

The Spirit-filled Community

Sermon Notes
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16th Jan 2011

Acts 2:1-4, 14-21

1. Introduction

Familiar text to anyone that has had any association with Pentecostal/Charismatic movements = “proof text” for Pentecostals

Focus tends to be on **individual** reception of Spirit

Example: Doré woodcut (individualism – place for this; baptism of spirit not a vicarious experience >>> gifts of Spirit)

But also a **communal dimension**:

- v.1 – all together in one place
- v.2 – sound filled the whole house (every room)
- v.4 – all filled with Holy Spirit

v.3 – not clearly translated: ‘they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them’ (NIV); cp. Good News translation – ‘they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there’

Greek text of v.3 = Single ball of fire – fingers of flame touching each one (implications: each individual participates in **single communal experience** of the Spirit)

Focus (in this passage) = **communal** reception of the Spirit >>> **Spirit-filled community**

Note that instances of real power in Acts = when they were all filled with the Spirit (i.e. as a community), e.g. Acts 4:31

2. What are the characteristics of a Spirit-filled community?

3 characteristics given in vv.17-18:

- a. Spirit-filled community an **inclusive** community (no exclusions: full participation by all in one Spirit) – not limited to the professionals or to those with a “ministry”:
 - v.17 Sons and daughters (no **gender** differentiation)
Young men / Old men (no **age** restrictions)
 - v.18 Sons / Servants (no **class** distinctions)

- b. Spirit-filled community an **enabled** community: not a product of human initiation / activity, but of the power of the Holy Spirit:
- Luke 24:49: “stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”
 - Acts 1:8: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you shall be my witnesses...”
- c. Spirit-filled community a **catalytic** community:
- Acts 4:32-37: All believers one in heart and mind >>> sharing of possessions, sale of property, etc.
 - Acts 5:12-16: Sick brought into street, so that Peter’s shadow could fall on them – all healed
 - Acts 19:8-20: Ephesus – all Asia heard the word (v.10); sons of Sceva episode (vv.13-16); public renunciation of magic/occult, etc. [50000 drachma = \$13 million] (vv.17-19) >>> “the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (v.20)

3. What does the spirit-filled community do?

3 specific actions named: Prophecy / Visions / Dreams = 3 facets of whole activity of the Spirit (not just individual gifts of Spirit, but reflect wider community attitudes and orientations):

- A **prophetic** community
- A **visionary** community
- A community that **dares to dream**

- a. **Prophecy** (= ‘Prophetic imagination’ [Walter Brueggeman]):

What does prophecy do? Challenges the status quo – sees:

- Beyond the surface (what is really going on?)
- Beyond the present (what **is** or what **can be**)

Examples:

Abram >>> Abraham (Gen.17:5 – but Isaac not born until Gen.21!)

Gideon (Judg.6:12 – “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” – but Gideon threshing wheat in a winepress!)

Albert Einstein (b.1879) – didn’t speak until 3½ years old – thought to be handicapped

God deals with us on basis of our future/potential rather than our present!

- b. **Vision** (*horasis* (act of seeing), not *horama* (what is seen))

= Subjective, motivational vision (example: Mother Teresa)

‘I saw a woman dying on the street outside Campbell Hospital. I picked her up and took her to the hospital but she was refused admission because she was poor.

She died on the street. I knew then that I must make a home for the dying, a resting place for people going to heaven.’
Mother Teresa, cited in Kathryn Spink, *Mother Teresa: An Authorised Biography*, p.36.

“Visions” impel/motivate us into action!

- c. **Dreams** (old men dream of the past = long-term memory?)
- But these are dreams of **future / possibilities** (cp. Smith Wigglesworth / Charles S. Price)
 - G.B. Shaw – “Some men look at things as they are and ask ‘Why?’. Others dream of things that never were and ask ‘Why not?’”
 - Martin Luther King – “I have a dream...” (recognises present problems, but still “dreams”)

Communities that “dream” focus on future possibilities rather than on present negative circumstances >>> communities of hope/action!

4. Applications:

- a. Not just *our* dreams – these are God’s dreams (for his kingdom)
- b. World crying out for these new possibilities (“Let it be” (Beatles); “Somewhere in the world tonight...” (Altiyan Childs))
- c. What prophetic imagination / motivational visions / possibility dreams does God want to give to us in Leith Valley? How can we be the Spirit-filled community God has called us to be (cp.v.39)?
- d. All of these are the product of a **communal infilling of the Holy Spirit**

Holy Spirit, come...