



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 2: 1-13

Acts

“Wind and Fire”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This morning we're in the book of Acts, and if you are visiting, we have began a series in what is traditionally known as the acts of the apostles. That date was attached to the manuscripts in the 2nd century. It's probably not the best title because the book doesn't deal with all of the apostles, primarily with Peter and Paul. A better title is the acts of the Holy Spirit or the acts of Christ through the Holy Spirit. And this morning we come to Acts 2 and we'll look at verses 1 through 3, the events of the day of Pentecost, and this is a very significant moment in the history of the church and a very significant passage. And we're going to spend some time in some rather detailed discussion of some of the meanings of what is discussed here; Acts 2. And remember, the apostles and 120 believers have been gathered together in an upper room and they have been gathering there for some 10 days. And now we read.

"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia

and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.' And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others were mocking and saying, 'They are full of sweet wine.'" May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we consider it a great privilege to be gathered together this morning and whereas we have not gathered as the apostles and those early believers did, waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we do gather here and wait for you to minister to us through the Holy Spirit by means of Your word, and we pray that that would be our experience, that we would be ministered to by the Holy Spirit as He unfolds the meaning of this text. We are a people blessed beyond our comprehension. We understand it very little. We appreciate it very little, but as believers in Jesus Christ, we have been baptized into the body of Christ. We have been joined into the life of the resurrected son of God, and we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit; he dwells within us. What an amazing condition and position to have the third person of the trinity dwell within us.

So, Father, as we consider that great event, that day of Pentecost when these things came to be for the church, we pray that You would bless us with an understanding of it, and with the encouragement that it should give us, that we are people who are fully equipped from the moment of our conversion to live lives that measure up to the mighty deeds of God that they spoke of. So enable us to do that, Father. Bless us with the knowledge of these things and bless us with the kind of life that should accompany an understanding of them. May the spirit of God's presence be something that this morning causes us to be alert to Your truth, and embrace it, and live according to it.

We pray for Your blessings on us spiritually and we pray Your blessings upon us in the material things, the physical things of life. We remember those who have asked for our prayers who we continue to pray for. Bless them with healing. Bless them with encouragement and comfort. And bless us in many other ways. We pray for our nation. We pray that You'd bless it.

We are coming to days of great political decision and we pray that You would

govern and guide the thinking of the people of this land, and we pray that good and responsible government would be put in place, and we pray that not only for ourselves on a national level, but on a state and a local level, and on the local level, we think of the difficulties that are presently experiencing.

Bless all of us, Father, in the positions that You've placed us in the world, or within the church that we might minister effectively because wherever we are, we are to be, as the Lord told the apostles, Your witnesses. May we witness well. Bless us to that end this morning as we study and bless us this evening as we return to remember our Lord and the life that He lived for us, and the blood that He poured out for us, and the salvation that we have because of Him. And we pray that You'd bless us as we do that with the thought that we are to do it until he comes and that day may be soon. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Some of us, or maybe most of us, either in high school or college read Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, about the sailor who shot the albatross. When he did, you remember, the wind died, the sails dropped, and the ship drifted on the sea under the hot sky. I had killed the bird that made the breeze blow he said. Without the breeze, the sails were empty, the ship was without power, and day after day, it just sat on the sea.

Now, when we turn to Acts 2, we find the apostles and the 120 believers who are with them in a similar situation. They weren't guilty of a sacrilege, like killing an albatross, but they were sitting and they were waiting for power from on high. They'd been given a great mission, to go throughout the world and be the Lord's witnesses and preach the Gospel, and yet, at this moment, they were without power. They were waiting for the breeze that would fill them because without it they could do nothing. They were waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised in Acts 1 in verse 5.

It came on the day of Pentecost and it came in an unmistakable way with spectacular signs of power and light, wind and fire, and it marked a turning point in the history of God's people; the end of the old age and the beginning of a new one, the church age, the age of the spirit. Luke begins the chapter with the simple details of the time and the place. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." They had been there waiting and praying for ten days, but God moves in His

own time and in His own way. He follows His schedule, not our schedule. He moves sovereignly, and so, they waited. They waited on Him.

Suddenly, a storm blew through the room. There came from a heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues as of fire resting on each one of them. The Spirit had come and His presence was recognized by the symbols of wind and fire, signs that had signaled God's presence from the earliest chapter of the Bible, and signs and symbols which are rich in meaning. In both Greek and Hebrew, the word for wind is the word for spirit. In Hebrew, it's the word ruach. In Greek, it's the word pneuma. And so, the wind was illustrative of the Holy Spirit. Both words even give off the sound of wind or breath when they are spoken; ruach, pneuma. And the description here of a violent rushing wind echoes a number of passages in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is found. Genesis 1 in verse 2, the second verse in the Bible is where we read of the Spirit of God moving over the surface of the waters, and the image there is that of a great wind passing over the earth in a powerful operation of creation. And now at the day of Pentecost, the same Spirit had come to do a new work of creation.

Ezekiel used the word ruach to describe the work of the Holy Spirit moving over the valley of dry bones and bringing them to life. It is a picture and prophecy of a future day when God will revive and give life to the nation of Israel. It will come to life. It's described with the words come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these again that they may come to life. And the breath came into them and they came to life and stood up on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Ezekiel 37:9 and 10.

In the New Testament, in John 3, the Lord spoke to Nicodemus about the new birth. Nicodemus didn't understand what He was speaking of, and so, the Lord illustrated the Spirit's work from the wind. He said, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who was born of the Spirit." In other words, the new birth, being born again, is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Like the wind, His work is unpredictable and uncontrollable. The Spirit has mercy and whom He will have mercy. Like the wind, He is powerful. He is life-giving, just as he was over the waters of creation and the valley of dry bones. He is the life-giving Spirit.

Now, that wind, that Spirit, was rushing through the house where the apostles

were gathered to empower them to speak the Gospel so that many would be born again on that day. And what an appropriate day for that to occur. Pentecost was the feast of the harvest. It means 50th because it occurred 50 days after Passover and it marked the completion of the barley harvest that was begun at Passover. But this harvest day would be unlike any that had preceded it and far greater than any celebrated before. Luke writes of the harvest that occurred in verse 41, that day there were added about 3,000 souls. Quite a harvest. Not because Peter was such a great reaper, not because Peter and the others were so persuasive and eloquent – I think they were persuasive, I think they were quite eloquent – but that wasn't the reason for the harvest, for the 3,000 souls. It was because the Spirit of God was upon them working in them.

Verse 4 states, "They were all filled with the Spirit." They were empowered by Him for the task that they had been given, which is what filling of the spirit means. It means control by the spirit. It means empowerment for a task. And so, the sound of a violent rushing wind, the sound of power was an appropriate symbol for the Spirit's presence, as was the fire, the light when what appeared to be tongues of fire rested on each one of them.

Often in the Old Testament God's presence was signaled with fire, all the way back to Genesis 15 when God made His covenant with Abraham, He appeared in this way. He instructed Abraham to cut animals apart, probably the animals of sacrifice, and then, he was to put the parts of these animals in two rows. This was the way an ancient custom was made. Sacrifice would be made. The animal parts would be laid out. And when the covenant was made between two parties, the custom was for the two to walk between these pieces of the sacrifice or pieces of the animal. And the significance of that, it has been suggested, is that it was a way of bowing loyalty to the covenant and saying in effect, "If I break this covenant, may I become like these animals." The custom was for the two parties making the covenant, making the agreement to walk between the pieces together.

Well, Abraham did this and he waited for the Lord to come. And finally, it becomes nighttime. And it's in the dark when God came and He appeared as a smoking oven and a flaming torch, which then passed between the pieces alone without Abraham, signifying that God made a unilateral covenant with Him. It was an unconditional covenant, a gracious covenant made by God alone, dependent on God

alone for its fulfillment. But to appear to him in making that covenant, he appeared as a flaming torch. He appeared in the guise of fire.

Later, when God appeared to Moses in the wilderness at Mount Horeb, He appeared in much the same way. He revealed Himself in a bush burning with fire, though the bush itself was not consumed. When He led Israel through the wilderness, He went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Fire was a chosen symbol of God because it illustrates much about Him, about His character, about His person, and much about His work. Fire pictures purity. The refiner's fire purifies.

God's appearance to Abraham as a flaming torch signified his unapproachableness, that He is a consuming and a cleansing fire who will purify His people, purify all of those in whom he has a covenant relationship. His appearance to Moses in a bush that burned, but was not consumed signified that He is holy. The fire was in the bush, but the bush was not consumed because the fire was not dependent on that bush. The fire was self-sustaining and that pictures God. He is holy and self-existent. He is not like us. We are dependent upon this world. We are dependent upon our environment, upon the elements of it, from the air to the water to whatever. We are completely dependent upon this world. God is dependent on nothing. The world depends on Him. The universe holds together in Him. He does not depend upon it. He has no beginning and no end. He is changeless.

Fire in the bush illustrates that, illustrates His holiness, illustrates His self-existence, and fire most basically gives off light, it illuminates. Really, until relatively recent times, people had light by oil lamps or candles. And so, the light of fire signified illumination, it signified understanding. God led Israel through the desert by the light of his fire. He gave them sight in the darkness, dispelled the darkness with that pillar of fire, and the appearance of fire on the day of Pentecost signified that God was present with His people, with the apostles, with the 120 who were with them, as He had been with Abraham, and with Moses, and with Israel in times past.

And what was particularly significant about his appearance on the day of Pentecost is that His presence was not manifested as fire alone, but as tongues of fire. This week, we've had a few fires in our fireplace. It seems like it's been years since we've done that, but we took advantage of it and built some fires. And I was sitting in

front of the fire the other day and I'd been working on this passage, and as I saw the flames blazing from the logs, I thought of this scene of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire distributing themselves over each of these people, and that was the picture that was in my mind, and that may be the kind of picture that it should present for us; the Spirit, like flames of fire. And yet, the word that Luke uses here is not the Greek word for flame. He could've used that, and as I say, that may be the picture that we should have in our mind, but the word that he used is the word for a tongue, literally tongues, and I think he did that for a purpose. I think he chose that word specifically for the purpose of what it illustrates about what would take place.

We speak by means of the tongue. Knowledge is given. It is communicated by the tongue and the appearance of tongues as of fire resting on each person signified that they would be enabled to speak the truth and speak purity of truth. By the power of God, the Holy Spirit, they would have, as it were, the tongues of God. And through their speech, God would communicate His truth. He would enlighten those who listened. And the message they would receive is a purifying message. It is a cleansing message, the message that leads to holiness, justification and sanctification, and glorification, and it results in great joy.

Fire suggests that as well. When God led Israel through the wilderness in the pillar of fire, He gave them warmth in the nighttime when the desert becomes cold. Warmth preserves life and gives comfort and joy, and the light of the Gospel gives that. That's what John Wesley experienced in his conversion in London with his famous Aldersgate experience. He was listening to a reading of Luther's preface to Romans when he said, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation." Well, many people on the day of Pentecost felt the warmth of the Gospel when the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred and they were baptized into the body of Christ. When it happened, the believers sitting in the house were suddenly empowered to preach. Their sails were filled and they moved out.

We read that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance. They left the house for the streets speaking in various languages, and as they made their way to the temple, crowds began to follow them amazed at this phenomenon of tongues. Now, the feast of Passover was an excellent time for this to occur, and of course, occurred in the

providence of God.

The feast of Pentecost had drawn pilgrims to Jerusalem from all over the world. Luke describes in verse 5 as devout men from every nation under heaven. Now, obviously Luke is speaking within the horizons of his day, the Greco-Roman world and the nations in which the Jews had been scattered, those of the Diaspora, and he lists them in verses 9 through 11; Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs. It was an international multicultural multilingual crowd that was gathered there on the day of Pentecost. And when the 120 reached the temple area of Solomon's porch, a large crowd had gathered around them, and verse 6 states that they were bewildered because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language.

Part of the surprise, according to verse 7, was due to the fact that they recognized those who were speaking were Galileans who were known to be uncultured people. The rabbis had a phrase that they used to describe the people of Galilee. It's a rural area, and so, they were called people of the land, which sounds like an innocuous term to us, but it was a very disparaging word. People of the land, they were considered provincial. They were country folk, unsophisticated, uneducated. It's what we'd call hicks and that's what they were, and they talked funny. The Galileans had difficulty pronouncing gutturals and gutturals are a prominent part of Hebrew or Aramaic. So they had a distinct accent that was looked down upon by the more cultured people of Jerusalem, maybe something like the east enders from London with their cockney accent compared to the public school accent of the British upper class; a great disparity between the two.

And so it was with the Galileans and the people of Jerusalem. But suddenly, these Galileans were polyglots, speaking many different languages and the people of Jerusalem were amazed. They couldn't understand what had happened, how men of their simple background, their lack of education could be fluent in foreign tongues. They couldn't explain it, but it could only be explained as something supernatural and it was typical of God's way, as given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 127, "He has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the weak things to shame the strong."

We're not impressed when a man of great strength can lift a lot of weight or a man who is very fast can run fast. We're not impressed when a man of great education and powerful intellect, a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, can speak another language, but when the uneducated can do that or when the weak can do something great, then we are impressed, and that's the whole point. One sees this is something beyond the individual. This can't be attributed to the individual. We can't praise the individual. We praise the one who gave the individual, in this case, the individuals, the strength, the ability to do what they did. He gave men who lacked a formal education and lacked the rabbinical degrees, a supernatural ability to speak in different languages, and in those languages to proclaim the greatness of God.

The crowd recognized that, at least they understood that a unique phenomenon was occurring. Verse 11, "We hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." But they couldn't explain it. How is it they were asking that they were each hearing their own language and so many different languages, languages of the east and the west, that of the Medes and Persians, Babylonians and Arabs, the languages of the Greeks and Romans, Oriental and Occidental tongues? They were all amazed by what they saw and heard, and they were asking, "What does this mean?"

Well, not all were amazed and not all were asking that. Some made light of it and they dismissed the disciples as drunk. That's how they explain what was occurring. Verse 13, they're full of sweet wine, they said. Peter will quickly deny that in verse 15 by saying, "Not so. It's too early in the day for that." It was only the third hour, which is 9:00 AM. Most people who drink to excess are recovering from it at 9:00 AM, not beginning that, but also, the Jews fasted during festivals until the morning service was over, so this wasn't time for drinking. So circumstances that didn't support their statement, plus alcohol never made a man gifted in languages, just the opposite. Peter and the others were completely rational. They were in complete control of their faculties and what they were doing, and it seems to have been a minority that mocked, a minority that took this view, but it does show an important point that we find throughout the Bible, and that is that miracles don't necessarily convince people of the truth.

We hear sometimes that there must be miracles in a company with evangelism for evangelism to be effective. It's called power evangelism and that's the kind of

evangelism that we should be doing, and yet, if you look at the life of our Lord, look at His ministry, look at the ministries of the apostles, you find over and over again great miracles occur, but it didn't lead to faith, and it didn't lead to faith with many of these. People can find their ways of dismissing the truth of God if they don't want to believe it. They did with our Lord. They did with the apostles. But clearly this was a miraculous phenomenon, a miracle of speech; people speaking foreign languages, languages that had not been taught to them, that they had not learned, and that is what defines the experience of speaking in tongues. It is speaking a foreign language which the speaker had not studied, had not learned. It becomes prominent later in the Church of Corinth and Paul discusses it at length, both its uses and abuses in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Some have tried to draw a distinction between the tongues of Pentecost and those practiced at Corinth by describing the Corinthian gift as ecstatic speech, as unintelligible sounds, not known languages, but the Greek word for tongue, glossolalia, has only two meanings. It means, one, the physical tongue, the organ of speech, and two, it can mean and often does mean the product of the physical tongue, languages, languages that are in common use; German or French, the language of the day, whatever that may be. And language is clearly the meaning in Acts 2. And the fact that it is not explained differently in any other passage where tongues is recorded indicates that the experiences were all of the same nature. A known language, a language common to that day was being spoken. Gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak recognizable languages, not unintelligible sounds.

There's nothing miraculous about unintelligible speech and nothing Christian about it. Ecstatic speech or gibberish was practiced by the Pagans long before the time of Christ. Some of the Greek oracles gave their prophecies in gibberish and it was considered to be a work of god because it was in that form. So there's nothing distinctively Christian about that, and apart from a few skeptics, the crowd recognized that a miracle had taken place; their own languages were being spoken. They testified of that, and so, they asked, "What does this mean?"

The answer to the question is twofold; one negative and one positive. It meant judgment and it meant salvation. For Israel, it meant judgment. It was a fulfillment of prophecy. It was a fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11 where God said, "By men of strange

tongues I will speak to this people." Now, we know that that is true and that that applies here because Paul cites that text in 1 Corinthians 14:21 in his discussion on tongues, and then, in the next verse, in verse 22, he writes that, "Tongues is not a sign for the believer, but a sign for the unbeliever." Israel was in unbelief. Fifty days earlier, the nation had rejected the messiah and this event at Pentecost was the sign that God was now speaking to them in judgment, that the kingdom was being taken from them and given to a different people. The Lord had prophesied that. We read that in Matthew 21 in verse 43, He was speaking with the priests and the Pharisees, and He told them that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to another people producing the fruit of it. And now, because of their unbelief, the Jewish people began to experience that, to experience a partial hardening which will continue until the fullness of the gentiles is brought in.

Well, that's the dark side of Pentecost; judgment on unbelieving Israel. But the bright side is salvation. Pentecost meant worldwide blessing. The Holy Spirit had come bringing new life to all who believe in Jesus Christ, Jew and gentile alike. He began a new age. He began a new work. Pentecost can be described as the birthday of the church because when the Spirit came, the church became. "I will build my church," Jesus said in Matthew 16, and he had begun doing that when he baptized His people with the Holy Spirit. That's what these events meant, but there is a lot of confusion today about Pentecost and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Some, mainly those in Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, separate the new birth from the gift of the Spirit, and they say that it's not enough to be saved. We need a second blessing. We need a work of grace, a second work of grace with the filling of the spirit, which is manifested by speaking in tongues. Until the Christian receives that second work of grace, he or she is unequipped for a joyful, victorious life. And so, we must seek the second blessing so that Christ will pour out the Holy Spirit on us. But the Bible is clear, there is no separation between the baptism of the Spirit and the new birth. They happen at the same moment. That is what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where he writes, "For by one spirit," or better I think, with one spirit or into one spirit, "we were all baptized into one body." And I make that change because in every other case where that phrase is found, it means with the Spirit. For example, John the Baptist said, "I baptize you with water. He who comes after me will

baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." It's the same expression used there. In fact, I think six other times besides this passage in that way. And so, to be consistent, it should be translated that way, so that the idea, it's not the Spirit is the one baptizing, but Christ is baptizing us with the Spirit. "For with one or into one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one spirit." It describes Christ's work of baptizing believers with the Holy Spirit, joining them together into His body, and giving them the Spirit who indwells them. It describes Him putting the believer in the Spirit or as it sometimes explained, in the element of the Spirit. Therefore, they're joined together, united together, and then, putting the Spirit in them. They all drink of one spirit.

Now, what is important about that is Paul describes it all as a past experience of all believers, not something they're waiting for, and it is the universal experience of believers. It all happened in the past. It happens at conversion. This is the initial and permanent blessing of the Spirit that places the believer in the body of Christ. That's what the baptism of the Spirit is.

There is no two-step experience with the Holy Spirit. Full reception of the Spirit occurs with conversion, at the moment of faith, and what that means is that every believer in Jesus Christ is at the moment of faith fully equipped for the spiritual life, not fully developed, but fully equipped to develop and grow in maturity. Nowhere in the New Testament are we told to be baptized with the Spirit. Nowhere are we commanded to be baptized with the Spirit. Nowhere are we told to seek for it or to pray for a second blessing.

What we are told to do is to walk by the Spirit and not grieve the Spirit, which we have from the moment of faith, from the moment of our conversion, and we are commanded to grow in the faith, grow in love, grow in knowledge, grow in holiness, and we can do that because on the day of Pentecost Christ poured out the Spirit from heaven and baptized with the Holy Spirit the apostles, the 120, and then, the 3,000 and gave the Spirit permanently to indwell them. And so, there is no separation between the new birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The believer receives the Spirit permanently at the moment of conversion.

There is, though, a separation or distinction between the baptism of the Spirit and the filling of the Spirit. Both occurred on the day of Pentecost, but the filling was

the result of the baptism. Some people identify the two as the same experience, but they are not. The baptism with the Spirit is introductory. That is, it joins us to Christ. It plugs us in to the new life of the risen Christ. It is permanent. It is once for all. We can never be separated from Christ. We can never be plucked out of his hand. Filling of the Spirit follows from that and it can be repeated. We see that throughout the book of Acts. Peter's filled with the Spirit here. Later, we'll see him filled with the Spirit again.

Baptism places the believer in the body of Christ. The filling of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to function effectively in the body. Being filled with the Spirit is being controlled by the Spirit. Often it happened to equip people for an immediate task, as in this case. And unlike the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, most notably in Ephesians 5:18, "Be filled with the Spirit," and there, the reason is so that the ministry of the church and that instruction is given in terms of how the church is going to function, and there the apostle is saying that they be filled with the Spirit so that the church's ministry will be under His control and that ministry will be orderly and fruitful. That, in fact, is the sign, the evidence of the filling of the Spirit. It is orderly, effective ministry.

In every case, the circumstance common to each passage where filling is described, the circumstance that is common is not speaking in tongues; never speaking in unintelligible sounds. Sometimes there is the speaking of tongues that accompanies the filling of the Spirit, but not always and not the majority of times, but what is common in every case is testifying effectively, forcefully to Jesus Christ. Filling results in witness. They were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Sumeria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. They could not do that apart from the ministry of the Spirit within them. The Spirit of God has come, baptized them into the body of Christ, and they are filled with Him and able now to act and to move, and the result is they become the witnesses that they were to be. And the crowd at Pentecost acknowledged that. They said in verse 11, "We hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

How can we know that we are filled with the Spirit? How can we know that someone else is filled with the Spirit? How can we know that this church, this ministry is a spirit-filled ministry? By this, not by extraordinary kinds of events, but by the fact

that we are speaking of the mighty deeds of God. That's apostolic preaching. It is theocentric. It is God-centered. It's actually more than that; it's Biblical preaching. Go from beginning to end and you find that kind of preaching. The prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed a great God who did great things. Moses said, "Who is like you among the gods, O Lord?" Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praise, working wonders?

Men had imagined all kinds of gods in the world and Moses is saying that their imaginations fall far short of what You really are and what You really do. Elijah said, "You have worked wonders." Plans formed long ago. In fact, we might say plans laid from eternity past with perfect faithfulness, brings them all about. He is faithful. He works wonders. Elijah demonstrated it, witnessed it when he laughed at Baal and his prophets on Mount Carmel, then prayed that God would prove Himself to Israel, and the Lord answered his prayer with fire from heaven. He does mighty deeds and on the day of Pentecost, the people spoke of those deeds. They spoke of God who raises the dead and gives eternal life to all who believe.

Peter will go on to answer the question, "What does this mean?" with a sermon that extolls the absolute sovereignty of God and the complete responsibility of man. Joins the two together. He speaks of predestination, the resurrection, the sin of the people, the need of repentance, in a highly theological sermon with appropriate application. He didn't take the view that these things are too deep for people. He didn't dumb down the message. God's people were filled with the Spirit. They proclaimed the greatness of God and His salvation, and the result of it was those who listened were pierced to the heart. That's what will happen at the end of Peter's sermon. God will pierce the stony hearts of those men and women who were listening. That is the ministry that we need for ourselves.

Now, that piercing of the heart describes conversion, people coming to faith, but I say we need that here because there may be people in this audience, and I suspect that there are, who have not come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. You're here, but your hearts are stone. The only thing that can penetrate those stone hearts is the word of God, the Gospel directed by the Spirit of God. So we need that here. We need that for the sake of the unconverted, but we need that for our own sakes too because our hearts grow cold and hard, and we need them pierced by the word of God. And I really

believe that if God is exalted in this place as He was on the day of Pentecost, that if we speak of the mighty deeds of God, of His person, of His attributes, of His greatness, and of the greatness of His works, of His personal care for us, and His abundant supply, then our hearts will be pierced. In fact, if we come here for the purpose of knowing Him, if we come to this place for the purpose of worshipping Him as the almighty triune God, then we will leave this place saying, "Today, I felt my heart strangely warmed."

I hope that will be our experience. I hope that every Sunday this church will be filled with the Spirit. It is as we look to Him in prayer and devote ourselves to the study of His word and commit our way to him that that happens and He lights a fire in our souls, and puts wind in our sails, and moves us out to do mighty deeds for Him. May God do that for us.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you are fully equipped for that. You have been baptized with the Holy Spirit once and for all and forever. You have been sealed with the Spirit forever. You are indwelled with the Spirit; He will never leave you. And so, now you are to walk by the Spirit every day, and as you do, He will bless you, He will use you, He will make you to be a blessing for others, but if you're here without Christ, if you have not believed in Him, then you are still in your sins, you are lost, you're in great peril, and you need a savior. The savior is Jesus Christ, the son of God who came into this world to die in the place of sinners. So look to Him, trust in Him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. May God help you to do that and help all of us to rejoice in the salvation that He has given us. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for Christ, for sending Him into the world, for His willingness to come into this world, and to do the work of salvation that You gave Him to do. Thank You for His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit that has poured out on His people. Thank You that we have the Spirit of God within us, that we have become His abode. In fact, the Father and the son dwell within us through the Holy Spirit. What a privileged position we have. We thank You for that. It's all of grace. We thank You for Jesus Christ and it's in His name we pray. Amen.