

Let's open our Bibles this evening to the book of Acts 2:1 as we continue reading Luke's second letter.

Luke, as we mentioned to you a couple of weeks ago as we started, wrote, by volume, 25% of the New Testament. Imagine that. So he's a big player, right? God really set him aside. And he wrote the gospel of Luke and this book of Acts to his buddy, Theophilus. We don't know who he was. We can guess. But the first book he wrote as a testimony to Jesus' ministry, mostly His public ministry, through His death to His resurrection. And then he starts this second book with the resurrection of Jesus, His appearances to the disciples, and then eventually His ascension into heaven and then the birth of the church; as the Lord had promised when He left, that He would send the Holy Spirit upon the church. And so, when He ascended, that's what they were waiting for.

On Easter evening, the 120 or so that were hiding in Jerusalem met with the Lord on the evening of the resurrection. You can find that in John 20 and Luke 24 as well; they both cover the same thing. But we know that that night, these 120 men and women were born again. Jesus breathed on them. He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). We will read of them, from that day, that they were in one accord, that they spent much time in prayer. They were learning the Scriptures, certainly, as they were growing. But yet the Lord, even though He breathed on them and they were saved, said to them in Luke 24:49, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." And so, though the Lord said to them that His work was going to be in their lives and through their lives, upon their lives His power, His plan was to use the church (the believer) to go into all the world and to share the good news of His Son.

And so when Luke begins to write this second epistle, this book of Acts, he picks that story up and gives us, really, the last words that Jesus speaks. If you go back in chapter 1:8-9, the Lord, in answering their question about when the Lord was going to set up His kingdom, His last words were this promise of the Holy Spirit, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you're going to

be My witnesses, and you're going to start here in Jerusalem and expand out to Judea and out to Samaria, and eventually to the uttermost parts, to the ends of the earth." So that was His plan, but He said, "You should wait here." And if you go back, and you read verses 4 and 5 there, He talked about the Holy Spirit being poured out upon them not many days from then.

And so, after His forty days of showing Himself with many "infallible proofs" to His disciples, on the fortieth day after the resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven from the backside of the Mount of Olives. They watched Him leave. The men or the angels, whoever they were, said, "In the same manner Jesus left, He will return to you again."

And then the disciples did something very interesting, according to the gospels. They went back to Jerusalem to wait upon God for His promise that the Holy Spirit would come. And they were going back with joy, and there was a different spirit, certainly, in their hearts. They were excited about what God was doing. But He encouraged them to wait until they received this power. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. But wait until you receive this power."

Now maybe Luke, more than anyone else (and because he's written both of these very large books), is aware of the importance of the anointing work of the Spirit. He spends a lot of time in both of these volumes writing about the work of the Spirit. He gives us more information, for example, about when Jesus comes to be baptized and how the Holy Spirit (in Luke 3 and 4) fell upon Jesus visibly; that John was able to identify that "He's the One. I saw the Spirit descend upon Him as a dove." And, as His public ministry began, Jesus was filled with the Spirit. He's our example. His ministry, you remember, began with forty days in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and all. But all of the chapters that follow that temptation, you will read words like, "He was filled with the Spirit, He was led of the Spirit, He was empowered by the Spirit, He was anointed by the Spirit." The Spirit was not given with any measure to Jesus. Nothing was held back. And we quickly learn from the gospels that Jesus, the Son of God, performed His miracles because He emptied Himself of that prerogative; He did the miracles and the insights and prayer by the power of the Holy Spirit upon His life because that's what you're called to do as well - to know the Lord by the Spirit and through God's Word. And so that same power that you find upon Jesus' life publicly, God now makes available to us, and the miracles that Jesus performed, He did so by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So we finished last week with the waiting, and these folks, in prayer, were waiting. They didn't know it was going to be ten days until Pentecost. I guess they could tell that by the calendar, but they certainly didn't know that that would be the day that the Lord would pour His Spirit out upon them. So they gathered, and they prayed, and they were with joy, and they were waiting, and they were in one accord. They were getting along. We talked last week about Peter's desire to take it upon himself, we think, to replace Judas. We gave you all of the information that we have on that, and hopefully you've thought that all through yourself.

But, this evening, we come to the promise that Jesus made - that now this church is going to be officially born and kind of unleashed upon the world. And even though the Holy Spirit had come to dwell in them (a little bit over seven weeks earlier), He had not yet come upon them. Now, the task that Jesus set before these disciples (back in chapter 1:9) almost, to me, seems impossible. "I want you to go into all the world, reach everybody with the gospel." And, look, they're living at a time when there's no modern technology, they have no television, no radio, no telephone, no internet. They've just got months of traveling just to get from one country to the other, and yet the Lord said, "You just get into all the world!" And yet He lays that before them, and by the time you get to Acts 5:28, they are saying of the disciples that they are "filling Jerusalem with this doctrine of Jesus." Everyone is hearing about the gospel of Christ. It was meant to be a slam, but it was a pretty good compliment, I think. These guys are "filling the whole city with this nonsense about the blood of Jesus." Well, it wasn't nonsense. Thirty years later, Paul would write to the Colossians, and he would say to them, in his opening couple of verses (1:6), "It's good that the Word of God has come to you as it has gone out into all of the world." And he was pretty well convinced, after thirty years of ministry, and that's about the time of the book of Acts. What you have, in those twenty-eight chapters, is about thirty years of history. But in those thirty years, the whole world had heard the gospel. That's an amazing thought, isn't it? And so why and how does that happen? It is by the fulfillment of this promise that Jesus made back in John 16 (and John 14 and all) that He said, "It's to your advantage that I go away; because if I don't go away, the Holy Spirit, the Helper won't come; but if I go, I can send Him to you. And you won't see Me anymore, but you will see Me because I'm going to the Father. My presence with you will be found in this relationship that you're going to have with the Holy Spirit."

And so, that's where we find ourselves this evening, in chapter 2. We only want to look at the first thirteen verses, that morning event. In fact, our plan is to spend

four weeks in chapter 2 - to look at the morning of the Pentecost experience this evening; then next week to look at Peter's sermon of a lifetime (amazing sermon, this guy is amazing all of a sudden); and then spend two weeks looking at life in the early church. Because if we really want to be that kind of church that God uses, we should go back and look at what kind of church He used to begin with. How did He raise them up? What did He do? How can we find ourselves right where God wants us to be? Where is His power now, and what do we do to be sure that we're in a place where He can use us?

But tonight God sends His Spirit ten days after Jesus ascended, and the power of God's Spirit was now about to fall, and these men and women that were told to wait would have to wait no longer. We're going to finish tonight in 1 Corinthians 14, so if you have a hard time finding stuff, start looking now, and we'll get there in a little while.

Verse 1, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they" (these 120, verse 15 of chapter 1) "were all with one accord in one place." Some 1500, by the way, Pentecost feasts had come and gone since the day that Moses was first directed by the LORD to institute Pentecost. Every feast in Israel (in their religious calendar) was designed by God to remind them of His work. And, aside from the Day of Atonement (which started off a sad day, a day of sorrow), every feast in the calendar is joyful - it is God's work, it is God's victory, we can be a part of what God is doing. Three of those seven feasts were week-long. People gathered in Jerusalem by the droves to celebrate them. They were encouraged, if they were close enough, to come and to celebrate. But all of them have to do with God's provision or God's promise, and in each of them, you'll see a type and a picture of what Jesus would ultimately come to do. So it is interesting that you read, in verse 1, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come" because, for the first time, this feast could be celebrated because Jesus had come. When the Passover took place fifty days earlier, God had delivered, marvelously, His people from Egypt years and years earlier - 1500 years earlier. And that was a type of God's deliverance of us, right? Egypt is the world. We're stuck in sin. There's a lamb that has no spot or blemish. He's put to death. His blood is placed upon the home. The people are encouraged to get rid of the leaven that's in their home and to hide under that blood. And, as the angel of death flies by, then they are spared. So Passover becomes Jesus our Savior in the New Testament. In fact, 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Jesus is our Passover." He's the One that came to save us. When the LORD established Pentecost (you'll find it in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16), He did so

(the word "Pentecost" means fifty, and it is seven weeks of Sabbaths plus a day after the Feast of Firstfruits or after Passover). But Pentecost was sometimes called the Feast of Weeks because there were those seven weeks. It was a celebration in the month of (about) May, usually in the spring months, if you will. It was an agricultural celebration at the end of the grain harvest, and it was designed in Leviticus; and, in fact, if you go to the Levitical law, there are very specific, kind of detailed instructions as to what kind of offerings you needed to bring, what they represented, between you and the LORD to acknowledge His blessings. But on Pentecost, they would make these two loaves of bread from the harvest, and they would put flour in them and oil on them and leaven in them. Now, in Passover, leaven was a type of sin. You had to be rid of it (from) your house and out of your house (Exodus 12:15), and then the house would be covered with blood. Because repentance meant getting rid of the sin and getting rid of the leaven. But on Pentecost, these two loaves began to speak about the work of the Holy Spirit - that the church was composed of sinners saved by God's grace, washed in His blood. And so, on Pentecost they would take these loaves of fruitfulness and wave them before the LORD and dedicate what lives were once dominated by sin to, now, His service so that He could use them as He saw fit.

Interesting comparison. I don't know if you've ever thought about it, but at the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai - when Moses went up to get the Law - he was gone a little bit longer than the people were ready for, and they finally coaxed Aaron into making them a calf that they could worship in front of. And the LORD sent Moses down. There was sin in the camp, and, as Moses returned and God's judgment fell, at the giving of the Law, 3,000 people died in judgment. Well, here at the birth of the church, in the giving of God's grace, 3,000 were saved. It's an interesting comparison. The Law kills, if you're going to live by the Law. But if you can live by the mercy and the grace of God, then you're going to find life.

And so Pentecost is the birth of the church. It is a time and a specific day where God let Himself be known to His people and set them free to go and begin to do the work that He wants from them. And we're still part of that work of God, the church today. This is a very interesting day. It's very unique - the birth of the church. There is wind and fire and voices. There are 3,000 believers that are added to the church, all because they waited for the Holy Spirit to come. And they didn't go out and do the work of God without His help. They knew what they had to do, but they also were told to wait, and wait they did.

Now, this will be, historically, or at least in a religious-calendar sense, the last Pentecost that really needed to be celebrated because it would always be pointing to Jesus, would always be pointing to the firstfruits of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit where these believers came in earnest that very day. Those three major feast days in the Jewish calendar - four of them are fairly close together in the spring, the other three are very near to each other in the fall - but Passover and Pentecost and Trumpets. And isn't that interesting? The next big event in the church, the trumpet's going to sound, and God's going to gather us together. (Someone in the congregation claps). They really line up. Are we happy about that? I know I am. You can clap for those kinds of things anytime you want. That'll be good.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Now that describes a people that weren't at all what we see in the gospels, where they were always at each other's throats. But they had been saved, they had been obedient to the Lord. The city was filled with pilgrims. This was one of those high holy days. Josephus would write that, in this year, there may have been as many as 1.5 million people coming to Jerusalem. It is not that big of a place. It was an amazing place. By law, they were obligated to bring gifts to the LORD. And, because it was such a huge deal, there were people there from all over the world. If you go to Israel today, you'll find synagogues that only have services in Spanish and only have services in Arabic and only have services in Afrikaans; and you can find just about any language; and people come, and they can find a synagogue that lines up with their background and their understanding. So, in the city this day, besides 120 godly men and women waiting, the place was just overrun with religious folks. And it is at that point that the Lord seeks to make Himself known. So, foreign born, from foreign soil, speaking different languages, following different customs - all of these Hellenists. Now they're called Hellenists in the Bible (also in history, for that matter) because they are Jews born in other cultures. They are called Hellenists. They bring culture with them, and so the flavor of the practice changes. The Law doesn't, but the practicing of it changes based on the culture. And so when the Diaspora came - when the Jews were all dispersed - imagine them leaving Jerusalem after this event, carrying the gospel - these 3,000 and more to their home countries. "I went to Jerusalem. I was there for Pentecost. I got saved! I met the Lord! God put His Spirit in me." And it will explain to you, when we get down the road in Acts, why Paul showed up in places that you say, "Well, where did a church come from here? How did these people

ever hear?" And, no doubt, part of it was this explosion that took place in Jerusalem this very first Pentecost.

So, in the days of the apostles, the Hellenists, they gathered together for the feasts, and now they get to hear the news of the Son of God born to save, and Peter is going to declare it by the Spirit, and then they're going to run home in their own languages, and they're going to share what they have heard.

Well, here's what we read in verse 2 (as they were gathered together in one place), "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." On this morning (and it was early, before 9:00 in the morning - Peter will tell us), this one-time event takes place that is designed to highlight a new work of God. And you will find that in more than one place in the Bible. When the Law was given in Exodus 19, you might remember the marvelous work of God in making Himself known. He didn't do it all the time, but he did that time because this, kind of, was separate from all that He had done before. When the first offering was ready (in Leviticus 9), and it was placed upon the place of offering - where the sacrificial system was about to be put into place, it was fire from heaven that lit up that altar for the first time. It didn't happen every time. That would have been easy. But God did it to show His approval and to be a part of what was going on. In dealing with the false fire that Aaron's boys, remember, brought in Leviticus 10, and then even in the deceptiveness of Ananias and Sapphira when the church was early born (Acts 5), that they just dropped dead in the church doors. It's a good thing God doesn't do that all the time. But He does set specific actions apart in the Bible that we can learn from and be changed by. Well, here is an example of that.

This (what we read here) does not happen again. It doesn't happen again. These three particular observable phenomena announced here, and accompanying the arrival of the Holy Spirit (according to Jesus' promise to fall upon the saints), Luke describes using similitudes. By the word "similitude", I meant "like a rushing mighty wind." It doesn't mean it was windy. It could have been perfectly calm that day, but you heard a noise, and it sounded like wind was just blowing through the city. It was a "similitude." The "divided tongues, as of fire" that sat upon every saint, again, doesn't have to be lit or put off heat, but yet it distinguishes this

work of God in the individual life. And then the third one, this speaking in tongues in a language that is understood by men. Those three are all one-time occurrences. You can't make doctrines out of them because this is a unique work of God at a time when the church was born. There is one phenomenon that is audible. We heard "like a rushing mighty wind." There was one that is visible. We saw "divided tongues, as of fire" upon each head. And one was aural, or you could hear folks speaking in dialects that you could understand (having come from a different country to Jerusalem), and yet here's a country bumpkin from (most of the time) the north, from Galilee, speaking in your dialect and nailing it, having it just right. And, man, that would set you off. So, here's the three - the "sound from heaven, like a rushing mighty wind," like a hurricane blowing into town. Like I said, weather-wise it could have been a calm day, but the Holy Spirit was here. He's announcing His presence. He's gathering the people. In Hebrew, the word for "Spirit" is "*ruach*." In Greek, it is "*pneuma*." They both mean wind or breath. And here, the Holy Spirit's presence is announced with the sound of "a rushing mighty wind." Now Jesus, in speaking to Nicodemus about the Holy Spirit, said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). And so on this day, as God enables the church, empowers the church, to accomplish the mission that He set before us, there is this blowing wind that is making great bunches of noise, if you will, and it is moving the people to gather.

Notice verse 6, "And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together." This was really the call to, "Hey, I've got a sermon, man. We gotta get a crowd!" The guy on the street, "Come on in. Free sermon!" And the Lord gathered the people together. And it is just an amazing kind of a picture - the noise of His arrival, gathering a huge crowd. Second of all, we read (in verse 3) that there are "tongues, as of fire" that sat upon them. Now, look, there's only one Holy Spirit. There're not many Holy Spirits. But He had been with Jesus, and where Jesus was, He was. Although He was with the disciples, and now had come to dwell in them, Jesus now could go with everyone individually. That's the good news. Right? The Holy Spirit, being a Spirit, could just Jesus was limited to one place at one time. "It's a good thing I'm leaving because if I'm in Galilee, I can't be in Jerusalem. If I'm in Jerusalem, I can't be out in the Sinai. But if I leave, the Holy Spirit can go with all of you." That was God's plan. So here comes this picture of a fire divided over the heads of each one. Throughout the New Testament, you will see that the word "fire" is a type of the Holy Spirit's work of purifying, of empowering. And, like I said, "like a rushing mighty wind," it didn't put out the fire

or the flame because those are similitudes; they're things to communicate to us, by example, what was going on.

I should, maybe, point out to you that the audio came before the video. By that I mean they heard and then they saw, and that's always the way God works. If you hear the Word of God, then you will see the work of God. It doesn't work the other way around. Sometimes people say, "I'll believe it when I see it." Well you're going to wait a long time to see it. In fact, Jesus said just the opposite in John 7:16. He said to the people, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or not, then do what He says. If you want to know the will of God, the doctrines of God, the ways of God, then obey Him." In other words, "You want to see it? Follow Him." So the audio comes before the video. The hearing comes before the seeing.

Also, verse 2, I wanted to point out to you that these 120 that morning were sitting together in the house. And I like that very much because if you've grown up at all Pentecostal, you might have been taught and I came out of the Catholic church into a Pentecostal church, before I ended up at Calvary Chapel. So, for a while, I was swinging from chandeliers because I was excited. (Laughing) And that's all right. I mean, there's a lot of excitement, but you need to have a foundation for your experience in the Scriptures. You can't make doctrine on your experience, but you can have experience in God's Word. So you need both. But I remember that you would have to work the Holy Spirit up. It seems like these guys prayed Him down. They gathered to pray, they waited upon the Lord. They were just sitting, which ministers to me a lot because so often practices are developed by the experiential testimony of others. You'll say, "Well, what did you do? How did you pray? When did the Lord answer your? Let me pray just like you did!" as if somehow you could recreate the steps by which God could work. These guys were just sittin' around - no rollin' on the floor, no out-of-control antics, no face down or even kneeling with their hands raised. God was just interested in the position of their heart, and they were waiting, and He was ready to fill them. So don't think that you have to be some emotional being to be used by God. It's His pouring out of His Spirit upon your life. And you see it here with these that were gathered. Hungry for Jesus. No weird behavior. Just calling upon Him, waiting for Him to do what He said. Now, these disciples had to wait ten days (well, actually, fifty days, but ten days since the Lord left). We don't have to wait that long. Today, tonight, the Holy Spirit will come upon your life if you want because

that's God's plan. "Well, I don't think I need Him." Oh, you do! If they did, you do. If Peter did and Paul did and Matthew did and Silas did, you do. Don't think you can go it alone. "I can handle it." No! It's not all about you handling it, it's you being a vessel through whom God can work. That's His plan.

Verse 4 says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Each person came and gathered, and the Holy Spirit came, and He sat upon them, and then the Holy Spirit gave them utterance as they began to speak with other tongues. Now, we're going to read later, when we get to chapter 4:31, that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit again, a similar group; we don't know if it's the same group or a larger group but a group that, again, went back to the Lord sometime down the road, and went, "We need a new filling. We've been poured out, man. You need to fill us up again." And as they prayed, it says, "the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" and given even greater power. Paul will write to the Ephesians, in chapter 5:18, "be filled with the Spirit." But it is a present tense imperative, which literally translates, "You should continue to be being filled of the Spirit." In other words, just go back every day, "Lord, fill me." Be the container, be the vessel through whom God would work. "Be being filled" is the way that translates. So they "began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit," who has now been given - as He shows Himself, "gave them utterance."

Let's look at what happens here, as they begin to speak, verse 5. It says, "And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." Verse 9, they were "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs." They were from everywhere! The nationalities that came to this church service were from Europe and Asia and Africa. Some had come to the feast. Some apparently, because they were from Judea, had moved here permanently. There were synagogues that would meet all of them. We are told, in verse 6, "And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together," (all of these folks from different places) "and were confused, because everyone heard them" (these 120 or so) "speak in his own language." A supernatural accompaniment on this day drew a crowd. Now supernatural things always draw a crowd, but these 120 Spirit-filled saints, filled with the Spirit, began to speak, and they spoke in languages they didn't understand. A guy didn't open his mouth and God rattled it. He just began to speak, and all of a sudden, he's a great Italian speaker; got the

right accent and everything. And yet these were country, like I said, bumpkins; they were northerners, for the most part, from Galilee. They were uneducated, they didn't come from the universities, they didn't come from the big city; they came from the backwoods. The reaction to the people was confusion. Notice verse 6. Though they came by the thousands to see what was going on - they were driven by the noise and by the event - they didn't know what to make of it. "What in the world is going on here?!" They're going to say, in a minute, "I think they're drunk!" which has to be the lamest explanation for anything. "He's been drinking. He speaks French now." (Laughing) I won't admit to ever drinking much, but I always found that drinking made me speak English poorly, let alone learning another language. Here's what it says in verse 7, "Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?' " (from the hills) " 'And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?' " And then they list the folks who were listening and where they came from. And verse 11, at the end, says, " 'We hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.' " They were "amazed." The word means to be troubled in their minds. It didn't compute. It left them kind of short of answers. To be marveling, in the Bible (at least in the Greek tense of the word "marvel"), it means to wonder but to wonder with some measure of admiration. So, "I can't explain it, but it's pretty cool. I don't know what to make of it, but you've got to like what's goin' on. I can that guy's he speaks I bet he lives up the street from where I used to live!" I mean, they were just beside themselves, and they began to ask each other out loud, "How is this happening? What made this happen?" And it says that they were "perplexed," which is a word that means to doubt. Perplexed is not just, "I don't get it," it's kind of like, "I don't believe it." There was some kind of negativity that came in their outlook, and then there were some who even began to mock and to deride or belittle, which is a weird response when something is going on around you that you don't understand. Right? But here's what they heard, verse 11, " 'We hear testimony in our own native tongues, from men and women who don't live anywhere near us, of the good works of God.' " Worship, praise, the things that honored God and His work; and there was no preaching yet. Peter would preach in a very common language that everyone could understand. This wasn't intended to be a sermon. This was a worship service, and the people began (the vessels of God) to worship God for the pouring out of His Spirit upon them and the enabling that He brought to them, of things that they could never have done on their own. And that's the point. They were able to accomplish what they could never have done on their own - reach lives, touch lives. They couldn't even speak their language. But understand, these three things: the wind that

howled, and the fire that burned, and the understanding of the gift of tongues (is a one-time occurrence). In fact, throughout the Bible, the rest of the time, that will not be used to speak to men unless it's done with an interpreter. And even then, it is intended to be spoken to the Lord. Now, verse 12 says, "So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'Whatever could this mean?' Others mocking said, 'They are full of new wine.'" "Craziest thing I ever heard in my entire life. They're just filled with the new wine."

Though it is not understood fully here, the gift of tongues becomes almost the signature mark (through the book of Acts) on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon men's lives. It is mentioned in very great detail six different places, six different experiences from people who came to know the Lord. It is found days and weeks and months and years that follow. As with all vocal gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the Bible, the gift is able to be used at the discretion of the believer, as God would lead them. In fact, everything that is told to us about tongues has a lot to do with us and our willingness to speak or be silent, to speak forth or to not speak forth. Paul shared much about this gift: how unique it was from the other gifts, how it is the only gift given that could benefit you personally (the rest of the gifts of the Spirit are always used to benefit somebody else). But there are lots of insights, and this is (the thirteen verses) what happened to draw the crowd. Right? This is the call to the service. "Hey, Peter's about to preach." And you can just imagine thinking, "What are we gonna hear from this guy, who is quick to put his size 14's in his mouth?" And yet now the Holy Spirit is upon him, and the work of going out to the whole world begins here in Jerusalem, and his sermon we'll look at next week.

Now, because we're going to stop with these signs, I wanted to take you to 1 Corinthians 14 (and I hope you have found it by now, I'm sure that you have) because, in 1 Corinthians 14, we are told very much about this gift of tongues, and I want you to know it well and to be open to allow the Lord to give you this gift in your personal life. Verse 2, "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries." The gift of tongues, by biblical definition, other than the one time which was set aside because God wanted to leave an imprint ("I've come to work", and like I said and told you, He's done that in many places in the Scriptures), the language that men speak in tongues is directed from man to God. So get the direction right. Tongues speak from man to God. It is worship, it is prayer, it is praise. We are told, very clearly, in verse 2, nobody can understand him (unlike

this first-time occurrence at Pentecost). It is a spiritual language. We will read in 1 Corinthians 13:1, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." So, it is a heavenly language. It is compared, in verse 3 here, to prophecy, where Paul says this, "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Prophecy, as a language, is understood by man and has a different direction. Prophecy comes from God, speaks to man, understood. The gift of tongues comes from man, goes to God, not understood by anybody but the Lord. So those make very distinct for you to be able to understand, and God gives words or prophecies for teaching, for comfort, for exhortation, for encouragement. You'll find lots of words to describe the effect of you hearing from God what He has to say. Now, we use the term "prophecy," and we think immediately of someone telling us what's coming in the future. Right? Like the guy who looks in the crystal ball. That's not the way it's used in the Bible. Prophecy, by definition, means to tell the Word of God. It may be future, it may be present tense, but it is the declaration of God's Word to others. So prophecy is God speaking to man. Maybe you're praying for someone, and the Lord puts a Scripture on your heart, and you go as a prophet in the sense that you bring forth the Word of God to encourage somebody else. "Hey, I was praying, the Lord put this on my heart. I want to share this verse with you." That's the ministry of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There are no prophets in the New Testament in the same manner that you find them in the Old. Old Testament prophets were offices held by individuals through whom God spoke to nations. If you want to find a modern prophet, Billy Graham, for years, spoke to the governments (in our country, anyway). But there are really no offices of prophet in the New Testament.

There is a gift of prophecy because, now, when the Holy Spirit is given, everyone has a relationship with God with that power of God's Spirit upon them. Right? The fire sits on everybody. So, the gift of prophecy functions best, and the gifts of the Spirit function best, in the life of the church where you minister to each other. You're not going to speak to California, "Thus saith the LORD...." Good luck with that. That doesn't, and it isn't the way God has chosen to work in the New Testament. But you might very well be able to minister to the group that you're involved with, people that know you. The gifts of the Spirit operating in smaller groups, by the way, like that make you accountable for what you say - allow you to learn that, "Hey, that wasn't the Lord at all" or "I did hear His voice. Awesome. That's great because I'm trying to hear what He has to say." It gives you a

wonderful place to minister one to another. So that's what prophecy is all about, by definition. And God's Word shared at a proper time. That would make you a prophet in that sense, or having a gift where the Lord just gives you a word, and you're able to share that with folks well.

Now let me reinforce that. Look at verse 5. Paul says this, "I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification" or encouragement. "But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?" That's Paul's argument. And then he says, down in verse 9, "So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me." That's really not what we're looking to accomplish. So, here's Paul's thing - when it comes to ministering to people, speaking God's Word to others, the best thing you can do is pray to be that man or woman that can deliver the Word of God. That's the best gift when it comes to edifying the body.

But, when it comes to personal prayer, this gift of tongues comes in very handy for you, and it's one that God makes available to you. And it isn't really meant to be used publicly. In fact, Paul said it's only useful - if you use it publicly - if there's someone who has another gift, an accompanying gift, the gift of interpretation; not translation but interpretation. As you're worshipping God in the Spirit (only God understands), there's someone who's been given a gift of interpretation that is allowed to, then, pull alongside, and, "The Lord put on my heart that this is what the prayer was," and it'll be something from God to man in terms of worship, else it isn't an interpretation at all.

So, this is a unique gift. And notice in verse 4, and we'll kind of go back up, "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself," (builds himself up) "but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues," (that's Paul) "but when it comes to the church ministry, I would rather that you just could prophesy." The uniqueness of the gift of tongues is that it is the only gift of the Holy Spirit that is given to edify you. No other gift can you use for you, except this gift. And,

when it comes to church meetings, like I said, it needs an interpreter to benefit anyone. Now Paul says that he wishes all of us would pray in the Spirit for that benefit to us but that, when it comes to church use, understanding is important. If I was up here speaking in a language you don't understand, you could say, "Man, that guy's a good speaker. What did he say?" "I have no idea. I don't know what he's saying, but he's good at it." No benefit at all. So, tongues is great for you - for prayer, for intercession, for a hundred other things that the Bible tells us. But it is a gift that is available by the Spirit, and I truly believe it is available to all of you. Now most people immediately go to the end of chapter 12, and they'll say, "Well, look, the Bible says, 'Do all speak with tongues?' " (verse 30), and the answer is no. But I think if you'll read those verses, those are verses that are speaking to a church gathering of people. Do all stand up and use that gift publicly? And the answer is no. And Paul never said that he necessarily did that at all. But he made great application to himself, that there's a need for this used personally in prayer. And the Bible tells us. Look at verse 14 here, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful." I don't know what I'm saying, but God does. Verse 15, "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say, 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?" Again, remember, tongues is from you to God - worship, thanksgiving. He won't understand. Verse 17, "For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." Paul's making just a big distinction - this is a gift for you, for your life.

How does the speaking in tongues edify you? Well, Paul tells us, here in verse 14, that you can pray and get by your intellect. Isn't that something?! Don't you usually use your brains in your prayers? "Oh, Lord, this is what I would do." A lot of times, we'll give God advice, won't we? Or we don't know how to pray. Some guy called a couple of years ago and said, "Would you pray for me? I'm either gonna get married or go to college. What do you think the Lord would want me to do?" And I went, "Go to college." No, I didn't say (Laughing) I said, "Do whatever the Lord shows you," and then he goes, "Well, what do I do?" I said, "I don't know." "Well, would you pray for me?" "I don't know how to pray except to say, 'Lord, show him.' I don't know. I've got no clue." God is good to give us a prayer language that we can utilize to bypass understanding when there are times when we just

don't understand at all. When Paul writes to the Romans (in chapter 8:26), he says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" or, literally, cannot be followed or understood or reasoned. "Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Praying in the Spirit - one thing for sure - you can know that you're praying the will of God. Will you understand it? You won't. You won't. But yet God does. God does.

So, how do I receive, then, the Holy Spirit, this gift from the Lord? And that, I find, is oftentimes the hardest for people. They're willing to be filled with the Spirit, they want to be empowered with the Spirit, but, "How do I speak in tongues?" And this is what I usually tell people - how did you get saved? And they'll say, "Well, I asked the Lord into my heart." I said, "Well, did He come?" "I hope so." "Well, why do you think He came?" "Because the Bible said so." "Exactly right. You asked, and the Lord came. You want to speak in tongues? Speak." "Well, what do I do? Just speak words that I don't understand?" "Hey, Lord, give me words I don't understand, that I can worship." "Well, that seems odd." "Sure does. Sure does. Just like me goin', 'Jesus, forgive all of my sins. I'm goin' to heaven. Amen. Hey, I'm feelin' better. I'm goin' to heaven.' " It's based on the promise of God in His Word, so I'm feeling really good.

The same thing comes around to the Holy Spirit, there in Luke 11:9, where Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Now you're not asking for the Holy Spirit when you get saved, you're asking for forgiveness. God's given you His Spirit. This is a prayer for the Holy Spirit to come, now, into your life. You ask Him. It's a good gift. It is one that you need. So you need to ask. You need to ask. And then you need to speak out. Hard part. Which is why Paul says this (you're still in chapter 14) in verse 32. It begins in verse 26, by the way, with directions on how the gifts are to be used - vocal gifts - in large groups of church meetings. So, for example, he says in verse 26, "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." Nobody should be involved here to draw attention to themselves. But here're some of the rules in use of the gifts. Verse 27, "If anyone speaks in a

tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God." Don't pray out loud in the Spirit because no one will get you anyway, and it's done for interpretation. So this is in the context of church. But here, notice, you have a gift of tongues, you want to share it with the world - "God's movin' on me" - the Lord says, "Make sure there's an interpreter. Make sure there haven't been five or six people talking in front of you because then it's confusing. And, if you know there's nobody there that's going to speak up, maybe they don't have that gift, just don't say anything. Just pray." In other words, this gift is in the control of the user. You're given directions on how to speak and to not speak. Verse 32 says it more clearly, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." In other words, it's in your control. You can stop. We had people, when I was a young Christian, who would just - in the middle of my teaching on a Sunday night service - stand up and begin to speak in tongues. And I'd say, "Dude, stop!" It was pretty much how I said it. "Hey, dude! Stop." And he'd go, "I can't!" "You'd better 'cause you're gonna be helped out, and you're not gonna be let back in." "Oh, I can't. The Lord's on me." "No, He's not. The ushers are on you." (Laughing) "Stop this right now."

So, it is interesting that tongues, this gift - and remember we've learned about what it consists of: man speaking to God in worship, praise and prayer and the one time it was heard, that's exactly what was heard; you don't preach in tongues because preaching is from God to man, tongues is from man to God - and the gift of interpretation of tongues are the only two gifts of the Holy Spirit that you will not find in the Old Testament and you will not find in the ministry of Jesus. All of the other ones you can find. You can't find these two because they are unique to the Church Age, and they are given by God to His people beginning on the Day of Pentecost. Prayer to the Lord is of great value. It is of tremendous help to you and me. It is invaluable. And Satan would love to challenge you in that place of prayer. So, look what happens in verse 13 (back in the book of Acts) where the people came back, and they began to be perplexed, they began to question, they began to accuse, they began to mock. And these guys were doing everything right! God was moving, and yet the enemy was there seeking to interrupt.

The gift of praying in tongues - the gift of tongues - I believe, with all of my heart, is available to every believer. Not all of you will ever be asked to use it publicly. And you are restricted from doing so unless you know the people in which you are ministering. The whole thing in 1 Corinthians demands small group

interaction, people that you're accountable to and that you know; not just these 2,000 people just screaming at the top of their lungs. It's confusing, and it gives the gifts of the Spirit a very bad name, and it shouldn't. So, it is important that we understand that we need to speak up. We need to speak up like we did when we got saved. We're going to have to speak out because you're in control of your speech. God is not going to flap your jaws (Pastor Jack flaps his jaws). There he goes. Okay. Good. That doesn't work any more than you sit at home to get a job. The Lord'll tell you to go knock on some doors, make some phone calls, put out some resumes. You have to participate. Call on the name of the Lord, you'll be saved. You don't call on the name of the Lord, you're not saved. It doesn't happen, "Well, I just hope He saves me." NO! You have to ask! Want to speak in tongues? Speak. "I won't understand it." Trust God. If you believe it biblically, and you're convinced that it is available to you, then it won't be a problem. If you're having trouble with the concept biblically, then I think you scour the Scriptures until you're sure. That's really where you have to end up.

So, God is so interested that you and I can worship and pray - and pray in intercession and pray according to His will and sometimes just be able to pray without our minds even engaged, we can just cry out. I got baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues an hour and a half after I got saved. I was just ready for it. "Give it all to me, Lord. I want more." And I'm just so grateful for it. And I know people struggle. And I understand that the mind doesn't like to step out in faith, and I get it. That's your battle. But if God says so, I want to believe Him and follow Him. And it's important. And you find it's the defining gift as the church goes out, which is interesting. It's not my power, it's His. I can't speak French, but now I can (so to speak). Right? I don't have any power, but He gives it to me. He will move me as He sees fit. The church is a wonderful work of God, a creation of God, and the fruit that comes from it is to His glory. We're just look around here. Really?! This is God's best hope for reaching the world? Us?? Poor Lord!! Poor guy. But He can work, and if He can work, I'm willing to go. Aren't you? I'm willing to be a part of that.

So back to Acts to kind of finish up. "Amazed" and "perplexed" was the response of the people that were listening. No explanation. No explanation. Now I want you to, as we end, think about this. In this crowd of thousands, there is absolutely (up to verse 13), no conviction of sin, no sorrow over separation from God, no crying out, "Oh, man, I think we're on the wrong side of this God issue." There is nothing that is moving religious people in a religious place that have sacrificed much to do

their religious thing. There is no softness, necessarily, in their hearts to turn to Jesus. All of the gifts of the Spirit - the outpouring of God's Spirit, supernatural things - draw a crowd, but they don't save. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of an unbeliever that saves. Right? He tells us about Jesus. John 16, beginning in verse 8 and through there, when the Holy Spirit comes, He convicts the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. But that hasn't happened yet. This is God arriving to empower the church. But the work of the church starts in the next verse. The work of the church comes when Peter opens his mouth, and he begins to relay the Scriptures, and conviction sets in. And it isn't long, just a few minutes, before the people in the crowd can't listen to another word, and they stop Peter in mid-thought and say, "What are we supposed to do now? Thanks for beatin' us over the head. Now what? We're guilty." And Peter's able to stop them and turn to them (in verse 38) and say, "Here's what you've got to do. Here's what God requires of you." And, as the Holy Spirit powerfully falls upon Peter and then powerfully begins to convict the crowd, then there is fruit. And there is fruit among people from Asia and from North Africa and from Asia Minor, and thousands of those who lived in Jerusalem; and they'll leave, carrying the gospel to their homeland in their hearts. I've always thought if you were in college, and you really wanted to be an international missionary, find some people that come from other countries and are staying on campus. Because if you can get one of those folks saved, they're going to go home with the gospel. You don't ever have to go there. You'll save on airfare. (Laughing) Just buy 'em lunch at the quad during a break or something.

So, in the weeks ahead, we're going to continue. But keep this mindset. This is how God started the work of reaching the world with the good news of His Son. This is what He did ten days after His ascension, to get the church moved out. This is what He put on display. This is what drew the crowds. And next week, this is the message that Peter preached, and it's a great outline. If you ever want to say to yourself, "I just need a little outline to share," I'll give you one next week. I'm going to steal it from Peter. He's that good, and we're going to use what he's given us.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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