

Intro: From fear to action

Fear. What comes to mind as you hear that word?

Fear can be a complete immobiliser can't it. It can kind of stop us in our tracks.

I've recently been re watching Band of Brothers, which is a historical fiction show based on US paratroopers from WW2.

But what they do so well in the show is capture the fear of some of soldiers and how it paralyses them. But it then goes on to show how something changes in them, and they push through the fear.

I don't know if you've ever had those moments, of utter fear, but then something changes and then you can keep going.

Cru lead of faith.

I still remember, end of year 8.

Fearful, but something change within me.

My kids going down the hall way at night. Fearful, and not wanting to do it. But if something changes. Turn light on or go with them.

The disciples, they are fearful after Jesus' death.

This is how John describes the what the disciples were doing after Jesus' death.

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,

The disciples are afraid and hiding behind locked doors.

But as we know, most of the disciples end up dying for their faith.

What changed?

How did they go from paralysed by fear, to dying for Jesus?

That's a big change.

And it's all to do with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So this week in our Holy Spirit series, we're looking at the Holy Spirit and world mission. And to do this, we're going to be focusing on the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all people.

And we're going to be particularly looking at Acts 2. And in Acts 2, in verse 1 to 13, it describes the event of the Holy Spirit being poured out. And then verses 14 to 41 explain the events that have just happened.

Which means verses 1 to 13, must be read in the context of 14 to 41. As actually that's the important bit, as it gives us the why of what was happening.

Point 1: The Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit showed that the new age had arrived.

And so point one, the Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit showed that the new age had arrived.

And at the start of Acts 2, we see the Holy Spirit come upon the disciples.

Take a look.

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Spirit comes, in quite an unusual, but yet spectacular way.

There was a mighty sound. A sound like rushing wind.

There was something like fire that came upon the disciples.

And the meaning of the Spirit coming in this way is not that apparent. If you look closely at the text, we can't really even deduce whether there was actually wind and fire. Or just a big sound and something that looked like fire.

The text is unclear.

And the Spirit's coming is not described anywhere like this again in the scriptures.

And so I wouldn't expect the coming of the Spirit to be like this now.

The pattern that we see throughout Acts, is that the Holy Spirit comes in unique ways to indicate new out pourings of the Spirit as the gospel goes out in Jerusalem, then all Judea, then to Samaria and then to the ends of the earth.

And so as you read the book of Acts, and read about the weird ways that the Holy Spirit comes upon people in chapters 2, 8 and 19, we don't want to take that as normal.

The normal pattern of receiving the Spirit, I'd argue is that of the first 3000 converts on the day of Pentecost.

Peter finishes explaining to the people in Jerusalem, that the Jesus who they just crucified, that he's alive and that God has made him both Lord and Christ. And then in verse 37 we see the people's response.

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

...

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

What's the normal pattern of receiving the Holy Spirit?

Believe – Repent – Receive.

3000 people received the Spirit this way at Pentecost.

12 people had a unique experience of receiving the spirit.

What we actually need to focus in on at the coming of the Holy Spirit, is the speaking in tongues. As it's the speaking in tongues that becomes part of Peter's explanation of what's going on.

In verses 5 to 11, we see that people from all over the world are hearing what the disciples are saying in their own native language.

And this is just what speaking in tongues is. Speaking in tongues is just speaking another human language.

You see, in Acts 2, it's the only place in the bible where we see speaking in tongues being described.

In every other instance of this phenomenon being talked about, it is just stated, with the assumption that the original hearers knew what the writer was referring to.

So I'd argue then, that we need to let Acts 2, shape our understanding of what speaking in tongues is. And in Acts 2, speaking in tongues, is speaking other known human languages, that other humans understood.

This idea that speaking in tongues is about some sort of prayer or praise in syllables and words that are unknown to humanity, I just do not see this concept in the scriptures.

God gave the gift of speaking in tongues for the good of the gospel going out.

But then for everyone who heard the disciples speaking in tongues, they were amazed and astonished. And rightly so.

As the disciples were hickville Galileans. Unlearned men.

They were like the equivalent of Queenslanders.

And so how could these fishermen have known so many languages?

And in verse 12 and 13 we see then end of how the people responded.

Take a look.

¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

There are some there that day, who ask the right question, what does this mean?

And there are other's that dismiss it. These men are just drunk.

Now, if there was a type of alcohol that helped you learn another language very quickly, that would have been very helpful at bible college coming into our language exams.

But sadly, that doesn't exist.

And so Peter, he goes on to answer the question of the people, to show them what the speaking in tongues means.

And the important bit was not the activity of speaking in tongues. What was important was what the speaking in tongues was pointing to for that moment in history.

As Peter, he doesn't talk about speaking in tongues again after this point.

Rather, Peter wants the people to understand that speaking in tongues signifies that the new age had come. That we were now in the last days

Just look again from verse 14.

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

**¹⁷ " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,**

*and your old men shall dream dreams;
18 even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
20 the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be
saved.'*

Peter is telling the people of Jerusalem, that the phenomenon of them hearing the mighty works of God in their own tongue is a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.

And so Peter is wanting the people in Jerusalem to understand that this new age of the Spirit was here.

That we were now in the last days. A time when God would pour out his Spirit on all people, and a time when all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

And to be a part of this new age, you have to receive the Spirit.

To be part of the age of the Spirit, we need the Spirit to enter us and regenerate us. We need to Spirit to give us new birth, new life.

Ezekiel speaks about this in chapter 36.

26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

It is the Spirit at work within us that gives us a new heart, that enables us to actually be able to follow God and his ways.

And so now, being part of God's people is no longer about ancestry or membership of a chosen nation.

In the age of the Spirit, God's people are God's people because they have God's Spirit within them.

With Pentecost, it was the end of the old covenant ways of relating to God, through the Levitical sacrificial system. And it was the start of the new covenant. A time of relating to God by his Spirit.

But what we need to understand is that the centre figure of the new age is not the Spirit.

The centre figure of this new age is Jesus.

Joel declared that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved in this new age, so what does Peter do in Acts chapter 2?

Peter gets on with declaring to Jerusalem who the Lord that saves is. And that's Jesus.

Just look at how Peter ends his speech on the day of Pentecost.

³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

***“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’***

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

This is the main point of Pentecost.

That Jesus is the risen Lord and Christ.

It is precisely because of this that the Spirit is being poured out and that everyone is hearing about the mighty works of God in their own language.

You see, Acts chapter 2, it's not about the Holy Spirit, and it's not about speaking in tongues.

Acts chapter 2 is about Jesus. And the Spirit's arrival is all about pointing to Jesus as the risen king.

To take Acts chapter 2 and to make it about the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues misses the point. And it undermines the very point that speaking in tongues and the pouring out of the Spirit is pointing to.

Peter wants us to see in his speech, that what's just happened, is all about pointing to the fact we're now in a new age. The age where Jesus is reigning as the risen Lord, and it's a time of salvation for all people who call on the name of the Lord.

Point 2: Coming of the Holy Spirit is the time for witnessing.

Which means, point 2, the coming of the Holy Spirit is the time for witnessing.

Just come back and look again at the end of the Luke reading from Luke 24.

This is what Jesus says to his apostles just before he departs.

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

The apostles were called to be witnesses for Christ. And they were to witness to the fact that Jesus died and rose again, opening the way for repentance and forgiveness to all nations.

But the disciples were to wait until they were clothed with power from on high. They were to wait until the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And the apostles were to wait as it wasn't until the age of the Spirit, that started at Pentecost, that salvation was for all people.

As the age of salvation, that was the age of declaration.

But when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they went and bore witness to the risen Jesus.

In Acts 2:32 Peter with the other 11 apostles beside him says;

³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

And then in verse 40 we read;

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness

This is a staggering turnaround from John chapter 20, when the disciples are hiding behind locked doors.

When the Spirit comes upon them they are emboldened to speak.

And Peter, he doesn't hold back. He's quite confronting.

Just look again at verse 36 of how Peter speaks to the crowd.

Peter says to the crowd, ***“This Jesus whom you crucified.”***

He's telling them exactly what they did.

Peter is being a faithful witness as he declares the truth of what had happened.

Have you ever noticed though, that you only need witnesses when the truth is contested.

Being a witness at court story.

Entering into a contest, so it can very quickly bring opposition.

And so being a witness, can be dangerous. There's a reason why we have witness protection programs.

Some people do not like the truth, and do not want it to come out.

And so for the apostles, as they witness to the risen Jesus, they are contesting for the truth. And there were people who did not like that, and so it's no wonder that opposition came there way.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples;

⁸ But you will **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

With the opposition that was going to come for the apostles as they became Jesus' witnesses, they were going to need God's power to fulfil their task.

But it wasn't just the apostles who were given boldness to speak, as it wasn't just the apostles who were given the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit came upon all God's people at Pentecost.

This meant that all God's people were to be prophets, that is to declare God's words.

And in chapter 4, we see that this is what God's people were doing.

Just after Peter and John are released from prison in chapter 4, they rejoin their friends. And there's no reason to think that the friends here are just the apostles.

And so there's a whole bunch of believers together, and they pray.

But just look at what they pray for in verse 29.

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

The first Christians are starting to see persecution come their way, and what do they pray for?

Boldness to keep speaking.

What's interesting though in the book of Acts, is that it's only the apostles who are said to be witnesses.

This task to be a witness Jesus, seems to be a particular task for the apostles. As they were the ones who were with Jesus from the beginning.

And that makes a lot of sense really. As if you haven't seen something, then you can't be a witness.

None of you here could be a witness in the case that I was a witness for. You didn't see it.

But what you can do is go and spread that word of what happened.

And that is precisely what the early Christians did. They spread the word of God.

And so, at the beginning of chapter 6, we see that the number of disciples was growing.

And then in chapter 8 at the outbreak of persecution against Christianity in Jerusalem after Stephen's death, we then see that the Christians scatter.

And in chapter 8 verse 4, we read;

⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

And so this was the start of the gospel going to the nations.

And as the gospel went to the nations, the Holy Spirit continued to witness to Christ.

As it's the Holy Spirit who convicts concerning sin and righteousness and the judgement to come.

Do you remember these words of Jesus from last week, from John 16?

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

As the gospel spread to all the nations across the world, the Holy Spirit was at work witnessing to Jesus. On one level the Holy Spirit really is the primary evangelist in this new age that we're in.

And so evangelism is not just the exclusive activity of the apostles.

It is the joy and pleasure of all Christians to speak of our Lord and saviour, to see people come to know him and be saved.

And this is quite clear in 1 Corinthians 11.

Paul's just finished saying that everything that he does is for the salvation of others and then he gives the Corinthians this command;

¹ *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*

Just as I seek the salvation of others, you do the same.

And we saw at Pentecost that the Spirit enables, not just the apostles, but all disciples to proclaim Christ boldly, even in the face of opposition and persecution.

Because when the Spirit came at Pentecost, it came upon all people, enabling them to prophesy, so to speak God's words.

HS doesn't lead us to do miracles, but to proclaim Christ

2 Corinthians who is up for this task?