

Acts 2:4

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[0 : 00] We shall turn now to the book of Acts in the second chapter, and our text is verse 4, Acts chapter 2 and verse 4.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there are a few questions that cause more division and cause more confusion in the church of God today than the question of the place of the Holy Spirit.

In the life of the believer. And it is impossible for us to keep those questions and their perplexities and their potential for division forever away from our own congregations.

Although one is thankful to God for the fact that we've been spared so far from serious problems in this whole area. And I want tonight, because this chapter is so important to the whole discussion, to reflect for a moment on some of its teaching and to investigate and explore some of the problems and questions which its propositions and utterances give rise.

[1 : 56] Before I do so, I think it is worth a while to emphasize that we ought never to take our theology from what we ought to take our doctrine from the word of God.

Any more than one takes doctrine from symbolic or parabolic passages. By large we ought to take our doctrine from the didactic or the teaching parts of Holy Scripture.

And much damage is done by basing our conclusions on the book of Acts and neglecting the teaching of, for example, the epistles of the Apostle Paul.

But having said that, it is important to see the act teaching and above all to reflect on what exactly it was that happened to the Christian church on the day of Pentecost.

And the answer given to us in verse 4 is that on that day they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak with other tongues as that Spirit gave the utterance.

[3 : 28] Now let me put to you for a moment some of the major questions in this area. The first point I want to notice is the terminology itself.

The terminology we are told that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And the problem is that so often people take this terminology and they try to drive wedges between the different terms and they try to tell us that to be filled is one thing, to be baptized is another thing.

And furthermore, to receive the Spirit is yet another thing still. In other words, they say there are three terms and there must therefore be three experiences.

And they will tell us all have received the Holy Spirit gift but all have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Or they will tell us all have been baptized but all have not been filled. Or they will tell us all have the Spirit but not all have the fullness of the Spirit.

[5 : 05] Or they will tell us the Spirit has come on every believer but not all have been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Now I want to suggest to you that this whole practice of regarding the terms as defining different experiences is completely wrong and completely at variance with the Bible's own presentation. I do not deny for a moment but there are four or five different phrases to have to receive to be baptized to be filled.

There are all those different phrases but the phrases do not point to different experiences. they are all descriptive of the one great moment the one great act of God in Christ.

[6 : 15] Now how can I show that? Well I can point out to you first of all that in Act 2 4 we are told that these people were filled with the Holy Spirit.

but if I go back to the book of Acts the same book to chapter 1 I find instead in verse 5 the promise that ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

In other words Pentecost is the fulfillment of the promise of Acts 1:5 that promise said you shall be baptized in the Spirit.

And yet when the promise is fulfilled we are told that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. That happens that suggests surely that Pentecost is both the filling and the baptism.

the one experience is defined or designated or denoted according to two terms. That doesn't make it two distinct experiences.

[7:38] It is the same experience. And the moment we allow that every believer has been baptized in the Spirit of God the moment you allow that you are saying that they have all been filled because the same experience is covered by both designations.

Then we say there is no distinction between receiving the Spirit and being baptized or being filled with the Spirit.

Now again I say biblically there is no difference. because if we go down in this book of Acts again to verse 38 of chapter 2 we find that Peter's promises that they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There is a filling there is a baptizing there is a receiving. Now we also find if we went to Acts 10 and 11 that we are told that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit.

We're told in fact that the Holy Ghost came on him and his household even as upon us at the beginning. In other words Peter sees Cornelius' experience as corresponding exactly to his own Pentecostal experience.

[9:20] And yet Cornelius is said to have received the Spirit are to have the Spirit of God come upon. Luke in other words is not using those four terms as technical jargon designations of distinguishable experiences.

He is referring them interchangeably to refer to the same experience. To be baptized is to be filled is to receive is to have the Holy Spirit come upon us.

And let me turn the argument otherwise. People will say to me all between all Christians and they've had the most marvelous experiences.

They've been filled with the most blessed assurance. They've had a most overwhelming sense of power. They've had this inethable experience experience of the love of God and will turn to me in triumph and say do you deny that experience?

And I say no I do not deny it. I may wish to know more about it but I do not deny it. What I do deny is that that is Holy Spirit baptism or that is Holy Spirit filling or that that is something that every believer ought to have as a mark of receiving the Spirit of God.

[11:14] I do not deny the experience I'm denying the assignation to the experience of the terminology of baptism of filling or of whatever because I can make no distinction between believer and believer on this point or between those various terms.

Everyone who has the Spirit of Christ has been baptized in the Spirit. Everyone who has been baptized has been filled in the Spirit.

that is the biblical presentation. And I will add to just one thing more and that is this that in the New Testament this whole idea of filling does not refer at all to a once and forever experience that is in every sense unrepeatable in the life of a Christian.

Take for example the Apostle Peter. he we are told was filled at Pentecost with the rest. And if we turn to Acts chapter 4 we find that the same Peter is filled yet again.

And I'm sure in fact that Peter was filled many a time. I am sure that every time Peter found himself in a critical situation that God kept his promise to take no thought what you shall speak because the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that hour what you ought to speak.

[13:07] And so I'm saying to be filled with God's Spirit is not a different experience from being baptized or from receiving the Spirit.

nor is it something unrepeatable something definitive something a man has once and never needs again. It is something of which we need a constant experience a constant replenishing so that we live as the Lord has said in John's gospel grace for grace and as Paul says to the Ephesian church we are to keep on being filled with the Spirit of God.

We're not asked to seek one definitive moment. We are told that the filled person may be filled again.

We are in fact given a charge by Paul to keep on being filled with the Spirit of God. Let me extend it for a moment.

Let me take one of the best known parts of the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord says, Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find.

[14 : 31] Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Now let's bear in mind that that is not a word for unconverted people. the message is not one to those who are outside Christ telling them, seek Christ and you'll find.

And that is true. I would even say that the person who seeks Christ has already found, and although that's a parenthesis, it is a doctrine of enormous importance, there is faith in the seeking.

but when the Lord says, Seek and ye shall find, he is speaking to those who have Christ, to those who are God's children, to those already saved.

And what are they to seek? Well, remember what Luke tells us, If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, shall your father not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

In other words, there is an explicit divine command to seek the Holy Spirit. And that demand is imposed by God on all his children.

[15 : 57] They are not to be content with the filling they have had. They are to keep on being filled. with the Spirit. They are to abide in Christ.

They are day by day to go to the throne of God and say, Lord, I need grace in time of need. I need grace to stand.

I need grace to see. I need grace to understand. I need grace to endure. I need grace to know how to react.

I need grace to know what to say. I need grace to keep the lid on the appalling corruption and depravity and egocentricity and all the destructive forces within.

And we say, yes, we've had the filling. We've had it, Lord, many times. But we come still and we ask thee to fill us again.

[17 : 03] That's why we're knocking at the door. That's why we're seeking. That's why we're crying. That's why we're pleading. In the same way we say to God as Peter was filled in Acts 2, and yet Lord Peter was also filled in Acts 4.

And Peter because he wasn't filled, dissembled, and failed, and let thee down. So I pray that although once filled I may be filled again.

Let me put in another parenthesis. We are a charismatic church. Every church is a charismatic church.

A church cannot be a church without the charis which is the grace of God. And a church cannot be a church without the charism which are the gracious gifts of that God.

what we need for the teaching and for the running and for the serving of the church is not native human intelligence.

[18 : 37] It's not professional training only for a ministry. We can't survive only by charism time. We can't survive only by spiritual gifts.

God and I would ask you whether there is not good reason to go to God and say not only on behalf of our own souls.

But God will not also go on behalf of our own congregation, on behalf of our own denomination. church, may we not go to God and ask for a collective filling, for a collective outpouring of charismata, of spiritual gifts.

shall we not face the terrible danger that we sometimes rely on our own organization, on our own common sense, on our own native instinctive animal intelligence, rather than rely on those spiritual gifts, the church of God, the church of which tonight I am a part.

That church desperately needs pastoral charismata. That church needs desperately leadership charismata.

[20 : 05] That church desperately needs evangelistic charismata. Have we gone to God and asked for pastors?

Have we gone to God and asked for leaders? Have we gone to God and asked for evangelists who will know how to capture the attention of a totally apathetic and of an hostile population?

We need those spiritual gifts and I do not want to see the free church concede to anybody the designation charismatic any more than I concede to any denomination Christian.

An exclusive right to the designation Catholic. The free church is part of the Catholic church.

The free church is a charismatic church. It must be because otherwise we are no part of the body of Christ at all.

[21 : 14] So I'm saying let's not drive wedges in between those words as if the variation in the words indicated classifiable and differentiable experiences because they do not.

And let us not imagine that this feeling is simply a once for all and definitive thing because again it is not. we need to be constantly filled.

And if you press the logic of my vocabulary to its conclusion ruthlessly and turn to me and say well that means you are saying that we must also be baptized constantly in God's spirit.

And I say well the New Testament doesn't use the word baptism for repeated experiences and yet it does use that word to baptize in the spirit as synonymous to be filled in the spirit then I will say right brother I am saying that we need to be constantly baptized in the spirit of God.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 tells us that we have all been made to drink in one spirit made to drink it's a very clumsy rendering of Paul's actual word which means we have all been irrigated we've all been irrigated and it would be absolutely absurd for any horticulturalist or any farmer to irrigate his plant or his field once at the beginning of its life and then leave all that to evaporate under the heat of the sun and do nothing about it but just say well I did baptize it I did irrigate it I believe I accept that we need the constant refreshing the constant irrigation of the spirit of God you realize at once that Paul's metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12 is the body we've all been made to drink we've all been irrigated and those of you who have medical knowledge would be able to pursue

[23 : 44] Paul's metaphor into some very glorious patterns and conclusions you know that the body all its tissue needs to be hydrated needs to be irrigated and that the body has the most complex system to ensure the irrigation of every particle every fiber of that being in the same way the body of Christ has to be irrigated and that irrigation that baptizing in God's spirit extends to every single member of the body that brings me to a second point the emphasis that they were all filled every single one was filled in other words you have the church of Pentecost the whole church of

Christ is gathered there when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place the whole church was there and they were all filled the moment they were all filled there wasn't a single disciple of Christ in the whole world but had been filled every single one was filled that I put to you was to be God's pattern for the new dispensation every single one was to be filled they were all filled and you will find that pattern right through the new testament this insistence upon the fact that to be a child of God means that we have been baptized we have been filled now let me put a parenthesis that I would want you to explore elsewhere it doesn't mean that we're all full there are

Christians who are not full there are Christians backslidden there are those who have declined in their old spiritual commitment there are those close to apostasy there are those whom Satan has there are those against whom sin has prevailed they're not full but I'm saying if they were Christians they have had the experience of being baptized they have been filled although tonight because of their own infidelity they're not full but they have all been filled in the spirit of God now you see in act two if you continue right down to the closing part of the chapter the apostle

Peter promises them that if they repent and are baptized in verse 38 then they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and Peter links that gift with repentance at his conversion and with baptism every convert will receive the gift you cannot be a convert and lack the gift you can't be a convert and yet lack Holy Spirit baptism similarly when Cornelius the first Gentiles ever into the church they are all filled they are all baptized that's why the apostle Paul says again first Corinthians 12 in one spirit we were all baptized it is quite impossible that a man can be a

Christian and yet never have been filled with the Spirit it is impossible in this new dispensation to be a child of God and not to have had the filling of the Spirit of God now I've given you a series of verses that point not erection but let me give you a principle that is more important than the actual verses themselves if we go back to Acts chapter 1 to verse 4 we are told wait for the promise of the Father what did the church get at Pentecost they got the promise you come down to

[29 : 13] Acts 2 39 for the promises unto you and to your children it's again the promise you go to Ephesians 1 we are told that we were all sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise and I would remind you or point out to you that the authorized version by omitting the definite article in that verse which I think is verse 13 has in fact weakened the force of what the apostle is saying Ephesians 1 13 ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of thee promise it is the Holy Spirit of the promise it is still that

great thing wait for the promise of the father the promises unto you you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise you come again to Galatians 3 14 one of those great passages on the atonement Christ we're told in verse 13 Galatians 3 hath redeemed us from the curse of the law why that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through faith you go beyond that we'll see the connection you cannot be covered by the atonement and lack the blessing of Abraham but what is the blessing of Abraham that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith it's still the promise right with this to that if

I ask a believer have you received Holy Spirit baptism I must him have you got the promise if I ask him have you been sealed with the Spirit have you been filled with the Spirit I must him have you received the promise I am challenging either his status as a child of God or I am challenging the fidelity of the God who is his father and what I cannot accept what I will not accept is the idea that there are Christians who don't have the promise promise that I can be Christian and not have the promise and I say again it is the promise that promise which is the blessing of

Abraham that blessing which is in the seed that blessing which is through faith my interest in the Pentecostal controversy it is not in miracles and gifts of tongues these things do not terribly disturb me because at least they were found in the New Testament but what does disturb me is the appalling theology that suggests that I can be in Christ I can be a believer I can be a son of God and yet I have not got the promise the promise is one of the great covenant words there is the covenant there is the inheritance there is the promise

Holy Spirit baptism is God's covenant Holy Spirit baptism is God's inheritance Holy Spirit baptism is God's promise it's for each one of his children the moment I'm in Christ the moment I become one of Abraham's seed and I do that by faith that moment I become a child of God that moment I receive the inheritance that moment I receive God's promises which I tell you are yea and amen in Christ in Christ there in Christ I have the promise say to

[34 : 57] God's people walk tall let's walk tall with those who claim to have had a second blessing walk because we have had all that is claimed in the second blessing we've had the baptism we've had the feeling we've received the spirit is falling upon us God has irrigated our souls walk tall walk tall not in self assurance but in the confidence of the inexhaustible reservoir of power and consolation that we have in the spirit of God that's why we survive that's why that's how one keeps the lead in oneself that's how one forks the rivers that's how one climbs the mountains that's why one is not afraid even while one is conscious of what's within that's why while one is conscious of the appalling past that's why one still walks tall that's why there's courage that's why there is fearlessness when all the logic of her self analysis and all the wisdom of her self evaluation suggests to us that we should hide in the dust and flee from the conflict but we cannot we need not because we have the spirit ordinary men less than ordinary men made extraordinary with the power of an indwelling savior they were all filled if people ask you are you charismatic yes if people ask have you been baptized in the spirit yes have you been filled with the spirit brother yes is your soul being irrigated by the spirit yes can you be more than conqueror yes can you carry the burdens can you cross the river can you climb the mountains yes can you see the darkness yes can you go through the valley of the shadow of death death yes because we ordinary children of

God have been filled with the spirit of God I want to ask one more question on that briefly what are the signs of this Holy Spirit's presence what are the great insignia of his nearness of his dwelling in our souls how does he come well we're told in verse 3 and verse 4 we're told there in verse 4 that they began to speak with other tongues that's a great sign of what God's spirit being present meant it affected their tongues but we have no right to detach that gift and to isolate it from those other great accompaniments of this moment because it wasn't only those people spoke in tongues that wasn't all that happened you go back to verse 2 there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind you go to verse 3 clothing fire like your fiery tongues and then we began to speak with other tongues how does the spirit of God come into a life as a rushing mighty wind how does he come as a consuming fire how does he come as a spirit of prophecy and I want them all linked indissolubly and retained indissolubly in both my concept and in my experience

God's spirit as a rushing mighty wind you know that the word for a spirit in both Greek and Hebrew is the same as the word for breath or wind that wind which is the great symbol of power that wind of God's spirit coursing through their souls and coursing through the whole church which they constituted a rushing mighty wind in other words it's a symbol of power and that is exactly as it was promised in verse 8 of chapter 1 but he shall receive power you shall receive dunamis you shall

receive dynamite that's what happened there came a rushing mighty wind in other words there came that power which is dunamis power at one level of the Greek new testament at another level of that same new testament is the dunamis which are mighty acts you shall receive the power to do mighty acts the lord made a staggering promise to the disciples recording the gospel according to john he said that those who believed in him should perform greater miracles than his own greater works than these shall ye do and I'm laying it on the line for myself and for you that ordinary authentic christianity is about doing wonder we have the power what I want to do tonight is not to demolish or try to demolish the reality of what is claimed by Pentecostals I want to tell you that you possess that reality that you have that power you have that capability to perform mighty acts to do wonder the power to transcend ourselves there is a rushing mighty wind blowing through this congregation it has blown through the heart of every believer in this congregation God's dunamis and God's dunamis must become your dunamis God's might must become your mighty acts God's God's spirit is also there in cloven tongues like as a fire fire and I can't develop that in all its biblical associations although these are quite fascinating

[44 : 00] I can only bring you back to one great passage our God is a consuming fire fire what do I have in my life I have the mighty rushing wind of God's power and I have the consuming fire of the holiness of God and as one says one ought to be very conscious of the solemnity of one's standing and of one's openness to being struck down by the God of holiness he is a consuming fire but either what have you within you are rushing mighty wind whatever we have fire like holiness consuming the dross and the filth of our own depravity let no man glory in his shame let no man exaggerate the depths of his own degradation no man needs to exaggerate it nor man needs to publicize it we have this tremendous privilege pain pain privilege the carterizing sterilizing effect of God as a spirit of holiness the consuming there is power there is consuming holiness and then there is the speaking in other tongues now tonight the great thing surely is this what those tongues were saying they were proclaiming according to verse 11 the wonderful works of

God I put it to you that the great thing here is a testimony that is being born when God's spirit comes into life it gets people talking but the great thing is not their talking the great thing is not their chattering the great thing is their theme the miracle was not that they talked it was not even that they talked in other languages it was what they talked about the wonderful works of God now you come back again to Acts 1 8 ye shall receive dynamite and ye shall be witnesses to me the sign of a spiritual man is that he proclaims the wonderful works of God the magnalia day the magnificent achievements of the living

God and it's in all languages the phrase which is found nowhere else in the new testament and certainly not in the charismatic utterances of 1 corinthians 11 to 40 but is found uniquely in this part of the book of Acts the gospel for the gentiles go and teach all the nations go preach the good news to every creature that is the great symbol but I want to put it otherwise I want it home in your heart and I want to say the sign of being filled with the spirit is concern for the nations is concern for every creature you have that magnificent portrayal in the 40th psalm he put a new song in my mouth not only melody in the heart glorious though that is but a new song in my mouth why many shall see it and shall fear his hand if he had been concerned only with his own soul and concerned only with God then the song would have done perfectly well in his heart but he was concerned for the many for the hoi polloi for the multitude for the nations for every creature and that's why it wasn't enough to have the song in his heart he had to have the song on his lips and in his mouth I want the world to sing I want the world to sing ere since my faith I saw the streams thy flowing wounds ply redeeming love has been my theme said Cooper and shall be till I die is that the way it is then in a nobler sweeter song

I'll sing thy power to save when this poor lipping stammering tongue lies lie silent in the grave never never forget the paradox of that don't imagine for a single moment that to be baptized tonight and gloriously irrigated by the spirit of God would take the pain and the frustration out of preaching out of witness you remember the two realities in the life of the apostle Paul filled with the fullness of the spirit of God and yet an error than this I was among you in weakness and fear and much trembling oh my good brother and sister don't imagine that if only the spirit came then you'd be something other than an error than this or something other than one forced to stand and grab this book board and hang on for dear life in weakness and fear and much trembling and you be careful that your plea for the spirit is not a protest against limitations that God is not prepared to remove the Holy

[51 : 57] Spirit is not about the elimination of human weakness at that level it is about triumphing over them more than conquerors in him that loved us let us pray oh lord we ask the blessing of thy spirit we ask for the filling of thy spirit we ask to be irrigated anew by the waters that flow from the fountain in the midst of the throne guide us oh lord to meet again and bless thy servant over this congregation on the next lord's day if we are to be spared and if thou are to tarry prepare us oh lord each one to be with thee and forgive our sin for our saviour's sake amen our closing praise is psalm 133 behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well psalm 133 we'll sing the whole psalm to the tune newington newington to the mel

Together such a forever love, in humility to dwell.

Thy precious wine, thanks all the bread, but on the mere bit old.

He made us here come to the skirts, in all his garments old.

Last day was to lie to God, on Zion's hills descend.

[54 : 51] For there a blessing brought from us, life that shall never end.