

What Difference Does the Spirit Make?

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading is to be found in Acts chapter 2, page 1093 in the Church Bible. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, page 1093.

The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest upon each one of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. As the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment. Because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked, Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?

[1 : 21] Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites? Residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs.

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? But some made fun of them and said, They've had too much wine.

And then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

Listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people, Your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your young men will see visions, Your old men will dream dreams.

[2 : 41] Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days, And they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above, And signs on the earth below, Blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness, And the moon to blood, Before the coming of the great and glorious day, Of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Will be saved.

Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you By miracles, wonders, and signs, Which God did among you through him, As you yourselves know.

This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge, And you, with the help of wicked men, Put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

But God raised him from the dead, Freeing him from the agony of death, Because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him, I saw the Lord always before me, Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

[3 : 54] Therefore my heart is glad, And my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest in hope, Because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, You will not let your Holy One see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life, You will fill me with joy in your presence. Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently That the patriarch David died and was buried, And his tomb is here to this day.

But he was a prophet, And knew that God had promised him on oath That he would place one of his descendants on his throne. And seeing what was to come, He spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, That he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, Nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, And we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, And has poured out what you now see and hear.

For David didn't ascend to heaven, And yet he said, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies A footstool for your feet.

[5 : 13] And therefore, Let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus, Whom you crucified, Both Lord and Messiah. When the people heard this, They were cut to the heart, And said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, What shall we do?

Peter replied, 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.

The promise is for you, And for your children, And for all who are afar off, For all whom the Lord our God will call. With many other words he warned them, And pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, And about three thousand were added to their number that day. Thanks be to God.

Thank you, Malcolm, for reading. Thanks, Martin, for leading. And thank you, Michael, for prayers. Lovely to see you all. Welcome to St. Silas. Especially if today's your first Sunday at St. Silas.

[6 : 27] Harvest Sunday. Brilliant. And as Emily reminded us there in our kids' slots, God knows every seedling. And I had the awkward realization that I'm not off the hook for my bad gardening.

My seedlings aren't looking great. So I thought I might be off the hook for that, but I'm not. So let's pray as we start. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. We pray that we'd listen to that word now. We pray that your spirit might work through us this morning. Amen. Amen. And we're in the book of Acts.

And Acts is written to encourage the readers of Luke who writes the book. And it's written long after the events that occur in the chapter.

And it's written to encourage and exhort them. So perhaps they may have gone off the boil, perhaps. Maybe it is the struggles of daily life, of in-laws coming over and staying, teenage kids maybe.

[7 : 35] Maybe parents are exasperating for teenage kids. Maybe the kids are exasperating to the parents maybe. Maybe it's aging in-laws. Maybe we've entered that stage of life.

Maybe there's this delay in Jesus' return. And we're wondering what's going on. Has Jesus forgotten about us? Maybe it's simply the pressures of the world outside that forces us to go off the boil.

Jesus seems so disconnected from the world that I'm living in. And all these struggles that Luke's heroes in those days were going through and that we are going through today cause us to sit up in the saddle somewhat.

So you know how it goes. I wonder if your experience is anything like mine when you go jogging. You head out with good intentions. You jog the first 100 meters. And then you walk along the side of the Kelvin for about another 500 meters until you see another jogger.

And then you jog on fast because you don't want to be seen to be walking. You carry on jogging like them. But what happens is you kind of lose heart, don't you? The legs get tired. You get weary a bit.

[8 : 40] And you lose heart and you forget your first, what you're about and what you're meant to be doing there. And I wonder if that's maybe a feeling that some of us can empathize here.

And so Luke, who writes this account, and we remember that it's the second half of a double book. The first book, Luke, is the history of the life of Jesus. And the second is of Jesus' continuing ministry in the world.

He writes to encourage Christians, to encourage us. So hopefully this morning will be encouraging. And so Christianity is rather than being a relic in the past, Jesus is presented as being alive and empowering and with his disciples today.

And so we remember by way of context how Jesus has been crucified, although he was completely innocent at the end of Luke's gospel. And then we remember how amazingly he is resurrected to life.

And how at the start of Acts, Jesus provides many convincing proofs that he is very much bodily alive. And then we remember how Jesus had instructed his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received what had been promised by the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[9 : 57] And as we saw in the opening verses of our reading this morning, we see the Holy Spirit come down visibly and audibly on the apostles with a great noise.

And what happens? The apostles start declaring the wonders of God in many languages. There's all these people from all over the world, and they exclaim that they can all hear what these apostles are saying in their own language.

And what is it they're declaring? They're declaring what God has done and is continuing to do in Jesus. But there are some cynics in the audience, and it's festival time in Jerusalem.

The whole world is descended on Jerusalem. So some of them say, well, they're just drunk. They ignore the evidence, and they're cynical. And in response to this cynicism, Peter stands up, and he gives, well, he gives a sermon.

And we remember that Peter is the spokesman for the apostles. And just a couple of observations on the sermon before we look at it in depth as we look at the content.

[11 : 02] The first there is that Peter gives a sermon not on the Holy Spirit, which you might suspect from the surrounding circumstances, but he gives a sermon on the risen and ascended Lord Jesus.

Peter wants to put Jesus front and center in the minds and hearts and ears of his hearers. And then in the sermon, what he does, it says, if he is peeling back whatever is going on in heaven, and he pulls back the curtain so that we can see into the very throne room of God and see what God is doing in the world.

And then lastly, we notice that it's a sermon. It's by the Spirit-empowered Word, this exhortation, that we see Jesus working in this passage and continue to work.

So as we unpack the sermon that Peter gives, I've really got two points that we're going to pick up here. And the first one is the promised Holy Spirit demonstrates, shows that Jesus is now exalted. And that's verses 1 to 36. And then secondly, my second point, the promised Holy Spirit draws people to Jesus in repentance and trust.

[12 : 18] And that's verses 37 to 41. So the first point there, the promised Holy Spirit demonstrates that Jesus is exalted. And so we're going to pick up the action in verse 12 there.

And the events of Pentecost, of the Spirit coming down, are so extraordinary that the crowds are amazed and perplexed. And they ask one another, what do they ask?

Just look down there. What does this mean? And you might be sitting here reading this passage and wondering the exact same thing. What does this all mean? And what they're referring to is how the Holy Spirit has come down visibly and with a loud noise and a great wind, and how the apostles start speaking in many different languages, in people's mother tongues.

And we've got lots of people here with lots of different mother tongues, of all the good things that God has done through Jesus. And so Peter answers the question that they ask.

And what does he say? The first thing that Peter points out in verses 14 to 21 is, and this is the text for his sermon really, is what they're witnessing is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophet Joel.

[13 : 34] And what he is saying is that in the gospel, the good news about Jesus, we see judgment and salvation. And if you know the book of Joel, the whole book of Joel points to the day of the Lord.

I wonder if you saw that there, verse 20. Before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And that's the end of creation where God will wrap up the books and call time on everything. And where God will call some to salvation, but others he will call to judgment. And so he's saying this day is approaching, and it's the spirit is the fulfillment of this.

So it's perhaps unpopular to speak about judgment these days. We kind of think we don't need to be apologetic for anything. Each of us has our own truth. Why would I be apologetic for my own truth?

And who is God to tell me that I need to repent and change ahead of his returning and of Jesus' coming? And I want to exhort you to know that, see, that justice, that God's judgment is a good thing.

[14 : 46] And so we think of harvest, we think of creation, we think of how we've wrecked creation. Everywhere you go, there's plastic everywhere. Everywhere. And then just this week I was reading

a book with someone, Unleash the Word book.

I've been reading it with the Roots leaders. And they've got this illustration in there of this girl who goes into her high school, Brenda Spencer, Grosvenor, Cleveland Elementary School, and she starts shooting people at the school.

It's a terrible thing. It's a terrible thing. And the reason that she does it is I hate Mondays. It's not a great reason. There's no excuse for it. And when we see things like that happening in the world, our hearts want justice.

And so we should cry out for justice. And Joel tells us that at the same time that God brings this judgment, this justice that he wants, he is also going to bring salvation to all who call on the Lord. And how is that possible? How can God call people who deserve judgment good and give them salvation? And the answer that this passage gives, that Joel gives, is that he is going to pour out his Holy Spirit on them.

[16:06] That God is going to come and live among them by his Spirit. And the question that that prompts is, if that's the case, then why is this happening now at Pentecost in the start of Acts 2?

What's caused these days to come before the final day of the Lord? And so secondly, what Peter says in verse 22, look what he says there. He says, listen to this.

Jesus. And what are you saying? He's saying these days have come because Jesus has come. God's chosen king forever has come.

And God has shown that Jesus is his chosen king forever, firstly through the miracles that he lists there earlier on, and then secondly in that God has resurrected Jesus to life.

You see, we might roll our eyes at Jesus. We might shrug our shoulders to him. But God has not rejected Jesus. God has resurrected Jesus to life.

[17:11] God has vindicated Jesus. See, they might have crucified Jesus at that time, but God brought Jesus back to life. And that's what he says in verse 32.

Just look down at verse 32 there. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. And what Peter is doing there is he is exposing a case of mistaken identity.

You see, they thought that Jesus was a blasphemer. They thought that Jesus was someone who claimed to be God, but wasn't really God. And what Peter says is, well, no, the evidence tells us that Jesus really is the Son of God.

Now, I wonder if you've ever been caught in a case of mistaken identity. So I remember I was in the Marines before this, and we were out, and there was a boss who was in charge of us, and he was a bit of a bully.

He wasn't the best chap to have as a boss. And he found one lad who was one of those massive, docile chaps who he thought he might pick on.

[18:19] And so he kept on bullying this chap, bullying this chap, bullying this chap, bullying this chap, until it came out one day that this chap had actually boxed for Scotland. And the boss's face went absolutely ashen white, because he had got it completely wrong.

No longer was he the bully, but he was someone who was only allowed to get away with stuff because of the good graces of my friend and not taking things into his own hands, if you get my drift there.

And I wonder if you've ever had a similar kind of mistaken identity. And the issue here is not just that Jesus has been resurrected in verse 33, but that Jesus has been, what do we read in verse 33?

He's been exalted to the right hand of God, and he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit that has been poured out on what you now see and hear.

And so what is Peter saying? He's saying that if you see the Spirit coming, as it had then come, then Jesus must have sent the Holy Spirit.

[19:34] So Jesus must be resurrected and exalted to the right hand of God as God's King forever. And so Peter gives us a sneak peek into the very throne room of heaven.

And what do we see? We see God on his throne as ruler of all creation. And at God's right hand, we see the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus.

And so the crowds ask, what does all this mean? What does this all mean? What does Pentecost mean? And Peter answers, Jesus has been resurrected and exalted to the right hand of God and has poured out his Holy Spirit on his people as he said he would to show that he really is God's chosen, resurrected, exalted King forever.

And then Peter goes on to remind them. What does he remind them of? He says, well, you crucified this Jesus. You put him to death.

And it's an incredibly awkward moment in the text, isn't it? Where they realized they've crucified the King of the universe.

[20 : 50] But here's the trick in the passage. I wonder if you picked it up. You might not have. But who Peter was speaking to there weren't the people that actually crucified Jesus.

They weren't the people that actually were at the temple shouting, crucify, crucify. And so what Peter is saying is that he's saying that when we try and live our life in our own way and say no to God, and we might do that in very respectable ways, it says if we are actively in that crowd shouting crucify and rejecting Jesus.

It says if we are nailing Jesus to the cross, and the result of that is we sit under God's judgment on that great and fearful day of the Lord that is coming.

And so what does Joel say, verse 21 in our reading? Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. So everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, that's everyone who turns and trusts in repentance to Jesus, will be saved.

And the sign of this is that they will receive God's Holy Spirit. And I wonder how that makes you feel sitting here this morning and how you might have responded if you were there hearing Peter's sermon on that day.

[22 : 21] How might you respond today as we go through this sermon together? Well, let's see how they respond. And that's our second point there. The promised Holy Spirit draws people to Jesus in repentance and trust.

Just look down at verse 37 there. When the people heard this, what were they? They were cut to the heart. And they said to the Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

It's no wonder that they've responded like that, that they're cut to the heart. You see, they knew that they were in the dark for wanting to crucify Jesus. Even though they weren't there, they knew that it's as if they were there shouting crucify Jesus.

But they knew what a terrible mistake of mistaken identity they'd made. They now saw that Jesus was glorious and awesome.

They could now see the awesomeness and glory of Jesus. And so we read, they were cut to the heart. And here is the truth of what Peter tells them, that they are cut to the heart.

[23 : 32] And so what do they ask? They ask, what shall we do? And what do they do? It's as if they're saying all bets are off. They put their hands up. What shall they do?

They ask the apostles. They ask the apostles, Jesus approved spokesman. They don't ask how Jesus can fit into their life plan. They don't ask whether Jesus will meet their criteria.

They simply say that they now see Jesus clearly. And they ask, how should we respond now that we see who Jesus is, that he is resurrected and ascended.

And so I wonder if I might encourage us and ask you, in the next week, in the middle of the working week coming up, away from the music and the sermon on Sunday, how do you feel about Jesus when no one can see you?

Are you cut to the heart? Does Jesus, in the middle of the week, dominate your vision for how you're going to live your life? Does Jesus dominate your vision, how you're going to live your life, when the kids are screaming, when everything goes wrong?

[24 : 47] Is Jesus going to rule as Lord in those moments, in those tough moments? And then if maybe you're sitting here this morning and you've come as someone who's slightly apathetic towards life at the moment, life's just ho-hum, it's just ticking along, then can I suggest that you need to flee to Jesus and see how awesome and glorious he is.

You need to see Jesus clearly. And how could you do that? You could do that by joining a life course, joining the life course, finding out more about Jesus. You could do that by joining a growth group, reading about Jesus in the scriptures with other Christians.

You could do that by meeting up with other guys or other girls and discussing what Jesus means to you and what you understand about Jesus from the scriptures.

do something, but don't do nothing. And Peter, having heard the question, look at how he answers in verse 38.

Peter replied, what does he tell them to do? He says, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy

Spirit.

[26 : 07] And so Peter tells them, he instructs them to repent and be baptized. And he says that if we understand how awesome and how glorious the Lord Jesus is, if we can see into the throne room, then we will repent.

We'll turn away from our rejection of him. We'll turn away from living for ourselves. And we'll turn to the Lord in trust that baptism signifies.

And to repent here, it means to turn around 180 degrees from how we have been living. He's not saying put another coat on the house. He's not saying tidy up the living room slightly of your life. He's saying smash the whole house down and start again. Give up on leaning on yourself and trust Jesus and continue giving up and continue trusting Jesus for as long as you live.

And as costly as that might seem, to give up on your pride, to give up on your self-reliance and give up on your efforts, the benefits are immense.

[27 : 23] And what does Peter tell us the benefits are? Firstly, that we'll be forgiven. That whatever we have done wrong, whatever it is, and we've all done wrong, and we've all been wronged, we can know forgiveness in Jesus, both in this life and on that last and glorious day of the Lord.

And then secondly, the second great benefit is that we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised by the Father, given by Jesus. God will come and live in us.

And the promise here is for all who trust in the Lord Jesus. There are no first-class or second-class Christians. All Christians can rest assured that they have received the Holy Spirit.

And so at Pentecost, we see the Spirit descending visibly in this passage, and it comes as evidence that Jesus is resurrected and exalted and sits and reigns with His Father.

And the Spirit continues to show that to us in our hearts, in our lives, day by day. As we have the Holy Spirit, we can see that Jesus is resurrected and ascended and reigning in heaven.

[28 : 36] And that's the offer that Peter makes them in verse 39. Just look down. Look what he says. For the promises for you and for your children and for all who are far off, for everyone whom the Lord God calls to Himself.

And what happens? Notice how the people respond in verse 41. Look what happens there. Those who accepted His message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to that number that day. And it's a glorious picture of the abundance that God gives His people. It's a glorious picture of fruitfulness, of salvation coming to thousands of people.

And how has this happened? By God's Word going out unstopably. His Spirit-empowered Word bringing people in to repentance and trust in the risen and ascended Lord Jesus.

So, in conclusion, how should we respond to this passage? Well, might I encourage us that we need to understand the times. We need to understand that we are living in the last days.

[29 : 47] That is, we are living in the days between when Jesus came and was resurrected and ascended, and when He will return on that last, final day as the Lord, the day of judgment and salvation.

We are living in between those two days. And if that is true, if we are living in those days, then now is not the time to start walking on that jog.

It's not the time to be sitting up in the saddle if you are a cyclist. Now is not the time to be complacent or grow comfortable in life. Now is the time to see that the Holy Spirit has come and if it has come, then it has come because Jesus has been resurrected and exalted.

we must not be complacent, but we must be in awe of how glorious and amazing Jesus is. We must be cut to the heart.

All bets are off and nothing is too risky or too much for King Jesus. And if Jesus is risen and exalted and if He is Lord, then now is the time for repentance.

[30 : 57] As we realize and acknowledge that we said no to Jesus, that we have nailed Him to the cross, that we have set ourselves up as His enemies, we must turn from that.

We must repent of that, knock the house down and flee to Jesus. Now for some of us sitting here this morning, it might be the very first time that we come to Jesus in repentance and trust.

And if that is you, I'd invite you to come speak to myself or speak to Martin afterwards. for many of us, it might be the thousandth time that we turn to Jesus in repentance and trust again for how we have said no to Jesus this week in our hearts.

And then finally, if Jesus is alive and reigning and if He has poured His Holy Spirit on us in our hearts, then now is the time to be confident, to be encouraged, and to be bold in declaring this to

our friends.

So what does Joel say? Just look down there at verse 17. What does he say in verse 17? Right in the middle. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy.

[32 : 09] And what does he mean? He means simply that like Peter, they will be telling, that's you and me, sons and daughters, will be telling others of the good news about Jesus.

that all who turn to Him in trust and repentance will be saved. Let me pray for us. So Father, we thank You for the great gift of the Holy Spirit.

We thank You that He is alive in our hearts now. And we pray that we would see Jesus more clearly as risen and exalted. We pray that we would see Him in Your Scriptures daily.

We pray that we would declare that good news to our friends and turn to Jesus in repentance and trust. Amen.