

### Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

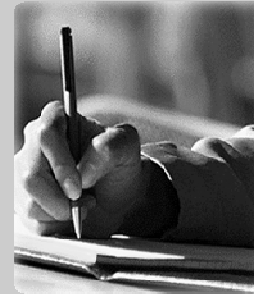


## HG31: Pentecost Sunday *The Purpose of the Holy Spirit*

**Acts 2 vs 1 - 21**

### Home Group Study Notes

23rd May 2010 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION **BEFORE** THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources that might be helpful.*



### Welcome/Ice Breaker (10 mins)

Emmanuel celebrates its 18th Birthday in a few weeks and we plan to mark this on Sunday 20th, with a special service at 10.45am and a family fun afternoon from 1 to 4.00pm. What special event might you be celebrating this year? Why might it be significant to you?



### Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise, or listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers; etc.





## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read through the text for this study, Acts 2:1-21, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss your answers with your Home Group.

**1:** Some people have suggested that: “Pentecost marked the birthday of the Christian church.” Discuss whether you agree or disagree with this statement, and why.

**2:** If the Holy Spirit makes ‘all things new’ is it possible to see the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives? Share with your home group how this might be true in your own experience.

**3:** Read though the quote from Colin Urquhart (highlighted in a framed box) and discuss whether the point he is making about Christians who separate God’s love and power in our Christian lives is a fair assessment of how some in the (wider) Church exercise their faith, or not, as the case maybe.

- **Release the OPPRESSED:** Jews, in Jesus' day, were oppressed by Roman occupation. But Jesus healed many who were oppressed in different ways: those whose spirits were crushed and dreams broken; those who carried heavy loads. Jesus promises to raise the spirits of those who feel they have hit rock-bottom in life. With Jesus ... *the only way is up!*
- **Proclaim the year of the Lord's FAVOUR:** The KJV version uses the word *Jubilee* – which is a better translation. However, Jesus applied this to his ministry, not in a political or economic sense, but in a physical and spiritual sense.

This was Jesus ‘manifesto’ for ministry and this is our Spirit led manifesto in our world today. I remember the late David Watson saying once: *If God removed the Holy Spirit from our churches today, 95% would continue as if nothing had happened.* What would happen here if that was to be the case?

**Conclusion:** I believe that there are many Christians today who are not fulfilling the potential God has for them. Former Archbishop George Carey puts it this way: ... *it appears self-evident to me that there ... are plenty of disobedient Christians around who refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to have his sovereign way in their lives.* The Spirit-filled life is not a special deluxe version of Christianity or an added on luxury extra for a chosen few. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for his people and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity of the Christian faith. The Holy Spirit is for every one of us, we see this in vs17&18: Sons and daughters, young and old, men and women, slave and free.

John Stott wrote: *There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christ likeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.*

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they changed from being a disabled and fearful group of followers, to acquiring a dynamic edge to their ministry that they'd never experienced before - just as Jesus said they would. The Holy Spirit enabled and guided the ministry of the disciples and empowered them to fulfil the commission Jesus had given them. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and something we need so badly in our churches and lives today.

Many comparisons have been made between the early church and the church of today: The great difference between present-day Christianity and that of the NT is that to us, it is primarily a performance but to them it was a real experience. We are guilty of reducing Christianity to a code or, at best, a rule of heart and life. To the early disciples it was the invasion of their lives by a new quality of life altogether. They never hesitated to describe Jesus as living in them. ***Perhaps if we believed what they believed we could achieve what they achieved.***

The power of the Holy Spirit was given so that the disciples could be first-hand witnesses of what Jesus had said and done. We need the power, purity, presence and purpose of the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and shape us in to the people God desires us to be.

As well as God's presence, fire is often used to illustrate purity. Precious metals are purified by being heated to such a high temperature that the impurities burn away. Tongues of fire symbolise the way in which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus purifying our character. Producing the fruit Paul writes about in Galatians 5:22: ... *love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; and self-control*. I always find it fascinating to see how children can look like both parents at the same time, even when the parents themselves look so different. As we spend time in the presence of God, the Holy Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3vs18: *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

It's not that we become perfect immediately, but there should be a genuine change in a person. A Christian should produce the fruit of the Spirit that should become our second nature. The fruit are natural consequences of His working in our lives. If we can't see fruit in our lives, or in the lives of other Christians, then God isn't doing His work. And that is down to us: our hardness of heart; our disobediences; our unwillingness to change. I wonder if any of you have ever filled your car up with diesel instead of petrol? I have a friend who did that! I'm not a mechanic but I understand it causes tremendous damage to the engine and is quite a job to put right. The engine has to be drained, flushed out, carburettors changed and so on. People are a bit like that. God designed us to work with him as the motivating power in our lives. But we want to run on our own fuel in our own way. The Holy Spirit was given to bring: new life; new fruit; joy; fellowship; freedom; and purpose.

**The Purpose of the Holy Spirit:** Charles Spurgeon was once asked why he preached on the need for more of the Holy Spirit: *Because I leak*, he replied. I need more of the Holy Spirit, because I, too, leak! As you well know. Jesus knew how much he needed the anointing of Holy Spirit as he sought to be effective in his own ministry. We see this in Luke 4:16-21. These words re the first words Jesus spoke at the beginning of his ministry after his 40 days in the wilderness. Jesus read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, we know it as Isaiah 61, written some 750 years before. Jesus said that Isaiah was writing about him and the reason behind his anointing was to preach:

- **Good news to the POOR:** Jesus was proclaiming that the day of the Lord's favour had come. He came to proclaim good news to the poor.
- **Sight to the BLIND:** Blindness was a common ailment of Jesus' time and we know he healed the blind on many occasions. However, Jesus is speaking about more than physical blindness, he's speaking about spiritual blindness - which is the greater blindness. Jesus knew that people were blind to the things of God, and he came to remove barriers to belief.
- **Freedom for the PRISONERS:** The Romans imprisoned many people in Jesus' day and it would be silly to think that Jesus was going to empty all the jails. Some prisoners deserved to be there - so another meaning was intended. Jesus came to free people from the evil forces that bound them up. In today's world, that may be from drugs, alcohol, bitterness. Jesus came to free us from the one who delights in dragging us down, the devil himself.

**4:** In his talk, Paul spoke about how the fire of the Holy Spirit signifies the presence and purity of the Holy Spirit. Is it possible to live an active Christian life without the Holy Spirit? Is it possible for a church to survive without the presence of the Holy Spirit? If this were true, what shape would both of these take?

**5:** In the section 'The Purpose of the Holy Spirit' Paul highlighted Jesus' spirit given 'manifesto' for his ministry from Luke 4:16-21. Share some examples as to how this could be relevant for the Christian church today.

**6:** The Holy Spirit fell on those first disciples because they had been waiting for Jesus' promise to be fulfilled. Spend some time in your groups waiting on God for a new experience of the Holy Spirit in your life. *Why not light some candles and play some worship music quietly in the background as you do so?* Take the opportunity to pray for, and with, each other, asking God for a fresh anointing upon each of you.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



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**Why Pentecost was significant to the Jews:** I want to begin by thinking about why Pentecost was a significant time to the Jews. It was important in two ways: 1) *Agricultural*: it was the middle of the three annual Harvest festivals; 2) *Historical*: the celebration of the giving of the law to Moses at Mount Sinai. And this is why Jerusalem was filled, vs5, with: *God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven*. Luke names at least fifteen nationalities who were able to hear the praises of God in their own language, vs9-11. This was a sign to show that the disciples had received the Holy Spirit and could be understood.

But there was another reason why God enabled the disciples to speak in different languages. It was a reversal of the judgment of the 'Tower of Babel'. You may remember how, in Genesis 11 men, in their pride, had tried to ascend to heaven to be like god and God's judgment was to scatter the people over the face of the earth and confuse their language. However, God's blessing at Pentecost actually united people together. At Babel, there was confusion in the language, but at Pentecost, men heard God's praises and understood what was being said. The Tower of Babel was designed for the praise of men, but Pentecost brought praise to God. The Building of the Tower of Babel was an act of rebellion, but Pentecost was a result of submission to God. And so the gift of tongues was given to let the people know that the Gospel of the Good News of the Kingdom of God was for the whole world. That everyone, not just the Jews, could be chosen of God; Greeks and Gentiles – us!

**The Holy Spirit makes all things new:** The Holy Spirit had been promised by the prophets of old, as well as Jesus himself in John 15 and Acts 1, which could only come into place once Jesus had taken his place alongside the Father. In the film 'The Passion of the Christ' there's a really moving scene where Jesus falls to the ground carrying his cross and Mary runs up to him and he says: 'See mother, I am making all things new.' (Isaiah 42:9; Jeremiah 31:31). The coming of the Holy Spirit on the church was the beginning of God doing a new thing in the lives of His disciples: giving ordinary people an extraordinary purpose. We shouldn't be surprised at what took place on the Day of Pentecost. It wasn't a coincidence. The Holy Spirit fell because the disciples, 2vs1, were still together in the upper room waiting and praying, ten days after Jesus had ascended to the Father. They were praying with expectancy and anticipation. They believed the promises of Jesus. They were praying for something to happen. They were preparing for all that was to come.

If we want God to move in new and wonderful ways in our lives and in our church, we prepare to receive. I don't believe God pours out His Spirit on people who are not seeking His face - though an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of His plan for His church. Praying with expectancy and anticipation is so important because it is this, which prepares us for the gift of the Holy Spirit and it is this, which allows us to be open to what the Spirit brings (Illustrations of flying instructor and Bishop Odo!) The Holy Spirit comes both to be our prompter and our instructor. But what did the Holy Spirit bring to those first disciples?

**The Power of the Holy Spirit:** Vs2: *Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting*. According to the Guinness Book of Records, a wind speed of 280 mph was measured in a tornado in Texas in 1958. Winds can be very powerful causing death and devastation but it can also be harnessed through windmills/farms and so on. And, whilst we can't see the wind, we can see the effects it has. Jesus told the disciples they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and, just as Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism at the start of his earthly ministry, so the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples to anoint them in their ministry. In 1:8 Jesus told them: **You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.** (Illustration of 'Storm Chasers')

The American Christian author Tommy Tenney has written book called 'The God Chasers' where he writes about how we should chase after God if we want him to be made known in our lives, and, whilst I understand what he's saying, I can't help but think that it's actually God who is chasing after us by sending Jesus to be our Saviour and by sending the Holy Spirit to empower us to live holy and godly lives. However we view it, we don't want to be waiting longer than we need to before we put ourselves in a position to receive all that God wants to do in and through us. We all need more of God's power in our lives, I know I do. But we also need more God's love in our lives in order to release His power.

The Christian writer Colin Urquhart puts it this way: *Some people wrongly try to separate God's love and power; but they belong together. The Holy Spirit is supernatural and brings both love and power into your life. God has given us power to use in our daily lives, how can we move in faith and love unless we learn to use these supernatural resources for ourselves? Those who try to love and serve God without making use of the power God puts within us are wasting His resources. They don't listen to the Holy Spirit telling them to use the power and authority God has given us. God sends us into the world in Jesus' name to be like him and take his power, love, joy, peace and forgiveness into every situation. However, if we take God's love without the power, we can only do half the job.*

**The Presence and Purity of the Holy Spirit:** Vs3: *They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them*. When God first appeared to Moses, He made himself known through a burning bush (Exodus 3:2). Whilst the bush appeared to burn it was not consumed by the fire. When God led the Israelites in the wilderness he led them by a pillar of fire at night (Exodus 13). The tongues of fire at Pentecost symbolised the presence of God.