

20260816 The Spirit Comes — Transforming and Saving (Acts 2:1-42, NKJV)

We will continue our sermon series on the book of Acts. Last time, Pastor Bijoy said Acts could be better titled as “The Acts of the Holy Spirit and God’s People.” As you know, Luke wrote a two-volume work. In the first volume, the Gospel of Luke, he tells us how God the Son, Jesus Christ, accomplished salvation through his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. In the second volume, which is the book of Acts, after Jesus ascends to heaven, the Holy Spirit comes to continue Christ’s work, applying His salvation to God’s people. The Holy Spirit carries out the mission of the Lord through God’s people. The key verse of the whole book is Acts 1:8, where Jesus says to his disciples: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Today we examine the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our passage for today is Acts 2:1–42. The message is titled “The Spirit Comes: Transforming and Saving”. We will look at the four phases or steps by which the Spirit empowers believers to witness for Jesus – 1) the Spirit Empowers Witness, 2) He Awakens Reason, 3) He Pierces Hearts, and 4) He Brings People to Faith.

I. The Spirit Empowers Witness

*¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Pentecost was a festival of harvest, a time to celebrate God’s blessing. But this particular Pentecost was different, for after the death and resurrection of Christ, God gave an even greater blessing: the coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles and the disciples received what Jesus had promised—the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they received power to witness to Jesus among all nations. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit first transforms the lives of believers. God had repeatedly promised this through the prophets of the Old Testament.

*For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,
and my blessing on your descendants. (Isaiah 44:2-3)*

I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

The greatest gift of Pentecost is not an experience, but it is God Himself coming to dwell among His people through the Holy Spirit. And where the Spirit dwells, He brings new life. We have shared several testimonies before on this matter. Through Jesus’ salvation and the Spirit’s indwelling, broken families have been restored, harsh tempers have been transformed, and people have experienced God’s goodness in their lives.

The Holy Spirit also empowers believers to witness for Jesus. The Spirit gives different gifts to believers to proclaim the gospel and build up the church. As Paul writes: “*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, ...to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, ...to another different kinds of tongues, ...*” (1Cor 12:7-10). Through these gifts, the Holy Spirit displays signs and wonders. These

can draw people to seek the gospel and confirm the message to those who hear it, showing that the gospel is not merely human words but that the gospel is indeed the powerful work of God. This leads us to the second stage where the Holy Spirit awakens minds.

The Spirit comes to indwell and fill believers, giving them new life and empowering them to bear witness to Jesus.

II. The Spirit Awakens Minds

The Holy Spirit works through believers to share Christ with those who have not yet received salvation. As people pay attention, the Spirit works within them, awakening and clarifying their minds so they can understand what God is doing. At Pentecost, Jerusalem was crowded with people who had come for the festival. Then suddenly, a loud sound came from heaven, drawing a large crowd to see what was happening.

⁵*And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ...*
¹¹*“we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”* ¹²*So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”* ¹³*Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”*

Most people have their own worldview and religious assumptions. When they encounter the Holy Spirit's extraordinary work, it is natural to feel confused and ask questions. Our reasoning is often shaped by what we already believe, so we tend to interpret new things through our own framework—and sometimes we simply resist what is unfamiliar. That is exactly what happened at Pentecost. Some people mocked the disciples and explained their unusual behavior by saying, “They are full of new wine.”

In the passage, Peter does not ask people to stop thinking. On the contrary, he brings them back to the facts, the Scriptures, and the Jesus they themselves had seen and known.

Peter first appeals to a simple fact to expose the confused reasoning behind their mockery: “¹⁴But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour (nine in the morning) of the day.”

Peter then quotes Joel 2:28–32 to explain what they are witnessing:

¹⁷*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,*
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.
¹⁸*And on My menservants and on My maidservants*
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.
¹⁹*I will show wonders in heaven above*
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.
²⁰*The sun shall be turned into darkness,*
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.
²¹*And it shall come to pass*
That whoever calls on the name of the Lord
Shall be saved.'

Then Peter bears witness to Jesus before the crowd—His ministry, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His resurrection, “²²...Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God

did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

Peter then goes on to use Psalm 16 to explain Jesus’ resurrection and ascension:

²⁷For You will not leave my soul in Hades,

Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’

“...³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.”

The book of Acts shows us that the Holy Spirit does not bypass human reasoning. Rather, through facts, Scripture, and testimony, He awakens minds that have been clouded by prejudice and assumptions. Christian faith goes beyond human reasoning, but it is never without it.

The Holy Spirit awakens our minds—but for someone to come to faith, He must do an even deeper work. And this is the third phase, when the Holy Spirit goes beyond human reasoning and pierces hearts.

III. The Spirit Pierces Hearts

Building on this reasoned argument, Peter then brings them to the conclusion, “³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” What happens next is remarkable – “³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

The Holy Spirit pierced their hearts through the truth. They were no longer simply examining claims about Jesus. Suddenly they saw: this Jesus whom they crucified truly was the exalted Christ. And that realization became deeply personal: What, then, must I do?

I myself came to faith after the Holy Spirit pierced my heart. I am a very rational person, so the Spirit first awakened my reasoning, which had been clouded by prejudice. Through a Christian radio station, the Holy Spirit helped me begin to understand the gospel. Over a period of about a year, through radio programs and pastors’ sermons, the Spirit answered many of my questions. At first, I could hardly understand the sermons. Yet many times, one or two sentences would suddenly feel as though they were spoken directly to me. At first, I explained everything away as coincidence. But after this happened again and again, my reasoning told me: this cannot simply be coincidence. There must be a supernatural God.

But this rational recognition did not yet bring me into a personal relationship with God. I simply accepted God as an objective reality—much as I accepted that the President of the United States existed. Yet the Holy Spirit kept drawing my wife and me to church on Sundays. One day in early summer 1991, as the service ended and we were about to leave, an elderly sister approached us and asked, “May I pray for you?” I agreed, and she led us to a quiet corner. Then she said, “I’ll pray one sentence at a time, and you can repeat after me.” She had seen us attend church for several months and thought it was time to lead us in a prayer of commitment to Christ. She had barely spoken the first sentence—“Jesus, I know that I am a sinner”—when something happened inside me. It was as though I had been struck by lightning, as though a great light suddenly shone into my heart. In that moment, I knew: Jesus died on the cross for sinners—and that sinner was me. I could not control myself. Tears began streaming down my face. I opened my eyes and saw that my wife was also in tears. The Holy Spirit had pierced our hearts. In that moment, I saw my sin; I saw Jesus’ love and salvation. And in that moment, I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, my Savior. As Scripture says, “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit uses Scripture and the testimonies to awaken blinded minds. He also uses believers’ message and prayers to pierce people’s hearts.

So when we share the gospel, how can we be used by the Holy Spirit? Do we know the Scriptures well enough to show from them the salvation of Jesus? Have we prepared our own testimony of how Jesus has changed our lives? Do we regularly pray for the people around us, asking God to bless them with the gospel? May the Holy Spirit help us.

The result of the Spirit's work is to bring people to receive the salvation of Jesus Christ. But what does it actually mean to receive Christ's salvation? This now leads us to the last phase, which is when the Spirit brings us to faith.

IV. The Spirit Brings Us to Faith

³⁸Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. ... ⁴¹Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴²And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. "

"Repentance" is the decisive change that the Holy Spirit brings about in a person's heart, turning the mind and will away from sin and toward God. Repentance is not merely feeling sorry; it is a complete change in the direction of one's life. To be baptized "in the name of Jesus" means to believe that Jesus is the Saviour, to rely on His authority, and to live according to His will. "Baptism" is an expression of faith. Through this sacrament, believers publicly declare that their lives now belong to God, and they become part of the community of God's people—the church. Salvation, therefore, is not only personal; it is also communal.

To receive God's salvation is to turn away from sin, believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ, and belong to God and His church. Salvation is not merely God solving our problems or rescuing us from crises. It brings a fundamental change in the direction of our lives.

In my church in Beijing, I once met a woman named Mrs. Wang. An MRI showed that she had a serious vascular malformation in her brain and needed open-brain surgery. Facing this life-threatening crisis, she accepted Jesus, and many Christians prayed for her. Two weeks later, another MRI was done before the surgery. To everyone's amazement, the malformation had completely disappeared. Even the doctors were astonished. She came to church excitedly and testified, "It's true! A miracle happened to me! I am now a Christian." But a few weeks later, she stopped coming to church. When I contacted her, she said, "Jesus healed me, so I believed in Him. But recently He hasn't answered my prayers or solved my problems, so I don't believe in Him anymore." Her faith was only that Jesus could heal. She did not really know Jesus much at the time. She didn't repent at the time. Hope the merciful Lord finds her and brings her to faith.

Salvation is not merely being rescued from our troubles; it is being rescued from sin and brought back to God. When we share the gospel, we need to make the meaning of salvation clear.

Summary

To summarize today's message: the presence of the Holy Spirit brings transformation and salvation, and empowers believers to witness to Jesus.

When we bear witness to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is truly at work through us. He first gives us new life in Christ and enables us to experience it—this becomes the basis of our witness. Then, through Scripture and the testimony of believers, He awakens the reason of those who hear, helping them see the reality of God's work. He also pierces their hearts, bringing conviction of the truth of salvation. Finally, He draws people to Christ—to repent, believe, and become part of the community of God's people.

If you are already a Christian, do not try to live the Christian life in your own strength, and do not try to change other people in your own strength. The Holy Spirit first works in you, and then He works through you. Ask Him to renew you, so that your life itself becomes a witness to Jesus.

Perhaps some of you are still unsure about the gospel. Perhaps you are asking, "Is this really true?" That is a good question. Peter did not ask people to stop thinking. But ultimately, the Holy Spirit wants to bring us to another question:

“If Jesus truly is Lord and Christ, then what should I do?” We would be glad to pray for you—that the Holy Spirit would awaken your reason, pierce your heart, and lead you to repent, believe in Jesus, and give your life to Him.

May all praise and glory be to God the Father, who loves us; to Jesus Christ the Son, who accomplished salvation for us; and to God the Holy Spirit, who applies that salvation to us. Amen.