

“We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”

Vance Havner made that statement and he was right. The early church had none of the things that we think are so essential for success today—buildings, money, political influence, social status—and yet the church won multitudes to Christ and saw many churches established throughout the resistant Roman empire. Why? Because the church had the power of the Holy Spirit energizing its ministry. They were a people who “were ignited by the Spirit of God.”

After Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended back to Heaven, the 120 disciples met in prayer for ten days in an *“upper room”* in Acts, chapter one, obeying Jesus’ command to remain in Jerusalem *“until the Father sends… the gift He promised”*—the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Although the text does not say so, I believe as chapter two begins, they were gathered in a more central place—perhaps one of the porches near the Temple—a place where the *“sound… like the roaring of a mighty windstorm”* could actually be heard by others in the city, for verse 6 tells us that it was this *“loud noise”* that drew the crowds—and a place that could accommodate the thousands who gathered to be confounded by the other sound of the disciples *“speaking in other languages… about the great deeds God has done.”*

Thousands gathered at the sound.

Many people wondered at what they saw.

Other people were confused by what they heard.

Some people mocked.

Especially if you’re unfamiliar with church activities, or have grown up in a church with many rituals and rules, the freedom and spontaneity of a Pentecostal congregation like that one, or like ours, could be unsettling.

We try to be considerate of those differences in how we conduct ourselves and how we speak, but our primary aim is to demonstrate our love for God and for one another. If you can sense the genuine warmth of our love, we think that any other concerns will sort themselves out.

Most of all, we want everyone to know how much you are loved by God our Creator, how big His dream for your life is, and the power that He offers to see that dream realized.

If you would put your trust in Jesus Christ today, we will have accomplished our highest aim.

On that day, in Acts 2, the crowd was *“bewildered”* and *“completely amazed”* and *“perplexed.”* Some exclaimed, *“How can this be happening?”* They asked each other, *“What can this mean?”* And *“others in the crowd ridiculed [the disciples], saying, ‘They’re just drunk, that’s all!’”*

**Propelled by the Spirit**

Then Peter stepped forward and stood up!

*Acts 2:14 (EB)But taking his stand, Peter､ with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and sounded out unto them—*

This was the same Peter who, a month and a half earlier, had repeatedly and vehemently denied even knowing Jesus, for fear of the trouble it might bring upon him.

But the Resurrected Christ had specifically shown Himself alive to Peter, and asked for Peter to join Him in Galilee, along with the others, for new instructions, and there, Jesus took him aside and led him to confess his love to Christ three times—once for each time he had denied Him. This mercy had such an impact on Peter that he had already begun demonstrating his leadership of the remaining followers as they waited prayerfully in that upper room.

Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter found a fresh boldness of faith. Along with the other eleven apostles, he stepped forward to speak to the wondering crowd.

What they were witnessing was no drunken rowdiness, nor shallow religious excitement. That morning was the initial fulfillment of a long-awaited prophecy.

*Acts 2:16 (KJV) This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel…*

*Acts 2:16 (NLT)**What you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel…*

**Anchored in Scripture**

Quoting from Joel’s prophecy, Peter declared the Scriptural basis for the day’s exciting events…

*Acts 2:17 (GW) ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour My Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will speak what God has revealed. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. 18 In those days I will pour My Spirit on My servants, on both men and women. They will speak what God has revealed.*

For some prurient reason, people often focus on the sensational and dreadful signs that Joel predicted: *“…blood and fire and clouds of smoke. 20The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives”* (Acts 2:19-20).

But those will just be passing signs to catch the people’s attention. They will not be the “main event.” Joel’s emphasis was not the “great and terrible day,” but the *“great and glorious day of the Lord.”*

Indeed, Joel predicted that this present age would end in the midst of frightening signs and long-awaited divine judgment, but that the ultimate purpose of that Day would be that *“then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”*

And the path that will lead to that bright future is this: *“I will pour My Spirit on everyone… I will pour My Spirit on My servants, on both men and women.”*

This was that—the prophetic Scriptural root of what Jerusalem witnessed that day.

**Applied to Today**

Peter then explained the contemporary application of the ancient prophecy…

Peter revealed that Jesus is that Lord of whom Joel spoke—the One who will return in judgment and upon whom people must now call in repentance and faith in order to be saved.

*Acts 2:22 (NLT)“People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through Him, as you well know. 23But God knew what would happen, and His prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed Him to a cross and killed Him. 24But God released Him from the horrors of death and raised Him back to life, for death could not keep Him in its grip.*

*Acts 2: 32 (NLT)“God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. 33Now He is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as He had promised, gave Him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.*

*Acts 2:36 (NLT)“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”*

*Acts 2:37 (NLT)Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”*

God’s Good News (the message of the Gospel) always has a personal aim; it is never mere philosophical pronouncements. That’s why Jesus can never be stood side-by-side with other religious teachers, as though His words and theirs carry the same weight or value.

Sure, the ethics Jesus urged people to observe were similar to the ethics of previous generations and other nations.

God had been revealing His truths throughout human history, beginning with His conversations with Adam and Eve, and continuing through Noah and his generations, and Abraham and his family, and Moses and Joshua, and the Hebrew kings and prophets, and Gentile kings and sages, too. Jesus quoted Moses and David and Solomon and the prophets frequently. God’s wisdom was enduring and relevant.

But Jesus revealed God in ways God had seldom been known. And Jesus gave God’s truth fresh meaning and application. Even the Hebrew religion had become, in practice, tired and stale. It needed fresh application for a new generation; the people needed revival.

Jesus came for them. He came to reveal God’s goodness and faithful love. He came to awaken the people’s loyal worship.

Everyone who hears His words becomes personally accountable to respond to Him—to receive Him in faith, or to spurn Him in unbelief.

So, the crowd asked, *“What should we do?”*

**Respond Personally**

Peter invited his hearers to make a personal response…

*38Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” 40Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”*

*41Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.*

And so, I urge you to make a personal response, because to hear without responding is to ignore…

What will you do with the words of Jesus?

What will you do with the words the Holy Spirit gave to Peter?

What will you do with the story of the church in Acts?

*“This promise is to you… all who have been called by the Lord.”*

That means YOU!

Has your religion grown tired and stale?

Are you alive in the power of the Holy Spirit today, or drifting in the current of religious routine?

Are you in need of reviving?

Will we drift away while going through the religious motions?

Or will we heed the upward call of God and surrender our stubborn pride to God, to serve Him and His church?

There is still a world that is dying to know the Savior. And apart from Him, there is still a world of hurt yet to come.

*Romans 10:14 (GW)But how can people pray to Him if they have not believed in Him? How can they believe in Him if they have not heard His message? How can they hear if no one tells the Good News?*

What will you do with the words of Jesus?

What will you do with the words the Holy Spirit gave to Peter?

How will you respond to the story of the Spirit-empowered church in Acts?

Will it become your story, too?