

It had been a week since the followers of Jesus had heard His instructions for them to wait for the promise of the Father, the power to be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus. The previous forty days had been punctuated by visits from the resurrected Lord Jesus teaching them about the kingdom of God. They had lived in anticipation of those visits. Now He is gone. They had watched Him ascend. Gathered together in the upper room, this group of one hundred and twenty souls were in one accord and praying for their hearts to be ready to receive this promise of a transformed and empowered heart by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. How aware they must have been that they could do nothing without Jesus and how desperately they needed the Spirit to do what Jesus had commanded them to do (John 15:5).

¹ *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.* Acts 2:1 Pentecost is fifty days after the Passover. It is a celebration of God's provision of the first fruits of the harvest of winter grain and the increase of the flocks. That is why it was referred to as the Feast of Firstfruits. It was the first harvest of the year. In Jesus' day, it was also a celebration of the renewal of the covenants with Noah and Moses. In the second century it also celebrated the Law being given to Moses. Since that time, the contrast of the Law and the Spirit would have been evident (John 1:17). The inability to keep the Law and thereby please God was about to be met by the indwelling presence of the Spirit that enables us to live the spirit of the Law (Hebrews 13:20-21). Listen to how Paul describes in Romans 8:2-4 the change that was about to take place. ² *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* ³ *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,* ⁴ *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* Romans 8:2-4

As they prayed, the moment John the Baptist had predicted, and what Jesus had told them to wait for, the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16) had finally come. ² *And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.* Acts 2:2 Wind accompanied manifestations of God in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 13:13). Wind parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21). It accompanied Ezekiel's vision of the chariot of God (Ezekiel 1:4). In another of Ezekiel's visions it brought the resurrected army of God to life (Ezekiel 37:9). Wind and spirit are the same word in both Hebrew and Greek. As the wind reached a crescendo, the 120, overjoyed that the moment had come, wholly surrendering themselves to God.

³ *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.* Acts 2:3 Fire had often represented the presence of God. Remember Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-5), and how fire descended upon Mount Sinai when Moses went up talk with God (Exodus 24:17). The presence of God in the Holy of Holies had been a ball of light like fire called the Shekinah. Picture this breeze stirring through the upper room turning to a roaring wind causing the robes of the 120 to flap, and everyone's eyes wide with expectancy. As the wind roars, the Shekinah appears in the room.

Commented [PW1]: John 15:5 (ESV)

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Commented [PW2]: John 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Commented [PW3]: Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Commented [PW4]: Luke 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Commented [PW5]: Ezekiel 13:13 (ESV)

¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end.

Commented [PW6]: Exodus 14:21 (ESV)

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

Commented [PW7]: Ezekiel 1:4 (ESV)

⁴ As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal.

Commented [PW8]: Ezekiel 37:9 (ESV)

⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."

Commented [PW9]: Exodus 3:2-5 (ESV)

² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

⁴ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Commented [PW10]: Exodus 24:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

Hearts must have been pounding as they watched in awe and wonder as He divided into tongues of fire and settled on each person. Hearts suddenly overflowed into words of ecstatic utterances proclaiming the wonders of God.

Those tongues of fire were a picture of the very presence of God in each life! There was only one Pentecost and it was as dramatic an event as is possible because the physical manifestations pictured a spiritual reality that, as I said a few weeks ago, was the turning point in the history of mankind. No longer was the Law on cold stone tablets the guide, but the very spirit of the Law was now written on hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19).

This moment was foreshadowed by the time when Moses ordained elders and the Spirit came upon them all and the prophesied. Two men in the camp who had not been chosen by men were chosen by God, and they also prophesied. Joshua thought he should stop them but Moses said he wished that everyone had the Spirit upon them (Numbers 11:29). Moses' desire was one with God's desire. It just wasn't God's time.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:4 "Tongues" is the word for languages. This is one of those areas where the church has different interpretations and applications. Insistence on the same understanding can cause division, which is not a fruit of the Spirit. We've read that they were all in unity. In this passage, tongues were obviously for the purpose of communicating clearly the wondrous works of God in known languages. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul describes another variation of this gift as an unknown tongues. He says he is glad he has this gift and prays and sings in this language (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). He describes it as expressions from our spirit to God without the mind getting in the way. He also describes it being used in the church as a form of prophecy, but warns that it should be one person at a time and only if there is an interpreter whose gift is to understand and communicate what was said. Paul limits it to three people expressing that gift in a worship service and others are to judge if it is inspired or not. Apparently it was overemphasized in Corinth. He also suggests that we should desire gifts that can be used to edify others, because an unknown language can be for the individual's edification alone (1 Corinthians 14:4).

The Holy Spirit does impart gifts for ministry as the Spirit chooses to distribute them (1 Corinthians 12:11). But everyone who is filled with Spirit will have the fruits of the Spirit. *²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.* Galatians 5:22-26 The gifts of the Spirit are helpful for building up the church. I pray that my preaching gift is used to build you up in your most holy faith (Jude 1:20). But whatever our gift is, it must come with the fruits of the Spirit. When the fruits of the Spirit are not evident, we must question if our gift is truly from God or self-effort. You can fake the gifts of the spirit but you can't fake the fruits of the Spirit for long. So while the instant gift of speaking a foreign language was a sign to the Jews that something amazing had happened to

Commented [PW11]: Ezekiel 11:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

Commented [PW12]: Numbers 11:29 (ESV)

²⁹ But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Commented [PW13]: 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.

¹⁵ What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

Commented [PW14]: 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 (ESV)

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Commented [PW15]: 1 Corinthians 14:4 (ESV)

⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

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⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.

Commented [PW17]: 1 Corinthians 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Commented [PW18]: Jude 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

reach out to the world, the foundation behind the gift is a transformed heart that expresses love, joy, peace, patience, and the rest of the fruits.

Some people claim to have special gifts of the Spirit, but the way they express it is a sense of superiority over others. Remember that Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant," and "I came not to be served but to serve." (Matthew 23:11; Matthew 20:28) Humility and serving are marks of a Spirit filled person.

⁵ 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. Acts 2:5-6 The 120 were spontaneously speaking from God a language they had never heard. They knew something supernatural was working in and through them. I wonder if that gift of the language they spoke stayed with them or was just for that moment (Romans 11:29)?

Remember how Babel was the division of languages to divide the kingdom of man so they would obey God by spreading over the earth? (See Genesis 11) They were bewildered because of the confusion of their languages. This is, in one sense, a reversal of that. This is everyone understanding in their own language the wondrous works of God bringing us together again in the kingdom of God. The Spirit makes our hearts one in Christ and brings a unity in Him (Isaiah 11:11).

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." Acts 2:7-11 Pentecost was a feast that all male Jews, whether born a Jew or converts, within the nation were required to attend. Those outside the nation, the diaspora, would try to make the trip as often as they could. Jerusalem would swell from the normal 100,000 to over a million people from many different countries.

Apparently the 120 were almost all from Galilee where Jesus conducted most of His ministry. Galileans did not learn some of the guttural sounds that make up the Aramaic language. That is why they were sometimes mocked and pointed out when they spoke (Matthew 26:73). However, they were serious about their study of the Scriptures. Most were laborers, farmers, or stoneworkers. While there were a lot of foreign people in Gentile cities in Galilee and on the roads that went through the region, the Jews tried to separate themselves from foreigners. For the most part, the Galileans were bilingual, speaking Aramaic and Greek, with a few who learned Hebrew as well. Very few were merchants who traveled and might pick up another language. That is why the crowd was shocked to hear so many languages and dialects so clearly spoken. No doubt the power behind the words was also a major factor. The words were filled with the fruits of the Spirit. The mighty works of God were being proclaimed with power, the power to bear witness to a risen Lord.

Commented [PW19]: Matthew 23:11 (ESV)

¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant.

Commented [PW20]: Matthew 20:28 (ESV)

²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Commented [PW21]: Romans 11:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Commented [PW22]: Isaiah 11:11 (ESV)

¹¹ In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

Commented [PW23]: Matthew 26:73 (ESV)

⁷³ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you."

I want to dwell on this point for a moment. When we try to witness without the leading of the Spirit, without the fruits of the Spirit flowing through us, we are sometimes doing more harm than good. What people pick up on even more than the words you choose, is the spirit in which you say the words. I can tell you, "I love you," and you can sense whether I really mean it or not. The words backed by sincerity filled with the fruit of love are powerful. Ron will tell you that when he witnesses to people he feels the love of God just pouring through him. If we become impatient in our witness, we need to check ourselves, for patience is a fruit of the Spirit. When we are more frustrated than joyful, we need to consider that joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

We can witness to people in the letter of the law instead of the Spirit. The Old Testament declares the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). You don't need the Spirit to proclaim that. You need the Spirit to proclaim it in love at the right time in a way that it can be received. Peter is about to tell them they murdered the Son of God, but it is received because he is preaching in the power of the Spirit with the fruits of the Spirit filling his words.

One of the fruits of the Spirit that we need to allow to come to the forefront is gentleness. Too often we can be harsh and unkind, not listening, because we know we have the answer and they should stop talking so we can lay it on them. If you want to know if you are full of the Holy Spirit look for His fruits. Listen to how Paul contrasted gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. This comes right after he describes the gifts of the Spirit. *¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 Paul's describing some of the greatest gifts of the Spirit but saying that without the first fruit of the Spirit, which is love, those gifts are just noise. They don't attract people to Jesus. They repel them like banging on a clanging cymbal. In fact, He says without the fruit of love, we are nothing! **Let us continually remind ourselves that if the fruits of the Spirit are not being manifest in our lives, we need to seek God for a fresh infilling of the Spirit** (Philippians 1:9-11). It may be that we have drifted from our first love and made other things a priority (Revelation 2:4). It may be that we are resisting the Spirit because we have chosen to ignore the Spirit in some area of our lives. Or it may be that we have never surrendered our life to the Lord like those in that upper room. Whatever the case, the lack of the fruit of the Spirit is a sign we need Him to take over our life.

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."* Acts 2:12-14 Some realize there was a great significance in the event. Others seeing the joy and zeal decided they were all drunk, which doesn't explain the language gifts at all. We can see in these verses the division in the world that is becoming so stark in our day. One group uses reason and insight which leads them to understand something the others can't see. The other group is illogical and jumps on a saying whether it makes sense or not because it

Commented [PW24]: Ezekiel 18:4 (ESV)

⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

Commented [PW25]: Philippians 1:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,
¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Commented [PW26]: Revelation 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

is what they would like to believe. There is no desire to look deeper or consider or even tolerate other perspectives (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Isaiah prophesied that the salvation of the Messiah would go to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). How could it be done without language skills? Today we have Wycliffe translators who are closing in on the final languages and are expecting to finish in eight years (Matthew 24:14). I have heard of a person supernaturally gifted to speak another language, but it is quite rare. One missionary couple we supported for years worked with the Mongols. They were in their late fifties when they went and were told that at their age they would never learn the language. They hunkered down and did it, eight hours a day for an entire year. We have our own foreign language groups here in our Japanese Bible study and a Spanish speaking church downstairs. The description of those in heaven includes every tongue, for God so loved the world! ⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,"* Revelation 5:9 Praise God for the life transforming gift of His Holy Spirit, the power to be a witness of a living Savior!

If you have received Jesus as your Savior, you have the Holy Spirit living in you. You can't have Jesus and not have the Holy Spirit. But being *filled* with the Spirit is letting Him have all of you. Do you want to let Him have *all* of you? Are you willing to follow His lead and allow Him to work through you? This is not about an organization or any individual telling you what to do. It is about letting your Creator reign over your thoughts, desires, actions, and words. If you are willing, and you ask for Him to fill you, Jesus declared that He would gladly do so, in the same way you delight in giving your child a good gift they ask for (Luke 11:13). You may have a supernatural experience or not. You don't have to have one. You just have to be willing and ask in faith and then believe the Word of God. The evidence you have been filled will be the fruits of the Spirit. You may experience that newness of life but then see it fade. Surrender again and ask to be filled afresh, and you will be. When we get our eyes off Jesus and allow the world to distract us, the fruits of the flesh start to be more evident than the fruits of the Spirit. Surrender again and be filled again. The world needs to see Jesus in you. You need the Holy Spirit's fullness to commune with God and to have a joy filled, meaningful life. All you have to lose is the false hopes of the flesh that will never fully satisfy you, but look at all you have to gain in living in Christ and His fullness in you!

No better time to ask than now.

Questions

- 1 What led up to this moment? 2 What was the contrast on Pentecost?
- 3 What are the symbols God used? 4 Why languages?
- 5 What kind of tongue gifts are there?
- 6 What is the difference between gifts and fruits of the Spirit?
- 7 What does Paul say is the priority? 8 What was proclaimed?
- 9 What do we need the most when witnessing?
- 10 How can you be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Commented [PW27]: 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Commented [PW28]: Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Commented [PW29]: Matthew 24:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Commented [PW30]: Luke 11:13 (ESV)

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"