan to achieve our salvation*
  - (3) *God raised Jesus from the dead to prove His unique supremacy as Lord and Messiah and Savior*

**(4) The risen Lord Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven where He reigns as Lord and Victor and whence as glorified Lord He gives the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to his followers**

**(5) *Jesus is now enthroned as the divine Lord of heaven and earth and will one day return as God's Anointed King***

**(6) You must repent of your sins and give your allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord in order to receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit – *this acceptance of Christ is expressed in baptism in his name***

*--3000 people did just that on the day of Pentecost*

- **That is Spirit-filled evangelism**

*--it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give believers the boldness to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others – and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict of sin, to convince of the truth, and to produce the new birth through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ*

*--a good indicator of the degree to which a church is experiencing the fullness of the Spirit is how many conversions and baptisms is that church experiencing*

## **Conclusion:**

- **J.B. Phillips: *“The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of which we read in the NT, is that to us, it is primarily a performance; to them it was a real experience. We are apt to reduce the Christian faith to a code or, at best, a rule of heart and life. To these men and women it is quite plainly the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. They do not hesitate to describe this as Christ living in them.”***
- **Have you arrived yet at the place in your walk with God where you realize that you are inadequate and unable to live the Christian life as it is supposed to be lived?**
- ***If so, then you are ready to ask God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit***
- **Bill Bright: *“The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-filled life. The One who came to seek and to save the lost now begins to seek the lost through the Christian. He directs the Christian's steps to those who are lost and to those who are in need. He begins to use the Christian's lips to tell of His love. His great heart of compassion becomes evident in the life of the Spirit-filled Christian.***
- ***In a very real sense, the Christian gives up his life, his spiritual impotence, defeat and fruitlessness for the power and victory of Jesus Christ.”***

A 747 was halfway across the Atlantic when the captain got on the loudspeaker: *"Attention, passengers. We have lost one of our engines, but we can certainly reach London with the three we have left. Unfortunately, we will arrive an hour late as a result."*

An hour later the captain made another announcement: *"Sorry, but we lost another engine. Still, we can travel on two. I'm afraid we will now arrive two hours late."*

Shortly thereafter, the passengers heard the captain's voice again: *"Guess what, folks. We just lost our third engine, but please be assured we can fly with only one. We will now arrive in London three hours late."*

At this point, one passenger became furious. *"For Pete's sake,"* he shouted. *"If we lose another engine, we'll be up here all night!"*

**Has it ever occurred to you that you are missing 2 or 3 engines when it comes to experiencing God=s power in living the Christian life?**

- ***How about our church? Are we operating on all four engines? Are we experiencing the fullness of the Spirit's life and power flowing through us?***

In order to be open to receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit, one must be desperate enough to be willing to be fundamentally changed from within - *for the Holy Spirit is a dynamic change-agent who rarely leaves the status quo alone*

- ***At the end of June we plan to see for the first time the headwaters of the Mississippi at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota***
- ***Of course, the Mississippi River actually has many sources of water in the sense of its 250 tributaries which all feed water into the Mississippi, including: the Rock River, the Iowa River, the Des Moines River, the Maquoketa River, and the Wapsi here locally***
- ***The level and volume of water flowing down the Mississippi depends on the water levels of all the tributaries flowing into the Mississippi***
- ***By way of analogy, think of the fullness of the Spirit's power in terms of the volume of water flowing through the Mississippi River***
- ***Think of our church being located in St. Louis and dependent for all its spiritual energy and power on the flow of water via the Mississippi***
- ***Because we desire and need plenty of spiritual energy and power to be available for evangelism and missions and outreach and VBS and so forth – we make sure that everything is clear and open along the river all the way from Itasca to St. Louis to enable a free flow of water***

- *The source of the living water of the Spirit is surrender to the Lordship of Christ – and to the best of our ability we seek to place our lives and our church ministries and programs under the Headship of Christ*
- **But we are uncomfortable with some of the activities taking place along the tributaries feeding the Mississippi**
- *We hear some troubling reports of some emotional excesses and unusual spiritual experiences occurring along the Minnesota River // we hear some reports of too much charismatic influence occurring along the Wisconsin River // we hear reports of some misuses of some of the more supernatural and miraculous spiritual gifts along the Rock River // And the Illinois River is known for unusual manifestations of the Spirit that make people feel uncomfortable// and we are afraid that the Mississippi might become polluted or the current too wild with too much water coming from these problematic rivers – so we place dams along these tributaries to control and severely restrict the flow of water from these tributaries in order to protect the Mississippi from those influences*
- *We want the spiritual power that comes from the Mississippi – but we want to be in control of the source and volume and flow of water into the Mississippi from these other rivers*
- *But then a strange thing happens – we notice the water levels and volume of water flowing through St. Louis are significantly down – and as a result, the spiritual energy needed to power our evangelism outreach and church growth is lacking*
- **The Holy Spirit is not a power source that we control like water coming out of a kitchen faucet**
- *The Holy Spirit is a Divine and Sovereign and Omnipotent Person – the Third Person of the Trinity – equal with God the Father and God the Son*
- **We must choose: Do we want to control the Spirit or do we want to be empowered by the Spirit?**
- *Will we trust God to control the volume and flow of water coursing through the mighty Mississippi – or do we want to get our living water from a faucet that we can control?*
- **God is God and we are not**
- **Experiencing the Fullness of the Spirit begins with acknowledging that truth**
- *When the Spirit came in power at Pentecost – He came like a tornado – not like the medium setting of a ceiling fan that we control to our liking*

- **If we want to experience the fullness of the Spirit's power – then we must repent of our self-reliant pride – believing that we can manage our own lives**
- ***If we want to experience the fullness of the Spirit's power – then we must repent of our fear and distrust of the Holy Spirit – repent of preferring to be lukewarm and impotent rather than letting the Spirit have His way with us – repent of believing that we know what is best for our church better than the Holy Spirit does***
- **If we want to experience the fullness of the Spirit's power – then we must repent of our prejudice against charismatics and “charismatic” gifts – we don't need to adopt Pentecostal theology – but we do need to be open to the Holy Spirit in all of His manifestations and gifts as He sees fit**
- ***If we want to experience the fullness of the Spirit's power – then we need to tear down some of the dams we have placed along the tributaries and let the living water of the Holy Spirit flow freely as the mighty Mississippi– trusting the wisdom of the Spirit to release His power in ways that will build up and not tear down our church***
- **How about you?**
- ***Do you desire to be filled with the Spirit to receive power for witness and holy living and continuing the ministry of Christ in the world?***
- **Are you willing confess and repent from all known sins?**
- ***Are you willing to completely surrender yourself to the will of God and the Lordship of Christ?***
- **Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit be God rather than trying to control and regulate Him?**
- **Are you willing to pray: *Open the floodgates of heaven – let it rain!***
- ***Are you willing to trust God when to send a gentle rain of the Spirit and when to send a downpour of the Spirit – when to send the Spirit as a gentle breeze and when to send the Spirit as a powerful tornado – trusting God to know when we need the tender comfort and encouragement of the Spirit – and when we need the Spirit to shake us up and tear down our pride and get us out of our comfort zones and complacency and to empty us of our self-will and self-sufficiency and self-management so that He can pour more of the Life and Power of the Living Christ into us?***
- **Are you willing to let the Holy Spirit be God in your life – and in our church?**

Prayer

Hymn # 371 “Have Thine Own Way, Lord”