

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues! ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, They have had too much wine. ¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

THE MIRACLE IS IN THE HEARING AND BELIEVING

- I. The multiplication of languages is significant
- II. The multiplicity of hearers is noteworthy
- III. The reception and comprehension of the Message is the focus

Dear fellow hearers of the Word of God,

Are you a Pentecostal? Each of us would answer, "No, I am not." This answer is intended to distinguish between those who use the term 'Pentecostal' to emphasize an insistence that the gift of speaking in various languages or speaking with ecstatic utterances is the mark of the true New Testament church. It is the indicator of the movement of the Holy Spirit in their midst. This is in contrast to those of us who believe that the miracle of Pentecost is not focused on the gift of languages, but rather on the ability to hear and comprehend the proclamation of the Word of God and to believe what the Word says.

By saying this we are not denying that the gift of tongues is the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that it is. As a matter of fact, the gift of languages on the day of Pentecost is God reversing what He had done at the tower of Babel. At Babel God multiplied languages in order to spread the people out over the face of the earth. Here God gave the gift of languages to communicate His Truth to the people who had been spread out over the world.

This morning we want to concentrate on the content of what the disciples were saying on that first Day of Pentecost. The emphatic event is the hearing and understanding what was heard as well as believing the message.

The text begins, **When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.** The breath of the Holy Spirit was blowing on the disciples gathered in one place. This was not done subtly. There was the sound of a violent wind that filled the house where the people were gathered. There was also the visible element of tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of the people gathered there. Notice also that it says that all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The result was that they began to speak in tongues, that is, in languages other than their native language. It is important to note that the verse says this speaking in other languages occurred **As the Spirit enabled them.** The individual did not choose the language to be spoken nor did he choose the time when he would speak. The use of this gift of languages was orchestrated by God, the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were not able to employ the gift of languages until the Spirit enabled them to do so.

The question for us this morning is: "Does the Spirit of our God still give this gift today?" Let's look at the larger picture. Jesus had accomplished His mission of saving all people from their sins. He had lived as mankind's substitute. He has paid the penalty of hell of all people. He had died. He had risen from the dead. Before He ascended He commissioned His disciples to take the message of this Good News to the ends of the earth. But He also had told them that they were not to begin going out from Jerusalem until He had poured out His Holy Spirit on them.

There were at least two good reasons for them to wait. The first is that they, at the time of their commissioning, did not yet comprehend the full meaning of what had taken place. This is clear from Philip's question on the way to the mount of ascension. His question about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel showed that he did not understand the concept of the kingdom of Christ, in spite of all of the teaching Jesus had given during His three years of ministry. So, the disciples needed to have their minds opened by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised to send the Spirit to them for this purpose. The Spirit would be sent to bring to remembrance the things Jesus had taught them. The Spirit would inspire them to record the Word of God, to write it down for succeeding generations to read and learn what they had been taught. And the Spirit of God would bring them to understand the message so they could communicate it to others.

The second reason they were to wait was that they needed the miracle of languages to jump-start their communication to the rest of the world. This happened on the very day in which they received the Spirit. Listen. **Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs.**

It was the Feast of harvest. There were pilgrims from all over the empire in Jerusalem on this particular day - God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. If you wanted to get the Word out to the empire, what better time could you have chosen than when people from all over the empire are in one place? Not only that, these were people who were serious in the practice

of their religion. This is why they are in the city. God wanted to touch their minds and hearts with the message of the Gospel so that they could spread this message abroad.

Amazingly, Galilean men were speaking in languages they had not spoken before. There are residents of twelve different countries listed here. They were all hearing the message in their own language. But when they mention this the emphasis is not on the languages but on the message itself. Listen, **We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!** The wonder of wonders is that God would send His one and only Son to save sinners. This is amazing grace, isn't it? It had to have struck their minds as it does ours now that the riches of God's love is so full that He would make such a supreme sacrifice in order to restore us to His family by the miracle of faith in Jesus. Human reason cannot fathom this. Our human reason dictates that we need to do something to merit God's favor. We need to pay the penalty for our sins. Our reason suggests that in addition to what Jesus has done for us, we need to add a life of good deeds to finish off and make good our hope of heaven.

Human reason suggests that what was happening here is nothing more than some of Jesus' disciples having had too much wine. But listen to what Peter says: **Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as some of you suppose. It is only nine in the morning. No, 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, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.** This quote ends with these words. Look at them: **And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

This miracle of Pentecost takes place every time the Spirit of God instills faith in the heart of a person who hears about Jesus – who He is and what He has done. Then that which may have seemed foolish at first is brought into focus, and the wisdom of God is demonstrated. What we could not do, Jesus did for us. We could not pay for any one of our sins. Your thoughts of hatred, your lust, your greed, your pride could only be paid for by the suffering of hell. Jesus did this for you. Even knowing Jesus' love, we are not able to live perfectly in accord with the will of God.

Yet God forgives us for Jesus sake. Those who despise Jesus and His love go right on sinning without any regard for God's will. They choose to set the course of their lives and indulge themselves in what pleases them.

The call to faith in Jesus and membership in His kingdom is always a call to repentance. It is a call to turn away from the vulgar, the profane, the expressions of selfishness and lust and it is a turning to Christ for forgiveness and restoration, for strength to live for Him, and for certainty of heaven.

Through the Word He inspired, the Spirit of God opens our eyes to these truths. He gives us the faith and conviction to believe what God says. He gives us the peace that goes beyond our comprehension.

Today we can sing with certain conviction, "Come Holy Ghost with light divine. Shine upon this heart of mine. Chase the shades of night away. Turn the darkness into day," and know that the warmth of God's love for us never diminishes. Amen.