

The Spirit of God  
Acts 2:1-13  
May 23, 2021

Have you ever been annoyed in a restaurant because the service is really slow? You have been waiting for a waiter or waitress for a long time, and they don't come to you or what you have ordered takes a long time? You have asked for utensils or napkins or more coffee and they don't bring it to you. Sometimes they are so busy that they forget you. When that happens, it is frustrating.

I have heard of a man who had a similar experience. He stopped at a small restaurant and asked for a cup of coffee with cream and sugar. The waitress brought him the coffee, cream and sugar. But he didn't get the utensils. So, he asked for a spoon for the coffee and waited. The waitress went to serve other customers. Even after she had served them, she didn't bring the spoon. After a few minutes of waiting, he waved his hand to get the waitress's attention. It was unsuccessful. She paid no attention. His coffee was getting cold and he got frustrated, so in a loud voice he announced, "This coffee is going to be too hot to stir with my fingers."

Within seconds, the waitress appeared with another cup of coffee, saying, "Sir, this coffee isn't as hot as the other one." That is an amusing story.

We don't like to wait for things, do we? But waiting is a part of life, and it is often a part of our spiritual journey. Sometimes the waiting is only for a short time; other times it may be for a long, a very long time. For example, God called Abraham one day and made a covenant with him. God promised that he would make Abraham a great nation and through Abraham many people would be blessed. That was a wonderful promise.

When that covenant was made, Abraham was 75 years old.<sup>1</sup> Then he had to wait 25 years before he had Isaac through whom this covenant would be fulfilled.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five years; not 25 days or weeks or months. Sometimes we have to wait for a long time.

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with his disciples before he ascended into heaven teaching them about the Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup> And he commanded them to be his witnesses. He told them to go into all areas of the

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 21:5.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 1:3.

world and preach the Gospel, not just in Jerusalem or Judea or neighboring cities, but in all areas in the world.

But the question is how could they do that? They did not speak foreign languages. They did not know the customs and cultures of other nations. They were uneducated. How would they preach or communicate the Gospel message to the people in other countries without knowing their languages or cultures? This task was impossible for them. Obviously, they could not do this by their own strengths or abilities. The only way they could do this is if and only if God would be working through them. This is why they needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Once they had received the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit, they would be able to do this. When they were empowered by the Holy Spirit their witness would be God's witness through them. This is why Jesus told them to wait until they had received the power from above.<sup>4</sup>

It happened on the Day of Pentecost. As the disciples were waiting and praying, the Holy Spirit came upon them in the most dramatic way. As a result, the disciples became the most courageous and powerful witnesses of Christ, and the world has never been the same since. If we want to make an impact in this world, we also need God's power and intervention in our lives and in our churches. The only way we can receive that power is through prayers.

The Greek word for the Spirit is *pneuma*, which means "to breathe or to blow." For example, when God created the first man, God "breathed" into the man "the breath of life" and the man became a living being. This was the beginning of human life.

In the book of Acts, we read that when the Holy Spirit blew upon or breathed upon the followers of Christ, they received new life, new energy, new vision, new purpose for their lives. They became a new being. And they began to speak foreign languages. They were equipped to do what Jesus called them to do.

Starting the verse 5, it describes what had happened on that day: "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound (the sound of the disciples speaking in other languages), 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

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:51.

speaking Galileans?’ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”

Each of the disciples began to speak in different languages. And the people in the crowd recognized these languages because they were their own native languages. They described each of their languages as *dialekto*. *Dialekto* means a “dialect” or “a known language.” It refers to the language that people actually use.

In other words, the disciples weren’t speaking in tongues, as some people do today, an ecstatic utterance, the words no one can understand. Such tongue is primarily for their own benefits. It is called *glossolalia*, which is an unknown tongue.

That was not what the disciples spoke. They spoke *dialektos*, different dialects or different languages. It was what they needed in order to preach the Gospel to the people in other parts of the world. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, they became equipped to be Christ’s witnesses.

Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and then stayed there until they celebrated Pentecost. Some people who returned home after the Passover, came back to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. I am sure they all spoke Hebrew but also the languages of their native lands wherever they were from. Can you imagine their shock at hearing ordinary men from Galilee speaking their native languages?

Here, these Jews from other countries heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ not from the religious elite or from highly educated people. They heard it from ordinary people who did not have any recognized credentials. They had no “seminary education,” or “ordination,” or “degrees,” or “qualification.” The crowd couldn’t believe what they were hearing. Of course, there were some skeptics in the crowd. They laughed, mocked and accused the disciples of being drunk.

It was at this point that Peter began to preach to the crowd. The power of his words, the power of the Holy Spirit, was so strong that about three thousand repented their own sins and believed the Gospel.

The presence, the power of the Holy Spirit, was so evident in the disciples that the people responded to the Gospel in huge numbers. That is the kind of revival we need in the United States today. We are experiencing a rapid moral decline in our country. We wonder how we can stop it or reverse it. How can we have a revival in this country? Can we have a revival by lamenting the moral

decline of our nation or by criticizing dishonest government, or by condemning media including social media? Revival actually begins within. It begins when the Holy Spirit has control over our lives. And without the revival of our own, in a personal level, we cannot expect the revival in a national level. It must begin with ourselves. The secret is the Holy Spirit controls and directs our lives ONLY WHEN our lives are surrendered to Christ.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the challenges of our time just as the first-century church needed the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the challenges of its time. And the way the first century church received the power of the Holy Spirit is through prayers. We also need serious prayers in our lives in order to receive the transforming power of God.

Someone has said that the average Christian and the average church are stuck somewhere between Calvary and Pentecost. We have been to Calvary for forgiveness of sins. We have confessed our sins and have received forgiveness. We know our sins have been forgiven. But we have not been to Pentecost to be filled with the power of God, to be filled with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest revival is the revival of ourselves. If we could be changed from within, if all our destructive thoughts and habits could be dispelled, then we can have a revival. When that happens, we can also see a revival in our family and society. It would happen because of the change we experience in ourselves. The revival that happens within will bring a revival in our homes and in our communities.

For this revival we need to surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit's control. The revival in our society doesn't come, unless we ourselves experience revival within.

An English theologian Edwin Hatch (1835-1889) once wrote a prayer that should be the prayer of all Christians:

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,

till all this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.

On this Pentecost, may the Spirit of God breathe on all of us, and fill the heart of every one of us so that we may glow with the divine light of Christ!