

“IGNITION ACCOMPLISHED”

Acts 2:1-28, Acts 2:29-41

May 18 & 19, 2024

“A young couple faced their first winter in a new home. As temperatures began to drop and the house began to get a little too cool for comfort, they decided it was time to flip the switch and turn on the heat. They got nothing. [Trying several times produced the same result - nothing.] So the lady of the house called the air-conditioning and heating guy and called him out to help.

“In a matter of minutes the serviceman had diagnosed the problem. The young woman held her breath, expecting to hear that in order to fix their heating system, they would have to pay a pretty penny. But the pro had surprising news. The problem was minor; only a few bucks to fix. The igniter was out. The furnace was self-igniting - designed to ignite automatically [when the thermostat called for heat]. A tiny thing like an igniter was causing such a big problem. It was not making the connection necessary to kick the heater into gear. The igniter was there but wasn’t doing what it was designed to do because of a bad connection. The couple didn’t need a new heater. They had all the power they needed. They just needed to change out a small part that would enable them to access the power resident in their heater to heat their home.

“Many ... Christians wonder how they can have all the power available to them and yet still have such cold, and sometimes miserable, lives. Well, we could say that their “igniter” is not working. When it’s not operative, the available power does no good because there is a disconnect between the power source and the function needing to take place.

“When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we have all the power we need. ‘*Old things are passed away and all things become new*’ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have all we need. God gives us a new heart, a new consciousness, forgiveness of sin, and empowerment. God has an igniter called the Holy Spirit. If **The Igniter** is not working, it’s because we are not allowing Him to work in our lives [because we are not] responding to His prompting.”¹ To make use of God’s power for us, we have to have the Holy

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 154-155, #465)

Spirit active in our lives so that through the Holy Spirit, we have direct connection with all of God's power.

Certainly the disciples of Jesus Christ were feeling like their igniter had failed in them. During the 40 days that Jesus had been with them after His resurrection from the dead, He had worked with them and had given them great hope of what was possible if they walked with Him and did what He had called them to do. But then Jesus ascended back into heaven, and they were left alone again.

So during the next 10 days the disciples prayed and waited for Jesus' words to come true, "*in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 1:5). They appointed Matthias as an Apostle, replacing Judas Iscariot, who had killed himself after Jesus' crucifixion, and they waited. They prayed and they waited. But nothing happened. They called upon God to send His Holy Spirit to them. In essence, they called the Lord of all Creation to activate their igniter to kick-start the Church.

So it happened on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus' resurrection, that God sent the Holy Spirit to them. He came in the form of wind and fire. Luke describes it like this: "*The sound of a violent rushing wind filled the house where they were staying, and they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each one of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them*" (Acts 2:2-4).

Here it was - the fulfillment of Jesus prophecy, and the ignition of the Holy Spirit fired up all who were there. On that day they were all given the ability to speak in other languages so that all of the people in Jerusalem would be able to understand the wonders of God in their own language.

Now, Jews from all over the known world had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the bringing in of the barley harvest, a celebration called The Feast of Weeks. These were the ones who heard the sound of the violent rushing wind, and saw the ruckus as the 120 followers of Jesus poured out into the streets speaking in many kinds of different languages. These 120 were recognized as Galileans who would not have been trained in all of the various languages of the people present in the city at that time. Yet everyone could understand what they were saying, because they heard them speak in their own heart

language. It was an amazing event, and the people wondered what was happening (Acts 2:12).

But despite the marvelous thing that was happening, there were some who tried to dismiss the wonder of it. *“Oh, they’re just drunk from too much wine,”* they said (2:13). However, it was only 9 o’clock in the morning! And it was quick to see that they were not drunk with wine, for who can understand someone drunk on wine? Drunk people don’t usually make a whole lot of sense. Yet everyone heard about the good works of God and understood them clearly.

It was Peter who explained what was happening. Using Scripture, Peter outlined the events as the fulfillment of prophecy of Isaiah and Joel. *“In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy”* (Joel 2:28-30, Acts 2:17-18). Both men and women were empowered!

But Peter quickly moves on to let the people know that it is the Lord Jesus (Jesus of Nazareth) that was chosen by God to bring salvation to the world. God’s deliberate plan called for a Perfect Sacrifice to be offered for the forgiveness of sins, and Jesus had died as that Sacrifice. But God had raised Him up from the dead so that all who believed in Him might be saved, redeemed and forgiven as they trusted in His broken body and poured out blood, given for them in their place.

Then Peter brought it home to them personally. He invited every person to receive this Good News and believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Listen to the rest of Peter’s recorded sermon. This is Acts 2:29-41. (READ Acts 2:29-41).

Having explained what God had done for all people, Peter emphasizes, *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah”* (Acts 2:36). The people were confronted with their sin of unbelief. They had initially rejected Jesus as the Messiah and had illegally handed Him over to the Romans to be crucified. Though God had sent them the One who would bring them eternal life, they had not understood His purpose, and they had tried to eliminate Him. Unknown to them, this actually fulfilled the needed Sacrifice for the forgiveness of all sins!

But Jesus had not remained dead. God had raised Him from the dead so that whoever might put their trust in Him would know the truth of God's Salvation and might receive forgiveness of their sins, and be reconciled once more to the Lord God Almighty.

And so The Igniter lit the spark that set the whole city ablaze for the Gospel! Empowering the followers of Jesus with the ability to speak the language of every nationality present in Jerusalem at the time, the Truth was revealed by the Holy Spirit, and the people "*were cut to the heart*" (2:27). They suddenly realized what had happened, and their sin became evident to them. So Peter instructed them to repent, receive Jesus as their Messiah, and become baptized IN THE NAME OF JESUS for the forgiveness of their sins. Only then could they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It is imperative to understand that baptism in the Name of Jesus has to happen before we can receive the Holy Spirit. Confession of our sins has to take place to wipe away all of our iniquity, for the Holy Spirit will not co-exist in a body that is dominated by immorality against God the Father. We cannot live according to the ways of the world in rebellion to the ways of God and expect that God will bless us with His Holy Spirit to empower us. Baptism for the forgiveness of sins cleans up the body, and the mind, and the spirit of the person professing Jesus Christ as their Savior. Only then can the Holy Spirit move into that person's life. There are no short cuts here. Confession and baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ must take place first BEFORE the Holy Spirit will empower that person's life!

That's the teaching that Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3. "*Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit'*" (3:5). To be born again means that we have to first have the baptism of water of confession of sins, so that we can have the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

So being cut to the heart with the words of Peter, the people listening on that first Spiritual Day of Pentecost were convicted of their sins and Luke tells us, "*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about THREE THOUSAND were added to their number THAT DAY*" (Acts 2:41).

Confronted by the Truth of God's Salvation through Jesus Christ, the people respond, and the number of

believers multiplied exponentially through the work of God's Igniter, the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's all good news for us to hear, but the real questions people will ask for us to answer are, "What does it mean for us today? Why is this portion of Scripture so important for us to hear and know? What difference does it mean almost 2000 years after it first happened?"

Having seen what the Holy Spirit authorized on that first Pentecost helps us to know that full and complete transformation in the Name of Jesus Christ can take place as we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, confess our sins in His Name, and be baptized into His death so that we can have life through Him. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not an isolated event, but it was the first in the Christian Church, and has been the source of revivals and awakenings ever since.

God desires that we also profess our faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized both by water and the Spirit so that we can do the work of the Lord Jesus in our world today. If we strive to work in our own power, without the help of the Holy Spirit, we will quickly burn out and waste away, only achieving a small amount of success, if any at all.

Take Oswald Chambers for example. "As a young man, Chambers, of *My Utmost For His Highest* fame, battled a persistent sense of barrenness in his Christian life. He finally wrote: *I was getting desperate. I knew no one who had what I wanted; in fact I did not know what I did want. But I knew that if what I had was all the Christianity there was, the thing was a fraud.*

"Then Luke 11:13 got hold of me. ("If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!")

Chambers continues. *"At a little meeting in Dunoon, a well-known lady was asked to take the after meeting. She did not speak, but set us to prayer, and then sang, "Touch me again, Lord." I felt nothing, but I knew emphatically my time had come. I rose to my feet. Then and there I claimed the gift of the Holy Spirit in dogged committal on Luke 11:13.*

"I had no vision of heaven or of angels; I had nothing. I was as dry and empty as ever, no power

or realization of God, no witness of the Holy Spirit. Then I was asked to speak at a meeting and forty souls came out to the front! I came to realize that God intended me, having asked, to simply take it by faith, and that power would be there. I might see it only by the backward look, but I was to reckon on the fact that God would be with me.

“From that point on, Oswald Chambers ministered with unusual power. His words and writings touched people around the world, especially when he taught, as he frequently did, from his favorite verse, Luke 11:13. And when Oswald died at an early age in Egypt during World War 1, an old Australian soldier, whom he had led to Christ, had a Bible carved in stone for his grave. Its pages were turned to Luke 11:13.”²

Folks, we have access to great power through the Holy Spirit only as we confess Jesus Christ as our Savior and be baptized into His forgiveness. We can have great abilities for doing ministry, but until we ask the Holy Spirit into our lives, the power that can make the greatest use of those abilities will never be with us. We need to confess our sins and ask the Holy Spirit to come here into this place, into each one of us.

So this account of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus is important for us to know and hear because if we ask God, He will grant it to us to receive the Holy Spirit into our own lives as we seek to follow Him. Just as He was needed in the days of the apostles, we need the power of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives, too, so that we can accomplish His work today. It won’t happen in our own strength. It won’t happen in our own wisdom. Revival and awakening will only happen as we humble ourselves to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that He can direct us to “*make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [Jesus] has commanded us*” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“Bible teacher F. B. Meyer once had a firewood factory that employed prisoners. Meyer would give them a job to do, good wages, a place to live, and when possible, spiritual encouragement. In

² (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000] pg. 440-441)

exchange, he expected them to render good employment. They didn't, and he lost money. Finally he fired them all and purchased a circular saw powered by a gas engine. In one hour, it turned out more work than the combined efforts of all the men covered in the course of a whole day.

“One day, Meyer had a little conversation with his saw. ‘How can you turn out so much work?’ he asked. ‘Are you sharper than the saws my men were using? No? Is your blade shinier? No? What then? Better oil or lubrication against the wood?’

“The saw's answer, could it speak, would have been, ‘I think there is a stronger driving power behind me. Something is working through me with a new force. It is not I, it is the power behind me.’

“Meyer later observed that many Christians and many ministers are working in the power of the flesh, in the power of their intellect, their energy, their enthusiastic zeal, but with poor effect. They need to become linked to the power of God through the Holy Spirit.”

So what difference does it make to have this recorded account of the first Christian Pentecost? We can have the assurance that God is not done with us yet. We may think that we're on our last legs as a church, but God has greater plans for us. We may think that we're just going through the motions of ministry, but God has much more for us to do. We may think that this building defines what we do as a church, but God has much more for us. We may bemoan the fact that we have far fewer members today than we did 20 or 30 years ago, but God has not given up on us.

The 120 disciples who had gathered together were given the Holy Spirit's fire, and they turned the whole world upside down. They did not keep Jesus to themselves, but let Jesus become the main part of their lives, and then touched the lives of all those around them with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and thousands came to believe in Jesus in one day. These men and women were faithful to let the Holy Spirit use them in whatever way HE decided, and the church grew, and grew, and grew so that believers in Jesus were in every city, state, nation and continent on the planet.

These faithful followers of Jesus submitted themselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and they changed the world because they did not make it about themselves, but they made it all about Jesus

Christ. They were faithful enough to endure horrible persecution, yet they remained committed to Jesus Christ. With the persecutions that occurred, the faithful were dispersed throughout the world, and everywhere they went, they took Jesus with them, sharing His message of hope and life and love with all they met. They were not afraid of death, and many were martyred for their faith. And they changed the lives of the people, the soldiers, the governmental officials, and even kings and presidents and Caesars.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the believers in Jesus Christ went into all the world to convict people of their sins, convince them that they need Jesus Christ as their Savior, and convert them to faithful believers who themselves become the very evangelists to other peoples.

God has that same goal for us, if we are willing to follow Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. God wants to empower us through His Holy Spirit so that we might also become confident in the message of Jesus Christ, and to help those around us to also believe in Him. But we have to first become connected with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we might become the igniters of faith in the lives of those around us. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time”* (I Peter 5:6). Let’s pray.

Father, we are all sinners in need of Your mighty grace through Jesus Christ the Lord. Today, we come before You, likewise, being cut to the heart through the giving of Your Word. Save us, O Lord! As we confess our sins before You, wash us clean once more and give us Your Holy Spirit so that we might become bold enough to share the wonders of Your great work through Jesus with those around us. Give such a convincing witness that all those around us might become interested in growing closer to Jesus. Give us the wisdom we need to share Your message of hope and life and love. There are so many who need to hear it, so give us the courage to be Your bold witnesses. Fill this place with Your Holy Spirit so that all who pass by know that there is real life here, ready for them to become involved in ministry, too. Fill our hearts with such love for others that we become the igniters that set their hearts on fire for Jesus Christ. Come, Holy Spirit! Come and fill our hearts with Your great love! This we pray in the great and powerful Name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior and glorious Lord. AMEN.