

Spirit-filled

Acts 2:1-41 on September 27, 2020

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Please read Acts 2:1-41 before going any further in this transcript.

Well, the long-awaited day of Pentecost has FINALLY arrived! God KEPT His promise and sent the gift of the Holy Spirit, just like Jesus said that He would.¹ As we dive into Acts 2 today, let's consider an introductory question: do we WANT to be "Spirit-filled"? What I mean is, do we WELCOME this idea of being "Spirit-filled"? Do we actually even WANT God to give us this gift? Don't get me wrong, being "Spirit-filled" is very intriguing, but some of us might also find this idea a bit unsettling, perhaps even frightening. So, here's a different way of asking the question... Does the Holy Spirit "weird us out" a little? Especially, all of this talk, in today's text, about "tongues of fire" and "violent wind." These sound more like the kind of things we might want to avoid, rather than welcome. So, in one sense, the Holy Spirit might feel a little bit... well... weird. As we dig into the text today, let's try to gain a better understanding of WHAT ACTUALLY happened at Pentecost & WHY it happened the way that it did. We'll begin by learning about the event; then we'll listen to Peter's explanation. And then, we'll consider his closing exhortation. Please open your Bible to Acts 2:1. Acts 2:1-13 tells us about...

1 The Event: the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1 begins, "When the day of Pentecost came...." Pentecost means "50th," as in "The 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week."² In our modern calendars, that would be 50 days after the Saturday of Easter weekend. However, for the Jews, the day of Pentecost, or the Festival of Pentecost as they called it, goes back much further than the 1st Easter. For them, it goes back to OT times, when they called it "the Festival of Weeks" or "the Festival of Harvest."³ In fact, one of the reasons why all of these different language groups were probably gathered in Jerusalem at this time, was so that they could celebrate this Festival.⁴

Now, let's think about all of these different languages. If we reflect back to Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, the day of Pentecost may not turn out to be nearly as "weird" as we might think. In Acts 1:8 Jesus told them, "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."⁵ Acts 1:8 is a key verse for the entire book of Acts. The day of Pentecost is simply the beginning fulfillment of this evangelistic mandate. Pentecost foreshadows just a small glimpse of how the Good News about Jesus would have a far-reaching, global impact.⁶ In other words, if Jesus wants us to be His witnesses "to the ends of the earth," one potential barrier, could be all of the many different languages. However, the day of Pentecost demonstrates, that any barrier that may appear to hinder the spread of the gospel, can be easily remedied by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.⁷

As one author notes: "the range of the languages in which these were proclaimed suggests that Luke thought of the coming of the Spirit more particularly as a preparation for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel."⁸ He goes on to suggest, "The church of Christ still speaks in many tongues, [and even if they are not] of the supernatural order that marked the day of Pentecost, the message is the same...."⁹ Acts 2:5 says, "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews

¹ Back in Luke 24:49 Jesus said, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Even before that, John the Baptist predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit. Luke 3:16 tells us, "John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The Old Testament prophet Joel predicted it ever earlier than this!

² *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1827 footnote on Acts 2:1.

³ See Deuteronomy 16:9-10 and Exodus 23:16a.

⁴ See *the NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1827 footnote on Acts 2:5. See also chart on pp. 188-189.

⁵ You will receive power means enabling power: See Acts 2:4, 17; 4:31; 9:17 as well as Luke 1:35, 41, 67; 4:14, 18-19; 12:11-12.

⁶ This makes me think of a lot of the refugee ministry in our world today. People are fleeing their home countries and ending up in places where they are hearing the gospel for the first time.

⁷ In Acts 2:7 they note that everyone speaking is a Galilean. And back in Acts 1:11 the Apostles are called the "Men of Galilee" because "All of the 12 were from Galilee except for Judas, and he was no longer present." This added to the miraculous awe of the crowd. *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1825 footnote on Acts 1:11.

⁸ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Rev.: NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, p. 53.

⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Rev.: NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, p. 53.

from every nation under heaven.” (If you have a Study Bible, take a look at any maps related to the places mentioned in Acts 2:9-11.) These Jews had been scattered all over the known world. They spoke whatever language was used in the areas from which they had traveled. Acts 2:6 goes on to report, “When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.” In other words, the early church was filled with the Holy Spirit, which empowered them to declare the wonders of God in multiple languages.^{10 11 12 13}

Now, even though the day of Pentecost may seem a little “weird” to us, do you think it felt “weird” to the early church? I would say, “Almost CERTAINLY it was a little weird to them.” After all, even though they’d witnessed miraculous things during Jesus’ ministry, they’d never encountered anything quite like this. Can we even imagine what it might have been like to have their language abilities transformed in order to speak a foreign language? Languages they’d never studied or learned, maybe not even heard before. The people around them certainly thought it was “weird.” Acts 2:12 says, “Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”¹⁴ Verses 14-36 go on to answer this question by giving...

2 The Explanation: why Pentecost matters. Despite accusations by some, that they were all drunk, in Acts 2:16 Peter explains,¹⁵ “No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.” In other words, “the disciples are not drunk... this is the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit... Peter interprets the miracle of tongues [as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy from the OT].”¹⁶ Acts 2:17 actually begins by referencing Joel 2:28, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people....”¹⁷ So this phrase, “In the last days,” means that THESE DAYS are the last days; they have now OFFICIALLY begun. Once again, in keeping with the main context of everything that we’ve been learning from the book of Acts, Peter mentions SALVATION as the primary driver. This manifestation of speaking in tongues provides an opportunity for people to turn to the Living God. Peter makes this clear by quoting the OT Prophet Joel all the way to the statement in Acts 2:21, “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

And with this initial explanation of the outpouring of God’s Spirit, Peter then gets pretty direct with his fellow Jews. In Acts 2:22-24 Peter says, “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead....” Peter kind of gets up in their face here: “As YOU yourselves know.” In other words, YOU ALSO were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ miraculous power. And even though YOU yourselves knew this, YOU put Him to death! With the help of wicked men, YOU nailed him to the cross. But God... raised Him from the dead. In other words, Peter is proclaiming the Good News of the gospel to these Jews, who had played a part in KILLING Jesus. Nonetheless, Peter explains God’s grace to them.¹⁸

¹⁰ It’s worth noting, that there is no need for an interpreter here. There’s an immediate, understandable message being proclaimed. Later on, however, in places like 1 Corinthians 14:28, those who spoke in tongues were urged to keep quiet unless there was an interpreter. This opens up a discussion on the nature of tongues. Are tongues a heavenly language that we can’t understand without an interpreter, an earthly language that is understood only by those who speak that particular language, or perhaps both?

¹¹ There is some debate as to whether only the 12 apostles spoke in tongues, or whether it was all 120 believers. I lean toward it being all 120 people due to the fact that there is no reason that the Holy Spirit would be exclusive just to the Apostles and due to the context, which quotes Joel 2:28-32, where it says that God will pour out His Spirit on both “men and women.” See Acts 2:17-18.

¹² One Bible commentator brings up an intriguing idea at this point. He points out that this gift of speaking in other languages, “reverses the events at the tower of Babel [way back in Genesis 11]. Just as that event divided people into diverse nations and languages, so now the arrival of God’s salvation brings the nations of the world together to form one new people of God.” Mark L. Strauss in *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2218 footnote on Acts 2:1-13.

¹³ And if we think about it, once these language groups came to faith, they then went back to their home country as believers who wouldn’t need the gift of tongues, since they already knew the language.

¹⁴ In the words of Ricky Ricardo, “Lucy, you got some splainin to do!”

¹⁵ Back in Matthew 16:18 Jesus predicted that Peter will become the foundational “rock” of the early church. We already saw the beginning of this in Acts 1, now it will only grow from there in Acts 2 and following.

¹⁶ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2218 footnote on Acts 2:14-41.

¹⁷ Just to be clear, God’s Spirit was already active among God’s people well before the day of Pentecost. But now that God had officially sent His Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we see the official inauguration of the new covenant. Under this new covenant, “believers permanently possess the Spirit, who uniquely empowers them for witness.” *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2218 footnote on Acts 2:1-13.

¹⁸ Later on, in Acts 3:15, Peter tells another crowd of Jewish onlookers, “you killed the Author of Life.”

Let's keep in mind the immediately preceding context in v. 21, "EVERYONE who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." So no matter how bad we think that our sin may be, none of us listening to this message, have gone so far as to kill Jesus. If these Jews were given the opportunity to call on the name of the Lord to be saved, certainly you and I have that same opportunity. THIS is what makes grace so amazing; it is unmerited favor that offers forgiveness, even for those things that we might consider the worst of sins. No matter how terrible we might consider our own wickedness, or the wickedness of someone else, it all comes down to a decision of whether or not we call on the name of the Lord.

Peter then goes on to explain how King David had prophesied that the Jewish Messiah would be raised from the dead. In Acts 2:31 Peter says, "Seeing what was to come, he (David) spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay." (The tomb was empty on Easter morning.) In other words, when God raised Jesus from the dead, it proved that Jesus was indeed their promised Messiah.¹⁹ And this is the point that Peter has been building toward ever since their question way back in verse 12. Do you remember their question? Back in Acts 2:12, right after these onlookers had heard all of the believers speaking in tongues, they asked, "What does this mean?" What is the explanation for this outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

Now, Peter tells them what this means; he lays out the ultimate explanation for WHY Pentecost matters. In Acts 2:32-33 Peter explains, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." So Jesus is now at God's right hand, calling the shots; Jesus is the one who sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost! In other words, seeing and hearing the Holy Spirit being poured out was tangible, eyewitness evidence that Jesus was indeed raised from the dead and that He's now actively sitting at God's right hand. Peter gives his crescendo, knock-out punch in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."^{20 21} The proof that Jesus is "both Lord and Messiah" "was now being demonstrated by the sending of the Holy Spirit."²² This was something that the Jewish onlookers had seen with their OWN eyes and heard with their OWN ears.²³ The evidence was clear and unmistakable proof; and it hit them like a ton of bricks!

Acts 2:37 tells us, "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"^{24 25} In other words, this day of Pentecost ushered in an amazing reality for many Jews that day. Finally, after all this time, they came to terms with WHO Jesus really was: their long-awaited Messiah! Now their question about Pentecost, "what does this mean?", is replaced by an even more important question: "what shall we do?" And this leads us right into verses 37-41...

3 The Exhortation: repent and be baptized. In Acts 2:38, "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'²⁶ The intended result of Peter's message to his fellow Jews, was an exhortation for them to REPENT. To admit their sin. To believe that Jesus was indeed who He said He was. And to choose to follow Him as both their Lord and Messiah. Peter was exhorting them to make a PUBLIC confession of their faith in Jesus; calling them to be baptized in water, for all to see.²⁷

¹⁹ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2219 footnote on Acts 2:24.

²⁰ In other words, in Acts 2:34-35, David is saying that "The Lord" i.e. the Heavenly Father, said to "my Lord" i.e. Jesus, "sit at my right hand."

²¹ "Though Jesus was born the Messiah-to-be (Luke 2:11) and "anointed" as Messiah at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22 and 4:18-19), God enthroned him as Messiah when he exalted Jesus to his right hand." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2220 footnote on Acts 2:36.

²² *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1829 footnote on Acts 2:34.

²³ In a sense, Peter is recruiting even more eyewitnesses to join him and the Eleven and the 120 other believers in the early church.

²⁴ See John 16:8.

²⁵ In verse 37, the Jewish onlookers, who had just listened to Peter's explanation, agreed with what Peter said: "What you said about us is true – we are sinners who killed the Christ. What you said about Jesus is true – He is Lord and Christ." Kevin DeYoung and Chris Ranson, *Acts: A Visual Guide*, Christian Focus Publications, Scotland, 2018, p. Acts 2:37-41.

²⁶ In Acts 2:38, "Two gifts are now given: the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1829 footnote on Acts 2:38.

²⁷ Throughout the book of Acts, we will see this pattern of closely connecting repentance with water baptism. In other words, on the day of someone's salvation, they were often baptized in water, that SAME day. For various reasons, we've gotten away from this practice. In part, I suppose, because it's

Can you imagine? These people who 50 some days earlier were shouting, “Crucify Him!” were now being baptized into His name.

Baptism is a clear and visual demonstration, of what Jesus has done to win our salvation. Romans 6:4 explains, “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” As believers in Jesus, when we repent of our sin and place our faith in Jesus, we are identifying with that same death, burial, and resurrection. When someone comes to a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, he or she receives the Holy Spirit. We might say, they become “Spirit-filled.” Acts 2:39 clarifies, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

“All who are far off” is a way of referring to Gentiles, you and me, those of us who are Gentiles, not Jews. This is not only foreshadowing the upcoming gospel explosion among the Gentiles all around the world, but it is also inviting each one of us today. This takes us back to one of our opening questions: do we want to be Spirit-filled? You see, the point of being Spirit-filled is NOT so that we can speak in tongues. In fact, when the 3,000 come to faith at the end of verse 41, there’s no evidence of tongues of fire or a violent wind. The point of being Spirit-filled is that it’s necessary for our salvation; SO, it’s not nearly as “weird” as it might sound at first. Being Spirit-filled is actually something that happens to everyone who believes in Jesus. When someone turns from their sin and turns toward God, by placing their faith in Jesus, they are spiritually reborn.

The theological word for this is REGENERATION. When a sinner puts their faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit regenerates them to new spiritual life. Some of us may remember Jesus talking about this, with a guy named Nicodemus, back in John 3:3-6, “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

In other words, the Holy Spirit is required in order for us to be born into our new spiritual lives. We need to be filled with God’s Spirit in order for us to be spiritually regenerated. Another way of thinking about all this, is that we don’t become Christians just by feeling bad about our sin and saying we believe in God. We need more than moral instruction and a desire to be a better person; we need spiritual transformation.²⁸ We can’t “convert” ourselves; we need God’s Spirit to “convert” us. To change us and make us new. Salvation is the supernatural work of God that can only occur when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, as we consider this question: “do we want to be Spirit-filled?”, I hope that your answer is “yes!” Because being Spirit-filled, is the means by which we are transformed and initiated into the Christian life.

Peter concludes his message with Acts 2:40-41, “With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Wow, can you imagine: 3,000 people beginning brand new spiritual lives in one day? Can you imagine 3,000 brand new believers being added to E-Free Bemidji in one day. The fact is, we would rejoice over even just one new believer. If you’re not yet Spirit-filled, then I would make the same appeal to you that Peter made 2,000 years ago: Save yourself from this corrupt generation. Repent: turn from your sin. Place your faith and trust in Jesus. Invite God’s Spirit to fill you and transform you. And then get baptized as a public testimony of the new life you’ve found. If you’re already Spirit-filled, then I would urge you to continue living out a Spirit-filled life. Allow God’s Spirit to empower you, for a powerful witness this week. Just imagine, if each believer hearing this message, could lead just one person to salvation this week!

not a normal part of our culture they way that it was in Jewish culture. But also, because the meaning of water baptism was more immediately understood. The Jews didn’t need a baptism class, they well understood the purpose of baptism, what it symbolized.

²⁸ See discussion in *Evangelical Convictions*, Free Church Publications, Minneapolis, MN, 2011, p. 141.