

*Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*Peter's Sermon at Pentecost*

*14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

*17 "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams;*

*18 even on my male servants and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

*19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;*

*20 the sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

*21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

After much cajoling, on January 10, 1992, I had my very first date with Connie LaBelle Smith Pressley.

I had never met a woman so committed to Christ, so sure about ministry and with such a sweet Southern drawl. You might say she put a spell on me.

Every single day after that I went to her house until I finally convinced her to marry me at Easter 1992. On September 26, 1992, we got married on the front porch of her grandmother's farm house. And that day changed my life forever. On September 25, 1992, I was a single man with few obligations and not many prospects. On September 26, I became a husband, a protector and provider with a genuine Gospel-centered purpose.

It's amazing the difference one day can make. You actually see that truth in the story before us. Here's what I mean.

The day before Pentecost there was no church; it didn't really exist. The day after Pentecost, there was a movement of God often identified as the body of Christ (we know it as the church). It's of the church that Jesus said, "the gates of Hell will not prevail against it." Not only that, the coming of the Holy Spirit signified the last days. Peter quoted Joel in v. 17, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."

1. Peter thought it was the last days.

2. Paul thought it was the last days 1 Corinthians 10:11 "Now these things happened to them as an example but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come".

3. the writer of Hebrews thought it was the last days. Hebrews 1:1-2 "Long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our father by the prophet but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son".

In Matthew 24, when Jesus talked about the end, He said a lot of things, but what rattles me the most is what He said in Matthew 24:10-12: "and then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray and, because lawlessness will be increase, the love of many will grow cold." These were people that they thought were believers. Apparently the end does not sound joyful, except for what adversity does is it separates the wheat from the chaff and we start finding out who the *true* church is.

That's what's going on right now. The *devolution* of our society is burning away the dross of the church. A purified church is a useful church and a useful church is spirit-filled.

## **A Spirit Filled Church Changes People and Challenges the World**

Let's talk about what a spirit-filled church does:

### **A Spirit Filled Church Confronts the *Status Quo***

To understand this, let's set the context. Jesus has ascended. In v.1 the disciples were all together in one place. The Holy Spirit descends with the sound of a rushing wind. They start speaking in other languages. Fifteen people groups are listed from v. 5 all the way to v. 11, and in v. 11 all of them are hearing the mighty works of God in their own language, and Luke goes to great lengths to tell us how this great movement of God was received:

1. V. 6 says they were bewildered, confused – pouring two different things together that don't go together.
2. Amazed in v. 7 also in v. 12, they were beside themselves in utter disbelief.
3. V. 7 Astonished – they marveled – didn't make any sense.
4. V. 12 Perplexed – completely in doubt – didn't think it was real.

5. In fact in v. 15 they were mocking – a word used only here in New Testament. They were light-hearted, making jokes.

You see, things had been the same for hundreds of years for believers in God. Now, this Spirit-filled church will challenge the *status quo* (existing state of affairs) and when you do, expect to be misunderstood:

1. Biblical Fidelity = legalism
2. Sexual Purity = Prude (50 shades of perversion)
3. Marriage Clarity = bigots.

This is the world and our God has put us in it to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus, and the Gospel always challenges the state of affairs. And what it challenges most is “Who is in Charge?”

A Spirit-filled church changes people and challenges the world. A spirit-filled church confront the *status quo*.

### **A Spirit-Filled Church Reverses the Curse of Sin**

Now, to get the point, you have to have a little working knowledge of the Bible. In Genesis 11, all the people came together. They spoke the same language. They built a Tower (Babel) and were so prideful they thought they could get to Heaven. And the Lord came down (it was so small He couldn't see it from Heaven) and scattered them and made it so they could not understand one another.

The Tower of Babel – someone is "babbling" meaning you don't know what they are saying. It was a curse and punishment for people's sin and pride. The day of Pentecost is a reversal of the Curse of Babel. For instance:

1. At Babel, human languages were cursed and people were scattered. At Pentecost, the language barrier was overcome as people came together for Christ.
2. At Babel, Earth proudly tried to ascend to Heaven. At Pentecost, Heaven humbly descended to Earth.
3. At Babel, people couldn't understand one another. At Pentecost, men heard God's promises and understood.
4. At Babel, a scheme was designed to make a name for man. At Pentecost, the Spirit came to make a name for God.
5. The Tower of Babel was an act of rebellion. The Day of Pentecost was an act of submission.

Pentecost reminds us the Gospel is for the whole world and God desires to speak the Gospel of Jesus to people in their own language. Furthermore, Pentecost reminds us that Jesus Christ has reversed and removed the curse of sin. You don't have to live in darkness and guilt and twisted pseudo-pleasure. You don't have to be ruled by lust or addiction or lack of self-control. The Spirit of God, by the Cross of Christ, has reversed the curse. It happens when you put your trust in Christ and are filled with the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled church changes people and challenges the world. It: 1. Confronts status quo 2. Reverses the curse of sin...and

## **A Spirit-Filled Church Restores the Usefulness of a Sinner**

Let me show you what I mean.

When the Spirit descended that day and all the comments happened, v. 14 tells us that “Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them.”

Peter spoke seriously with great passion and gravity. Peter’s intro wrote in 1 Peter 3:15: “In your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as Holy, always being prepared to make a defense to argue who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

But think about it for a moment...Peter? Of all the disciples who could have spoken, why Peter? In the passage, you see the very first Christian message ever preached...and it’s Peter? Don’t you remember back in Luke 23 he denied knowing Jesus three times? The only other person who betrayed Jesus like that was so guilt-ridden he hanged himself.

How could Peter go from cowardice and denial to boldness and insight? He was changed. It’s what the Gospel does; it changes you. And through it, God takes the worst sinner and makes him useful to His Kingdom.

People used to say the Church was a hospital. That’s only partially true, though. The front door of the church is most like the morgue, taking in those dead in sin, shaken to life by the power of the Gospel, and then deployed as a part of the worldwide mission to reach people for Jesus.

God saved you and changed you to use you for the Gospel. You were dead in sin. Christ made you alive to *do* something – some Gospel *usefulness* – so what are you doing in the wake of Jesus. What are the changes that need to be made so that your life might be honoring to God and useful for the Gospel? It’s what the Holy Spirit does through a Spirit-filled church of sinners restored to usefulness.

## **A Spirit-Filled Church Ties Our Movement to the Bible**

Acts is known as the Acts of the Apostles. It could have been named the “speeches of the Apostles.” There are 19 different sermons or messages in Acts, and v. 14 starts the first one.

As Peter starts to preach, note what he does. From v 17-21 he quotes the Bible. Old Testament Prophet Joel takes a passage, quotes it, then explains it, setting a pattern for how we hear God speak.

We don’t rely on a preacher to come up with stories to move our emotions. We hear God speak from the Book. Any authority at Hickory Grove is not tied up in a man or a preacher. The authority is from a Book. This pulpit is designed the way it is so when people come in, their eyes are drawn to the center where the Book will be read and

spoken from because it's from this Book you hear things like:( v. 21) "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

As we close, let's break that verse down: Everyone – the invitation is universal. Gospel is offered everywhere to everybody. In calling "every one of you" in v.1 -- but here is the exclusive part --who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Only those who will see themselves for what they are.

Let me personalize. Do you see yourself as a sinner before a Holy God? Will you turn from your sin and turn to Christ alone (by faith), believing in his death on the cross for your sins and Him resurrected from the dead for your victory?...in short, thus moving any of you that calls on the power of the Lord will be saved.

Changed – people are changed – the world is changed – For the Glory of God.

*(Pastor prays)*