

The Birth of the Church

by Steve Gallagher

Steve Gallagher's sermon explores the events of Pentecost as the pivotal moment for the birth of the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 50:19

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Growth"

Description

This sermon delves into Acts chapter 2, focusing on the birth of the early church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It highlights the unity, persistence in prayer, and the powerful preaching of Peter that led to 3,000 souls being added to the church. The sermon emphasizes the need for repentance, baptism, and a public confession of faith as essential responses to the conviction of sin and the call to be saved from a perverse generation.

Transcript

Okay, praise the Lord. We're going to get started on Acts chapter 2 this morning, the birth of the church. Last week, we introduced the series on the early church and also got into chapter 1. And if you remember, Jesus was giving the commission to his disciples.

And in verse 5, he said, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. And then in verse 8, he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. What a tremendous promise these people were given that day.

Now, I want to direct you to what happens next. Verse 12, we see that the disciples returned to Jerusalem. They weren't that far away.

They were just on the other side of the Mount of Olives there, if you've ever been there. And then in verse 13, it says, when they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying. That is, and he names the 12 disciples.

And as we will find out, well, it's actually in this chapter, there was actually 120 of them that had come together. Now, this is the beginning of that 10 days, right? And then look at verse 14. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer.

Wow, what a statement. This is what made chapter 2 possible. These two things, one mind, they were together in one accord, one mind, and also devoting themselves to prayer.

And I want to look just briefly at the two Greek terms here. With one mind is all one word in the Greek, homothumadon. And it just, I mean, it really means exactly what it's saying.

It means that there's no schisms, no divided interests, no discordant purposes. Everyone was together with one great purpose in mind. It was a merging, a uniting, a melting of 120 different personalities all into one mind set.

And that one mind set was completely focused on something here that day. Now, that word homothumadon is only used 11 times in the New Testament and only four times describing the church. And all four times it describes the church happened within the first five chapters of Acts.

Now, that's interesting to me because it shows how things start changing after a while. And we'll get into that in subsequent weeks. But for now, they had come together with one great purpose in mind.

And then here, the second word is proskarterio. And it means to persist obstinately in something, to persist obstinately, to, you know, just push through whatever obstacles or problems or challenges there might be, to just stay at it, to keep going no matter what. And so you see this 120 people, which is what? That's just a regular small size American church.

But these 120 people are all focused on one thing. There was a great call going forth, God, we need more. We need something greater than what we have had up to this point.

We need an outpouring of your spirit. Jesus, please fulfill the promise that you made to us. You know, and these kind of prayers were going forth day after day.

Think about that. Ten days. Now, Jesus just said not many days.

He didn't say how many days. And who knows what that means to a God who lives in the eternal realm. You know, one day can be a thousand years with him.

So it's always a little kind of dicey thing when God says something like that. But they were persisting through. And every day, they were praying like this.

Now, we just had our monthly half day of prayer the other day. And I don't know about you, but I don't understand it. But at the end of a half day of prayer, I'm exhausted.

You know, why is that? I can do a half a day of most anything. You know, sitting at my computer or, you know, whatever. It doesn't exhaust me.

What is it about sitting in this chapel, worshiping, you know, just sitting in comfortable chairs for most of the time, standing sometimes or whatever, praying? Why is that so exhausting? I don't know. You know, it's a spiritually taxing practice that is draining for some reason. Well, these people were probably doing it 12 to 16 hours a day, if you can imagine that.

And really, our annual conference came out of us doing that once a year, having one full day. And there again, man, we were shot at the end of that day of prayer when we used to do that. But these guys stayed at it.

One day, two days, seven days, eight days, nine days. Lord, are you sure? You know, did I hear you right? You know, how long is this going to go on? Well, there was one other thing, too. There was a great

Jewish feast coming forth, as we're about to learn here in a minute.

And, well, I'm getting ahead of myself. But throughout every day, they must have asked themselves, is today going to be the day that the Lord gives us what he promised? This Holy Spirit he spoke to us about, this helper, this comforter, is today going to be the day? And they just kept at it and kept at it, persisting obstinately in prayer, believing God to do what he said he would do. All right, so that's the background to chapter 2. That happens in chapter 1. And, of course, we see that whole incident about replacing Judas and all of that is involved there.

But I think most of that 10 days was spent in real, persistent prayer. OK, Acts 2, verse 1, when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And the King James also says, in one accord.

I don't know if that was added later or if that was what Luke actually said. Either way, it's certainly true that they were in one spirit. And, again, as I said, Pentecost was one of the three greatest Jewish feasts.

And it's also called the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Firstfruits, which is really what it was all about in the beginning. You know, that was why they would celebrate. Pentecost was, it was, you know, celebrating the fact that God was giving them their firstfruits of the year.

But it evolved over time, and by the first century, it actually had become, for the Jewish people, the feast where they were celebrating the anniversary of Moses giving the law at Sinai. So that became, I don't know how it happened, but somewhere along the line, that became the focus. And it's just an interesting side note to me, that for the Jewish people, the Feast of Pentecost represented the giving of the law.

And for believers, it represents the giving of the Holy Spirit. You know, Pentecost, that's what it's all about. So like I say, for nine full days, they're seeking the Lord.

And probably the 10th day was probably the peak of expectancy. You know, any further than that, maybe it would have started dwindling. Maybe they were in despair or, you know, some of them would have started getting restless or unbelief, whatever, I don't know.

But Jesus always knows things perfectly. For us, maybe we could compare it to, let's say the Lord gave us a real word on December 15th. Now, Christmas wouldn't even begin to compare for us what Pentecost meant to the Jewish people.

That was just a very spiritually focused day. And in America, Christmas is nothing but a carnal, worldly, you know, excuse to go out and spend money. But think of it, if on the 15th of December, the Lord said, not many days from now, I'm going to pour out my Holy Spirit on you, and you're praying day after day, Christmas morning, don't you think you would be a little more expectant on Christmas than, you know, any other day? I don't know, it just seems like the fact that it was actually Pentecost day would increase that.

Okay, let's continue on here. And suddenly, that word suddenly is just such a tremendous word. You know, one moment, life is as it has been for however long.

But this is the great thing about the kingdom of God. You don't know when things can turn on a dime, and suddenly everything's different. And I've experienced that before, you know, it's a tremendous thing when God comes suddenly.

And suddenly, there came from heaven a noise, like a violent, rushing wind. Now, in America, that means something to us, that's a tornado. And a tornado sounds like a train coming, you know, so I don't know if that's what is being described, but that's what it would mean to us.

And it filled the whole house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them tongues as a fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Wow, praise the Lord.

This is the great outpouring. Let me read what Alexander McLaren says. It's just an interesting way of seeing what happened there.

Many a prayer had gone up through the morning air, and no doubt some voice was breathing the united desires when a deep, strange sound was heard at a distance, and rapidly gained volume and was heard to draw near. Like the roaring of a tempest hurrying towards them, it hushed human voices, and each man would feel, surely now the gift comes. Nearer and nearer it approached, and at last burst into the chamber where they sat silent and unmoving.

Wow, man, can you imagine what that must have been like? Now, you know, Luke is describing in terms that he can, just trying to grasp what actually happened. He's using elements of nature to describe this fire and wind. And, you know, how else do you explain this phenomenon that has occurred? That's a spiritual phenomenon.

It's not a physical phenomenon. It's something that's occurring in the spiritual realm. But fire, I gave a message one time down in a church in Florida, the fire of God.

And one of the points I made in there, I talked about the fire of God in the Old Testament and what a mighty emblem of God's power it was. But that on the day of Pentecost, God's fire went into the people. Before that, it had always been an outward thing, but now it went into the people, and they would live out the rest of their lives in that fire.

And I gave whatever examples of believers who have had that happen. You know, when the fire of God comes into you, it's not like an emotional experience that just dies out within a few days or whatever. It's something that gets into you and smolders and burns and continues on for decades.

So this 120 people, this small American church, basically, got the fire of God in them. What does fire do for us? Fire thaws the cold heart. Fire purifies the motives.

Fire cleanses away the filth of sin. Fire kindles love for God and man. Fire ignites enthusiasm for the things of God.

Fire provokes zeal for winning souls. Fire empowers people to live the higher life. This is how the church of Jesus Christ came into this world.

This is the birth of Christianity, the fire that came on the day of Pentecost. Praise the Lord. She was only a baby, but she was full of life, full of innocence, full of purity, full of God's spirit.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. Filled, filled, filled to the brim, filled to overflowing with God's spirit and all that that means. You think about what is the spirit of God? Well, just look at the fruits of the spirit, for instance.

Filled with love, filled with joy, filled with peace and all of the rest of them. Wow, what a way to begin. All right.

So verses 5-13, this next section here describes the immediate effects of what happened. I'm not going to read this section, but I will read another Alexander McLaren quote that gives another interesting take on it. The sound of the rushing wind had been heard hurtling through the city in the early morning hours and had served as guide to the spot.

A curious crowd came hurrying to ascertain what this noise of tempest in a calm meant, and they were met by something more extraordinary still. Try to imagine the spectacle. As would appear from Acts 2-33, the tongues of fire remained lamently glowing on each head, and the whole 120, thus strangely crowned, were pouring out rapturous praises, each in some strange tongue.

Yeah, man, can you imagine? Now, again, the Lord does everything perfectly. He timed this perfectly. For one thing, I mean, besides all the implications of what Pentecost meant, but also, Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims that had come there from all over the Roman world, and the city was just teeming with all these multitudes of people.

So they hear this commotion, and something had to draw them, because we know that at least 3,000 came and heard Peter preach. At least 3,000. It could have been a lot more than that, I don't know.

So maybe this upper room was part of the temple complex or something like that. That's possible. Some people believe that, and it would make sense, because all the people seemed to know to converge to that place, and it would make sense that it was the temple.

That thousands of people in this early morning hour at nine o'clock would all converge on that place. And the one phrase that really got my attention in this section of Scripture is that all these different people, these 120 people, were speaking in the tongues, the languages, regional dialects of people from all over. Not Greek, but I suppose some were speaking in Greek, but that was the common language.

But they were speaking the dialect of Cappadocia and Phrygia and different parts of the Roman Empire. And they were all speaking of one thing, the mighty deeds of God. Wow.

Talk about a worship session, a praise session, where they're all just bursting forth, talking, let me tell you about the Lord. I don't know what they were talking about. Maybe creation, maybe the flood, maybe fire pouring down on Sodom and Gomorrah, maybe the plagues of Egypt, maybe the Red Sea parting, or maybe it was more spiritual things that God had done.

I don't know what those mighty deeds were that they were talking about, but they were all magnifying Jesus Christ. That much I know. Praise the Lord.

Okay, now the next section is the sermon that Peter got up because some of the mockers, who the devil was kind enough to supply there in the crowd, started scoffing at what was going on and people speaking in tongues and all this stuff. And that scoffing still goes on today in certain circles, but I'll leave that alone. But anyway, so Peter gets up and he begins by responding to these scoffers.

So there's thousands of people. I don't know where he could have been standing to address so many people, but again, I believe it seems like it would have been in the temple complex where they could have held a crowd of that size. But there's some remarkable things to consider about this sermon.

You know, I think we kind of take these things for granted, but first of all, who was preaching? This was flaky Peter, you know, 49 days before, seven weeks before. You know, there in the upper room, maybe the very same room that this happened in, he's telling Jesus, you know, full of his confidence and everything. Jesus, I'll go with you to the death.

And a few hours later, he's, you know, withering and away when some servant girl asked him if he was part of Jesus' entourage. And he runs off, flees for his life and leaves Jesus to do the best he could. That was Peter.

One minute he's, you know, all on board and the next minute he's going the opposite direction. That's the man who stood here and fearlessly preached to thousands of people. And we'll hear some of the things he said.

But there's this group of mockers, probably right in the front. And Peter gets up and gives it to him straight. That's amazing.

It's also amazing that this is his first sermon. Now, unless you're a preacher, you may not understand what I'm going to say. But getting up and preaching is no easy matter.

I remember Billy Graham one time said, remembering back when he first began, he said, the first time I preached, I got up and preached everything I knew. And in five minutes later, I sat down. And I so get that because I remember when I first started preaching, it's like, I don't know anything.

What am I doing up here? You know, I mean, you just, you're so empty. You're like a blank slate. You've got nothing to give other people.

And all of a sudden you're up in front of people and you feel nervous and everything. And think of it, Billy Graham, you know, said that. And it was probably true because it was true for me.

And that's the way it was. But Peter is a fisherman, just a simple-minded peasant who lived up in the northern regions, wasn't even a city guy. You know, he just, if you've ever been in other countries, especially out in the country, people are very simple-minded.

They just don't have a very wide, you know, range of comprehension. And imagine 2,000 years ago, before the internet and television and all that. So he's just a simple guy.

And he gets up and gives, really, a very well-constructed, methodical, systematic sermon that he lays it out and brings it to a conclusion that God uses. I mean, it's amazing that he could do this. He starts off by answering the mockers, but he quickly moves on, verses 16 to 21.

He goes right into Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the end times. How did he know to bring that up? You know, it's not like you're walking around with a big pile of scrolls under your arm. They didn't have a Bible like this.

How did he know to say that? And he recounted the whole thing that Joel said in chapter 2. He laid it out. How did he know to do that? Well, obviously, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. But it's amazing to me.

Anyway, he did that. Then he quickly shifts from that, talking about the outpouring. Then he goes right into talking about Jesus, verses 22 to 24.

And then he goes from there. You know, he just summed up the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus in those three verses. And then he starts tying in the Old Testament Messianic prophecies about Jesus and how they applied to him, verses 25 through 35.

And then he brings it all to a head. He concludes this sermon. And of course, these are only the highlights that we got here.

But he concludes this sermon with what he said in verse 36. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both the Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. And man, those words must have cut right into people's hearts.

Can you imagine? Because seven weeks before, many of these same men that were gathered there in that multitude that morning, many of those same men were there calling upon the Romans, the hated, Gentile, heathen Romans to murder, to crucify this holy prophet. And they knew they were guilty. The pulpit commentary says, the apostle is aiming a shaft straight at the mind and conscience of his hearers.

He is speaking with impassioned fervor, albeit also with clear intelligence and logical precision to the men who stand before him, speaking to them of things which concern them especially and individually, speaking to them with a view to influence their conduct decisively and to affect their condition presently and eternally. The sermon was a sharp arrow piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and discerning the thoughts and intents of their hearts. Yeah, that's how real preaching is supposed to work, that God gives the preacher a sight into the spiritual lives, I guess, of the audience, of the people sitting there, helps them to get a sense about the spirit that they're in and what's going on inside them and so on, and just drives the point home.

All right, look at the response here. The next section, verses 37 to 40. Now, when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brethren, what should we do? The verb pierce means to pierce or penetrate with a sharp instrument.

You know, in fact, I think that same word is used when the Roman soldier thrust the spear into Jesus' side, pierced his side with it. But figuratively, it means to pierce with grief or acute pain of any kind. This great question, what shall we do? That's a question that's been asked by multitudes down through the years who have come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and are looking to respond with an honest heart, a good heart like we heard the other day.

That's the question. But underlying that question, really even before that question arises in the heart, first, there is an overwhelming sense of woe is me. Or as Peter himself had said a couple of years before this, Lord, depart from me for I am a sinful man.

You know, that sense of sinfulness in the face of a holy God. It's the prodigal son. I have sinned.

I am not worthy. That is the kind of conviction that brings about a conversion. Not this mamby-pamby, weak, milquetoast.

Jesus has got a nice little plan for your life. You know, start coming to our church and that's not the way it happens. It comes about when the Holy Spirit is allowed to exercise and influence His power upon the minds and hearts of people.

And then you start having real conversions. So these people responded, you know, it's a crisis point inside them. Praise the Lord, God doesn't leave us stuck.

He's not afraid to fillet us, to, you know, beat us into the ground. He's not afraid to do that, but He doesn't leave us there. Praise the Lord.

He gives an answer to these people through Peter. Peter said to them, verse 38, repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then you'll get your forgiveness, that sense of peace with God that you need and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So there's two things that they need to do, you know, to quiet this consternation, this overwhelming fear that they are experiencing inside them, this overwhelming guilt, this shame, this sense of being undone. There's something you need to do. You need to have a complete change of mind and heart about your life and the way you're living it.

You need to express sorrow over and renounce and turn away from all your sins. You need to transfer the governing authority of your life from self to God. You need to dedicate yourself to serving the Lord instead of yourself from here on out.

That's repentance. That's what it means to repent. It's 180, yes, 180 degree turn, not a slight alteration.

It's a complete revolution in the heart. And then after having done that, then you would proclaim to the world what you have done. You don't hide it under a bushel or something.

Then you make a public confession that you recognize your need to repent. You make a public confession that now you belong to Jesus Christ. You make a public confession that you will serve him the rest of your life.

And you do this through the act, the sacrament of baptism. Now, this is what always happens with religion. You know, something that God institutes as something that has deep, profound meaning, spiritually, internally, and so on, that begins that way, and then little by little, as the Holy Spirit is pushed out, Jesus is pushed out of the picture, all that you have left is this thing you do.

You go get baptized, and there's no reality of God in it. That's not what it's about. It's not about going under the water or having water sprinkled on you.

That's not the point. The point is that you have had a dramatic change in your life. And because of that dramatic change in your life, you are going to stand in front of the whole world that you know, all the different people that know you.

And especially for these Jews living in Jerusalem, in the seedbed of Judaism and all that it meant, to take a stand publicly and say, I have been a sinner all these years. I need to completely change and repent before God. I am going to serve Jesus Christ.

I am claiming him as my Messiah. That's what baptism meant. And that's what it should mean to us.

It's not this weak, dead, religious thing you do, you know. And that's what it's become, unfortunately. All right, verse 40.

And with many other words, he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them saying, be saved from this perverse generation. Now that's the NAS version. I like the King James version.

Save yourselves from this perverse generation. I like that. That's more dramatic.

And I think that's more to the point of the way he expressed it that day. Save yourselves. Opa commentary says, the idea is that the crooked generation which denied and crucified the Lord is hurrying on to their destruction.

Those who would not perish with them must come out from amongst them and be separate from them. Yeah. And Albert Barnes regards to this word, save yourselves, preserve yourselves from the influence, opinions, and fate of this generation.

It implies that they were to use diligence and effort to deliver themselves. God deals with people as free agents. He calls upon them to put forth their own power and effort to be saved.

Now this is a Calvinist, by the way. Just saying, you know, this is a reformed guy who said these things. I'll continue.

Unless they put forth their own strength, they will never be saved. But see, this is a guy who understood the whole picture. Again, I'll continue.

When they are saved, they will ascribe to God the praise for having inclined them to seek him and for the grace whereby they are saved. He's got both sides. He's got the perfect balance.

And then in regard to this generation, he says the Pharisees had a vast hold on the people. To break away from them was to alienate themselves from their teachers and friends. That's something we don't really understand, but I think we will before it's all over with.

To brave the authority of those in office and those who had long claimed the right of teaching and guiding the nation. Yeah, and you know, what they would do in those early days is they would put you out of the synagogue. They would disown you, dis- whatever the word is.

And you were out. And that was the thing that they had to face. Okay, verse 41 is the climactic verse here.

Because this is what happened out of this. So then those who had received his word, so apparently there were also those who would not receive his word. And there should be no surprise in that.

Everywhere Paul went preaching in synagogues, there were those who received and those who refused. And that's the way it was, you know. When Paul went out preaching and he preached under that same anointing and power that Peter did that day.

So then those who had received his word were baptized and that day there were added about 3,000 souls. Wow, man, that is just tremendous. It's just tremendous.

Now, this is one of the most clear-cut examples of revival that scripture has. And there are other examples also. Jonah in Nineveh and other occurrences.

But this one's definitely New Testament and clear-cut. And Albert Barnes, again, I'll mention, a Presbyterian pastor, this is what he said. This teaches us, number one, that revivals of religion are to be

expected as a part of the history of the Christian church.

His remarks are by no means limited to the day of Pentecost. Wow, yeah, where are the Presbyterians today? Number two, all the objections of irregularity, extravagance, wildfire, enthusiasm, disorder, et cetera, which have been alleged against revivals in modern times might have been brought with equal propriety against the scene on the day of Pentecost. And he's referring to all the criticism that these dead so-called Christians would aim at the different revivals that have happened down through the centuries and so on.

And I've got a couple of quotes here about revival. I'll just read briefly. Roy Hesschen said, revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured into human hearts.

And that is in its most simple, basic form. That is what revival is. Charles Finney, who knew something about it also, said this, when the church finds its members falling into gross and scandalous sins, then it is time to wake up and cry to God for a revival of religion.

Man, Lord, wake us up. Put this cry, this one great holy cry in our hearts for you to come back in a mighty way, for you to pour out your spirit in our day. Now, I have a little book here.

It's called Floods on Dry Ground, written by our friend Jesse Meldrum. And it's a story of the Hebrides revival that happened in 1949 through 1952 through the work of Duncan Campbell. But really, this revival began two elderly sisters who lived on one of those islands.

God got it into them to really cry out on behalf of the young people. They were watching the young people just go off track and throw themselves into sin. And they really started crying out day and night, day and night, God, please pour out your spirit.

And the Lord brought in this man, Duncan Campbell, and God fell on the Hebrides islands. And I'm gonna play the audio version, just a little over four minutes of it. It's just some excerpts from this book.

But I wanna play this just to give you more of a sense about what revival feels like in more of our day and age. Same thing, same kind of thing that happened, but in more of a modern setting. So go ahead and play that, guys.

When God stepped down from heaven in 1949, the things of earth took second place. An awareness of God was felt everywhere. You felt his presence and his power on moorland and meadow.

You met him in the homes of people. Indeed, God was everywhere. You could not escape him.

Conviction was so intense that people could not sleep. Normal activities were halted and lost men and women cried out to God, terrified to face him in their sins. Strong seamen could be found weeping behind their fishing boats, crying out, God have mercy on me, a sinner.

So many young people were converted that the places of entertainment were closed due to lack of interest. There was no quenching of our desire for the Lord and for the things of God, one stated. There was no need to entertain us or put any special program on at the church.

We were just hungry for the word of God itself. This is revival. It is a supernatural moving of God's spirit so that the community suddenly becomes conscious of the moving of God beginning amongst his own people.

Those who previously had no interest in the things of God are suddenly gripped with a divine terror. They plead to God for mercy. Their only thought is to find relief for their souls.

No one knew what was going to happen during the services. The length of the meetings didn't matter and sometimes went right through the night. There were times when we were coming home at six o'clock in the morning from such meetings.

There was such deep conviction at the services that one man recalled the services as an 11-year-old boy stated, there was an awareness night after night of God searching me. Another affirmed, folks were so much under conviction of sin that they could see no hope whatsoever for themselves. There was a very real work done and a very thorough work done.

Conviction was one of the most apparent characteristics of the revival. Eternity was real. Heaven was real.

Their plight was terrible. Their judgment certain and eternal. How wretched their condition, how unenviable their position before a just and holy God.

They knew that they were doomed and damned. Outside of Christ, they knew there was no hope. Truths which they had known and believed in their minds were now living realities as they realized their desperate need of God's mercy and salvation.

Campbell's insistence on the true knowledge of sin and of needed repentance from it produced a deep conviction of sin which characterized the movement. The spread of the revival caused some of the unconverted to live in dread of their village also being swept away in a divine flood. On the east side of the island of Lewis, a young man actually prayed that God would keep Campbell away from his village.

To his dismay, Campbell did come and after a few nights of resistance, the young man finally attended one of the services. God was in zealous pursuit of this soul. This particular night, the speaker referred to those who had made vows to serve God when in danger at sea but had not fulfilled them.

That's me, he said to himself. His boat had been torpedoed during the war. By evening, the burden of sin was unbearable and at the service when Duncan asked seekers to meet with him in the vestry for prayer, he was ready to scramble over the crowds to get there.

Duncan prayed with him and pointed him to the scriptures but he could not grasp the message of salvation. Despairingly, he thought, I'm lost, really lost. There's nothing but hell for me.

This whole being seems suspended between heaven and hell. Alas, Duncan said, I think you had better pray yourself. But I have no prayer, he objected.

Then just ask the Lord for mercy. He fell on his knees and uttered only a few words when the miracle happened. The intolerable burden slipped away and the joy of forgiveness flooded in.

Looking down, he seemed to materialize on the floor the locks and chains of sin which had bound him. He leaped up in an ecstasy of love to Christ thinking that he was going straight to heaven. Later, as he met an elder by the roadside, a circle of light seemed to envelop him and looking up to locate its source, he found himself gazing into the face of his savior.

Undoubtedly, no one who experiences historic outpouring could ever forget what God had done. As one woman bore witness, you've been brought into touch with the power of the world to come and something,

something indefinable lives with you. You can never be content with anything less than what you've seen and you live to see it again.

So that gives you a little better sense about what revival looks like and what it must have looked like and felt like that day in Jerusalem. It's just the power of the Holy Spirit permeated the atmosphere of that city. All right, so we see the more longer term results here in the rest of the chapter.

Let me just read these verses as we wrap it up. Verse 42, they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all as anyone might have need. Day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking bread from house to house they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Wow, praise the Lord.

And we see this continue on this next section and really it actually begins in verse 42 there and goes all the way to chapter six, verse seven. This early period of the church which probably lasted something like three to five years there during that time. It would have been the early 30s, you know, looking back on it.

And this is where the church was birthed, that outpouring of the Holy Spirit that day. I think, you know, the things that they did to prepare themselves to be of one mind and to obstinately persist in prayer. We may not be able to expect a great outpouring like that but this is something that all believers should strive for.

I was thinking about one of the commentators said about how all the divisions have come into the church and he used a little phrase that Jesus used in Matthew 13 in the parable of the wheat and the tares and the farmer says, who did this? And someone, one of his helpers said, an enemy has come in and done this and he used that phrase to describe all the division in the church. The very thing that fractures us and keeps us from being one-minded with a one holy purpose of seeking the face of Jesus Christ. We allow all these peripheral issues, secondary doctrines and all of this junk, pride-based opinions to separate us and keep us out of the unity of the Spirit.

Shame on us, shame on us. We need to all humble ourselves and cry out to the Lord in need and if we will do that, you know, it's a guarantee that God will move. It's a guarantee.

It may not be like this to this magnitude but it is a formula, really it is. It's a formula that God has given us to receive from on high. The power and the gifts of the Spirit, amen? So next week, we'll get more into the fruit, what came forth from that and some of the vignettes that Luke shared about that early church.

Okay, that's it for today. God bless you. Amen.

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