



Living Walking Serving

FAITH AND GRACE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY NOTE ON

THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH (A BOOK STUDY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES)

(Rom.15:4, Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5)

STUDY 20-18: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS POURED OUT ON THE CHURCH -PT.1 (The initial experience of the filling of the Holy Spirit. 2:1-13)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Acts 2:1-13, Lk.10:1-20, Jn. 14:15-18, 16:7 20:19-23, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 2:4, 4:31, 10:44, Gen. 1:1-2, 2:7, Ezek.37:9-10, 1 Cor.14:14-15, 23, 27-28

The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit. Act 2:1-4a

The Day of Pentecost: This was a Jewish feast held 50 days after Passover. It celebrated the firstfruits of the wheat harvest.

Jewish tradition also taught that **Pentecost** marked the day when the Law was given to Israel. So, on the Old Testament Day of Pentecost Israel received the Law; on the New Testament Day of Pentecost the Church received the Spirit of Grace in fullness.

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come: It was now 10 days after the time Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:3), and since Jesus commanded them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were not strangers to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. They saw the Holy Spirit continually at work in the ministry of Jesus. (Lk.10:1-20, Jn. 14:15-18, 20:19-23, Acts 1:4-5) They waited until the Day of Pentecost had fully come, but they didn't know ahead of time how long they would have to wait. It would be easy for them to think it would come the same afternoon Jesus ascended to heaven; or after 3 days, or 7 days. But they had to wait a full 10 days, until the Day of Pentecost had fully come.

But who would have suspected that? God used this time to break them down and then to build them up. We can imagine how their **patience** and **kindness** and **compassion** was tested during this time, yet they all stayed together.

What this passage tells us about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- The gift of the Holy Spirit is **promised** to us.
- The gift of the Holy Spirit is **worth waiting** for.
- The gift of the Holy Spirit comes as He wills, often not according to our **expectation**.
- The gift of the Holy Spirit can come upon not only individuals, but also upon groups (see also Acts 2:4, 4:31, 10:44).
- The gift of the Holy Spirit is often given as God deals with the flesh and there is a dying to self.

What this passage does not tell us about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- The gift of the Holy Spirit is given according to formula.
- We earn the gift of the Holy Spirit by our seeking.

They were all with one accord in one place: They were gathered together sharing the same heart, the same love for God, the same trust in His promise, and the same geography.

Before we can be filled, we must recognize our emptiness; by gathering together for prayer, in obedience, these disciples did just that. They recognized they did not have the resources in themselves to do what they could do or should do; they had to instead rely on the work of God.

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven: Here, the **sound from heaven** was the sound of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the disciples.

The sound of this fast, mighty wind would make any of these men and women who knew the Hebrew Scriptures think of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Gen. 1:1-2, 2:7, Ezek.37:9-10.

This single line tells us much about how the Holy Spirit moves.

- **Suddenly**: Sometimes God moves suddenly.
- **Sound**: It was real, though it could not be touched; it came by the ears.
- **From heaven**: It wasn't of earth; not created or manipulated or made here.
- **Mighty**: Full of force, coming with great power.

There appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and one sat upon each of them:

These **divided tongues**, as of **fire**, **appearing over each one**, were also unusual. It probably should be connected with John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

The idea behind the picture of **fire** is usually purification, as a refiner uses fire to make pure gold; or fire can burn away what is temporary, leaving only what will last. This is an excellent illustration of the principle that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not just for abstract power, but for purity.

The Holy Spirit sat upon each of them. The word '**sat**' has a marked force in the New Testament. It carries the idea of a completed preparation, and a certain permanence of position and condition.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit: Essentially, the rushing mighty wind and the tongues, as of fire, were only unusual, temporary phenomenon, which accompanied the true gift – being filled with the Holy Spirit.

While it would be wrong to expect a rushing mighty wind or tongues, as of fire, to be present today when the Holy Spirit is poured out, we can experience the true gift. We, just as they, can be all filled with the Holy Spirit.

But we should do what the disciples did before and during their filling with the Holy Spirit.

- The disciples were filled in fulfillment of a promise.
- They were filled as they received in faith.
- They were filled in God's timing.
- They were filled as they were together in unity.
- They were filled in unusual ways.

This coming and filling of the Holy Spirit was so good, so essential for the work of the community of early Christians, that Jesus actually said that it was better for Him to leave the earth bodily so He could send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).

The phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Act 2:4b-13

And began to speak with other tongues: In response to the filling of the Holy Spirit, those present (not only the twelve apostles) began to speak with other tongues. These were languages that they were never taught, and they spoke these languages, speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Devout men, from every nation under heaven: The multitude from many nations gathered in Jerusalem because of the Feast of Pentecost.

We hear them speaking in our tongues the wonderful works of God: This is what the crowd heard the Christians speak. From this remarkable event, all were amazed and perplexed, but some used it as a means of honest inquiry and asked, "**Whatever could this mean?**" Others used it as an excuse to dismiss the work of God and said, "**They are full of new wine.**"

Whatever could this mean? What are we to make of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues? Speaking in tongues has been the focal point for significant controversy in the church. People still ask the same question these bystanders asked on the day of Pentecost.

We hear them speaking in our tongues the wonderful works of God: The gift of tongues is a personal language of prayer given by God, whereby the believer communicates with God beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). The Gift of Tongues has an important place in the devotional life of the believer, but a small place in the corporate life of the church (1 Corinthians 14:18-19), especially in public meetings (1 Corinthians 14:23). When tongues is practiced in the corporate life of the church, it must be carefully controlled, and never without an interpretation given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). *(For more on Speaking in tongue See our Bible Study No. 9 on the Important reasons for speaking in tongue)*

NEXT: THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH CONT'D (ACTS 2:14-47)