

By the wind of the Spirit 3

Richard Dawson – Sunday, 7th August

Acts 2¹⁻¹⁸ / Joel 2^{28,29} / John 3³¹⁻³⁴

[Read story of missionary and healing]

The Spirit is in Creation, creating, sustaining, restoring.

The Spirit is in the world, working anonymously to bless Creation and to glorify God. The mark of the Spirit's work are at least threefold and include, love, wisdom and humility.

The Spirit is in us as and when we believe but the Spirit is also in us in a special and greater way when we give ourselves to the baptism in the Spirit.

No relationship lasts by virtue of a single commitment or a single promise. Though we promise ourselves publicly in marriage once before God the nature of love is that its commitment must be renewed often. The nature of relationship is that it must be renewed, refreshed, revived and our relationship with God is no different. God calls us to be filled with the Spirit not just once or twice but continually.

¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, (Eph 5¹⁸)

In the Greek those words 'be filled' literally mean 'be crammed full.' So Paul is inviting his listeners to be crammed full or to be filled again and again with the Holy Spirit. And if we are invited to be so filled we also find that God gives the Spirit in this manner – so that we might be crammed full. And Jesus Himself testified to this when He said...

³⁴He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. (John 3³⁴)

In the OT we see that the Spirit is given **in greater measure** to particular people at particular times for particular tasks. It seems that at these times we can talk about a measure of the Spirit; as if the Spirit is indeed, much more like a liquid or a gas which carries with it some sense of quantity. If this seems impersonal I think we can easily see this in our own relationships. We talk, don't we of people 'not really being there' or of them being 'distant' or of someone 'not being in the conversation.' We talk of people being unconscious and we certainly don't mean they're dead or not there – it's simply that they're not **all there**. At other times we can be aware of someone being totally there with us; understanding us, empathizing with us; walking with us in wonderful undivided fellowship. In the same way it seems as if the Spirit can be given or present in **greater measure**. So the Bible can talk about pouring out the Spirit...

The Day of the LORD

²⁸“And afterward,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.

²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2)

¹⁰“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. (Zech 12)

Throughout the OT we find God giving the Spirit for particular reasons **over and above the act of the Spirit in Creation**. Bezalel is gifted for artistry, Gideon is gifted for leadership, Samson for strength and Isaiah for prophecy. But the promise of a new kind of giving where all can receive the Spirit is announced in Joel and then confirmed in the reading we heard from Acts this morning.

¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷“ ‘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. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

So we see here in Acts in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost the beginning of the fulfillment of this word from Joel that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh but this is not the end point. From now on we will find the writers of the NT referring to this pouring out in a number of different ways. These are as follows...

1. How it comes
2. When it comes
3. What it produces.

How does the Spirit come on to us? If we were to take this first instance of the Spirit’s outpouring we might imagine we have to be all together after a particularly traumatic time when one of our number was martyred. Happily I can tell you that the Spirit doesn’t need further sacrifice to fill us and neither do we need to have been together in hiding for 40 days. The Spirit’s coming is associated with three things in the NT more commonly. The first is that it comes as it came on those first disciples – when they were gathered together to worship God **listening to God’s Word** and it comes as an outpouring of praise and other tongues. Thus, we have Peter preaching in Cornelius’s house...

⁴⁶While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out

even on Gentiles.

⁴⁴For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. (Acts 10)

The second is that it comes with specific prayer and the laying on of hands.

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. ⁴Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all. (Acts 19)

The third is with baptism in water. This is signaled at least in Jesus’ own baptism which is marked by the coming of the Spirit in the form of a dove but it is also assumed by Peter in that first speech in Acts 2

³⁸Peter 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. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

And by Paul later on when he deals with the believers in Ephesus...

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there is a Holy Spirit.”³ So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

Paul asks immediately about baptism because there is an expectation that with baptism comes the Spirit. So the Spirit comes in different ways and I would hazard a guess that the Spirit may come in other ways as well.

Furthermore we should note that Spirit comes upon people who are at different stages in their walk with God.

When the Spirit came upon the disciples it came, arguable, upon a group of pretty mature believers; believers who’d been through the ministry of Jesus and who, though they’d let Him down at many points, were still seasoned believers and hence graduated to become leaders of the fledgling church. But the Spirit is certainly not limited to mature believers. The prophecy in Joel points out that people in various stages of life and situation in life with receive the Spirit. Men and Women. Old and young. Sons and daughters. I can’t tell you how radical this must have seemed both to OT ears but even in Peter’s day. Women were still chattel in the Roman empire and not much better in Jewish society. To have women included in this great outpouring and considered clearly equal to men in God’s sight was literally incredible. So mature and immature are able to receive the Spirit. There is clearly also no racial barrier either as Peter finds out in relation to Cornelius the god-fearing Roman soldier – so even Gentiles are included. Indeed the Spirit will move upon whoever the Spirit chooses.

Finally the Spirit produces different things in different people. And again we have something of a reference to that in the Joel prophecy since the sons and daughters will prophecy, the old men will dream dreams and the young men see visions. It’s an interesting distribution of gifts this one because it tends to fly in the face of what might be expected by the religious institution of the day. Prophets weren’t young generally. It took training and maturity to become a prophet and you will see that Jeremiah used this as a reason why he shouldn’t become one...

⁶“Ah, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”⁷ But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord. (Jer 1)

On the other hand it is usually the realm of young men to dream dreams – to see things as they should be; to be idealistic about life but here we find it is the elderly who are like this. And finally it is the young men who ‘see visions,’ who are seeing things in an holistic way – in a way that perhaps might be expected of the more mature.

Friends the principle here above all else is that God has more for us. More than we have at present. More than we can imagine. More than we can hope for. More than we know about. More than we have planned for up to this stage. God has more because God is more! God has more because we need more! God has more because we leak! We leak faith. We leak hope! WE leak love. WE need more of God everyday and when we realize this and realize that God’s well is an everlasting well bubbling up, as Jesus said to the women at the well, into an everlasting spring of living water for you and I.

Our great problem today is that we just won’t ask for more; won’t realize we need more; won’t humble ourselves to admit we need more and won’t stop lying to ourselves that what we have in ourselves is sufficient!

We need God in our lives and we need God to be poured out over and over again if we are to live the Christian life. So I ask you today, won’t you Ask God for more! Won’t you hold out your hands for more of God. He’s got it! He’s got more than enough for everyone. It’s not a matter of being greedy – it’s a matter of being needy. Once is never enough. God’s provisions are daily, hourly, minute by minute. He wants us to have more of Him.

Who wants more!?

Please stand. I'd like to pray with you now but I also want to encourage you to come and be prayed for for more. So if you want more pray this with me would you?

O God, I need more of you and I confess this now. Come into my life again by the power of Your Holy Spirit and fill me anew I pray. Give me all the gifts you want to and help me to be open and ready to receive them. Lord come now by Your Spirit and fill me, I pray, and help me to know that I am, indeed, baptized in your Holy Spirit in Jesus Name. AMEN.