

Bible Study

November 11, 2020 (Lesson 5)

Pentecostal Experience

Continues (Pentecost)

Acts 8: 5-17; 10: 44-48; 11: 1-18; 19: 1-7

Unit Theme: Pentecost

Central Truth: God's will is that every believer in Christ be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Focus: Acknowledge that God still gives the Holy Spirit, and invite the Spirit into our lives.

Context: Various accounts from the first-century Church

Golden Text: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11: 16).

Study Outline:

I. Converts Receive the Spirit (Acts 8: 5-6, 12, 14-17)

II. Gentiles Receive the Spirit (Acts 10: 44-48; 11: 15-18)

III. Disciples Receive the Spirit (Acts 19: 1-7)

INTRODUCTION

Outpourings of the Holy Spirit are detailed in several passages in the Book of Acts. Today's Scripture texts display the nondiscriminatory character, as well as the universality, of the outpouring of the Spirit. These texts show the outpouring of the Spirit transcends boundaries of status, ethnicity, and nationality. In chapter 8, the preaching of the Gospel in Samaria marked a transition from the Jewish to the Gentile mission.

Chapter 10 records Peter's vision at Joppa and the conversion of Cornelius at Caesarea. By pouring out His Spirit on the group that was assembled in the house of Cornelius, God declared that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were to be recipients of the promised Paraclete.

Chapter 11 gives Peter's vindication of his entering a Gentile home and associating with those considered to be "heathen." Whatever his critics might say, the Spirit's outpouring upon the Gentiles was enough proof that Pentecost is for all who respond in faith to the Gospel.

Bible Study

A Pentecostal minister gave this testimony: Sitting beside a Nigerian friend of mine in a Pentecostal congregation in New York was an African-American brother who has never traveled out of the U.S. When an altar call was given for those who wished to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the brother went forward and started praying. Suddenly, he began speaking in an “unknown tongue” that happened to be the Nigerian dialect of my friend! My friend could hardly contain his excitement! In relating this experience to me, he said, “Pentecost is real!” It is real indeed, and it continues.

I. CONVERTS RECEIVE THE SPIRIT (Acts 8: 5-6, 12, 14-17)

A. Philip Proclaims the Gospel in Samaria (vv. 5-6)

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Philip’s preaching of the Gospel in Samaria marked a transition from the Jewish mission to the Gentile mission. The Samaritans were a hybrid race—a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. It was logical, then, that the first step out of Judea should be into Samaria, immediately to the north (cf. 1: 8).

In the Old Testament, Samaria is the name of the capital of the northern kingdom, though sometimes the word refers to the nation. In the New Testament, it often referred to the district lying between Judea on the south and Galilee on the north. Philip, one of the seven deacons (6: 1-7), arrived in Samaria and preached Jesus as the Messiah. Luke did not provide any specific information concerning the city in which Philip preached.

The term translated “preached” (kerusso) frequently refers to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus (8: 5). God entrusted this message to the Twelve and to other messengers—such as Philip and Paul—and they conveyed it with divine authority and courageous confidence. The Samaritans “gave heed” (v. 6); that is, they paid close attention to Philip’s preaching for a long period of time. Philip’s preaching was accompanied by miracles, as happened with the apostles in Jerusalem. This must have boosted the eagerness of the people to listen to what he had to say. However, Luke did not say the Samaritans believed because they witnessed the miracles, but only that they listened.

Luke specifies what kind of miracles happened among the Samaritan population: “Evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed” (v. 7 NIV). The miracles and healings brought “great joy” (v. 8) to the inhabitants of the city in which Philip was staying.

Bible Study

- What did the Samaritans do “with one accord” (v. 6)?

“The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and nations is always being decided.”—Billy Graham

B. Samaritans Receive the Holy Spirit (vv. 12, 14-17)

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

The apostles in Jerusalem “heard” about the conversion of people in Samaria and “sent” Peter and John there (v. 14). The phrase “received the word of God” confirms that at least in the report that reached Jerusalem, the conversions of the Samaritans resulting from Philip’s proclamation were genuine (cf. 2: 41; 11: 1). Although converted, the Samaritan converts had not yet experienced their personal Pentecost. Hence, Luke writes, “The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them” (v. 16 NIV). This is a clear reflection of Luke’s understanding that the gift of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion.

When Peter and John arrived in the Samaritan town where Philip had preached the Gospel, they prayed that the Samaritan converts would receive the Holy Spirit (v. 15). The fact that Peter and John prayed for the reception of the Holy Spirit, rather than explain the Gospel in more detail, confirms they accepted the faith of the Samaritans as authentic.

The Samaritan believers received the Holy Spirit as Peter and John laid their hands on them. There must have been a visible or audible manifestation of the coming of the Spirit, which prompted Simon the sorcerer to think that he might acquire the ability to convey the Spirit from the apostles through money (vv. 18-19). It is safe to assume that the Samaritan Christians spoke in unlearned foreign languages when they received the Holy Spirit.

1. What did the people do “when they believed” (v. 12)?
2. Why did Peter and John go to Samaria, and what was the result (vv. 14-17)?

“‘Laying on of hands’ is a means of contact, not a magical act. There is no supernatural power in the hands of the one ministering. The power resides in God, who honors the faith and obedience of the person.”—R. Keith Whitt

Bible Study

II. GENTILES RECEIVE THE SPIRIT (Acts 10: 44-48; 11: 15-18)

A. The Gentile Pentecost (10: 44-48) ⁴⁴

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. ⁴⁵ And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ⁴⁷ Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Peter compared the “Gentile Pentecost” in Caesarea with the original Pentecost outpouring in Jerusalem. He said, “God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith” (vv. 8-9 NASB). God acted upon the Samaritans in the same manner that He did upon the 120 in the Upper Room.

Caesarea was an important seaport town in Palestine where the Romans had a military headquarters. There, Peter preached the Gospel at the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Peter began his message by declaring, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality” (10: 34 NASB). The description of the arrival of the Spirit as “falling” is Luke’s way of distinguishing a dramatic interruption of the Spirit.

The fact that Cornelius and his household had received the Holy Spirit as a gift from the Lord was indisputable, since they suddenly spoke in unlearned languages. The comment “they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (v. 46) suggests that Hebrew or Aramaic was among the languages being spoken—a language that Cornelius or some of his friends may not have been able to speak, but which Peter would have understood.

Peter acknowledges that Cornelius and his Gentile household had “received the Holy Spirit” (v. 47 NKJV). In speaking to the Jerusalem Council, Peter later explained his reasoning: Since these had unquestionably received the Holy Spirit, it follows that God had cleansed their hearts, making “no distinction” between redeemed Jews and Gentiles (15: 9 NKJV). This must mean God was including these Gentiles among His last-days people (vv. 16-17).

His conclusion that the Samaritan believers should be “baptized” (10: 47)—“immersed in water”—affirmed that resistance to Gentiles being considered people of God should be abandoned. The dramatic outpouring of the Spirit committed Peter and the church in Jerusalem to accepting Cornelius and his Gentile household into the congregation of the

Bible Study

followers of Jesus immediately, without demanding circumcision and full submission to the Torah. It is significant to note that their baptism with the Spirit did not excuse or exclude them from water baptism.

After the baptism of Cornelius and others in Caesarea, Peter was invited to “stay on for a few days” (v. 48 NASB). Apparently he did so, helping solidify the faith of the new believers.

1. When did the Holy Spirit come upon the people (v. 44)?
2. Why is this significant?
3. What “astonished” the Jewish believers (vv. 45-46)?

“God’s impartiality applies to more than just salvation; it applies to all His gifts.” —French Arrington

B. Gentile Pentecostals Revisited (11: 15-18)

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

On his return to Jerusalem, Peter was criticized, not for preaching to Gentiles but for associating with them without regard for the purity laws of the Old Testament. The charge was, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them” (v. 3 NASB). Peter responded by giving his critics a straightforward account of the events that transpired in Caesarea, explaining everything “precisely as it had happened” (v. 4 NIV).

The last part of Peter’s speech reports his proclamation of the Gospel and the Gentiles’ reception of the Holy Spirit, recounting Luke’s report in 10: 44-46. Peter had not finished his proclamation of the good news of Jesus when the Holy Spirit “fell” on Cornelius and his household, just as it happened to the apostles when they too had suddenly spoken in unlearned languages.

Peter added that he remembered Jesus’ promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (11: 16), quoting Jesus’ words from 1: 5 (and recalling the words of John the Baptist in Luke 3: 16). Since God granted the believing Gentiles “the same gift” of the Holy Spirit He had granted to the Jewish believers (Acts 11: 17 NIV), it follows that He could certainly not oppose God

Bible Study

by refusing to baptize them in the name of Jesus, accept their hospitality, and eat with them (10: 48; 11: 3).

Peter’s listeners were convinced by his report and by his conclusions, agreeing that God’s bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles meant they were part of the salvation God had brought to Israel through Jesus (v. 18). The Jewish believers in Jerusalem “praised God” (NIV) for this initially controversial, but now seen as authentic, new development in God’s plan of salvation.

1. Explain the significance of the phrases “as upon us” and “the same gift” (vv. 15, 17 NKJV).
2. Describe the response to Peter’s report (v. 18).

“The experience of tongues was evidence that Cornelius and his friends were immersed in the Spirit and that God had opened the Church to the Gentiles.” —French Arrington

III. DISCIPLES RECEIVE THE SPIRIT (Acts 19: 1-7)

A. A New Doctrine (vv. 1-2) ¹ And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

On his third missionary journey, Paul took the more direct route to Ephesus across the mountainous region (“upper coasts”), rather than the easier, lower route. Ephesus was a pagan city but crucial for the spread of the Gospel, since it was located on major trade routes. The temple of Diana was located there (one of the seven ancient wonders of the world). Soon after his arrival, Paul encountered “certain disciples” (v. 1). In light of the verses that follow, some have suggested these disciples were (1) Jews; (2) early disciples of John, who had never been converted to Christianity; or (3) “Christians” in a special class, who were not quite Christian. However, in Acts, disciples is used exclusively for Christians, individually and corporately. To place them in a special category would limit the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. It is apparent they were in need of further instruction and training.

Paul begins to inquire of their spiritual understanding and formation by asking about their salvation and Holy Spirit baptism. He specifically asks them if they had received the Holy Spirit “since” (“when” or “after”) they believed.

Acts 2: 38 reveals the order as repentance, water baptism, then Spirit baptism. In 8: 12-17, the Samaritans repented and were baptized by Philip, but did not receive the Spirit until the apostles laid hands on them. This pattern is seen in the conversion of Paul, who first believed on the Lord but did not receive Spirit baptism until Ananias prayed for him; then

Bible Study

he was baptized in water (9: 1-18). Cornelius and his household repented and were filled with the Spirit while hearing the preached Word, then submitted to water baptism (10: 44-48). It is clear that becoming a Christian and being filled with the Spirit are separate and distinct, yet the expectation of the Spirit's enduement and manifestation is to be anticipated and sought at the time of salvation.

If the Ephesian "disciples" had never "heard" about the Holy Spirit (19: 1-2), then it would seem impossible that they were Christians, or even true disciples of John, who had proclaimed that the coming Messiah would baptize individuals in the Holy Spirit (John 1: 33). They must have had some knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament and John the Baptist both testify of the Spirit's existence. It seems probable that they had not heard of the fulfillment of the promise recorded in Acts 2. They had not heard that He had been given at Pentecost.

- What was lacking in the Ephesian Christians' discipleship?

"Satan knows that Spiritless evangelicalism is as deadly as Modernism or heresy, and he has done everything in his power to prevent us from enjoying our true Christian heritage."—A. W. Tozer

B. A New Understanding (vv. 3-4)

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Their answer prompts Paul to ask another question, this time concerning their baptism (v. 3). Apparently, Paul knew they had been baptized. He was asking for clarification that would help him understand the boundaries of their spiritual formation. Then he could correct any problems through his skillful use of the Scripture. A proper foundation was very important to Paul (see Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Tim. 2: 19).

Upon hearing they had been baptized in John's "baptism of repentance," Paul explained to them that John's preaching focused on faith in Christ alone (Acts 19: 4). It is unfortunate that Luke did not include the full content of Paul's proclamation to these disciples. It is evident, however, that Paul wanted to make sure they were no longer deficient in their understanding of the nature of John's ministry or God's provision. So often, we think we know where we are spiritually until events or people cause us to examine carefully our standing with God.

Bible Study

- What did the baptism of John anticipate?

“Man is born with his back toward God. When he truly repents, he turns right around and faces God. Repentance is a change of mind.” —D. L. Moody

C. A New Baptism (vv. 5-7)

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.

After hearing Paul’s preaching, they were moved to be baptized again. They wanted to be certain their spiritual foundation and standing were secure and not deficient in any way—an excellent example. This is the only place in the New Testament that re-baptism is mentioned, though it has been a common practice in Pentecostalism in light of this passage. They were immersed by Paul (or perhaps by a companion of Paul’s) and baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 5). The emphasis here and throughout Acts is that those baptized were making a public proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour.

Paul then laid his hands on them and prayed that they would receive the promise of the Father (see Luke 24: 49). The prayer was answered, and the Holy Spirit came upon them with manifestations consistent with those described throughout Acts and the Pauline Epistles. This event is subsequent to belief, even if one rejects these disciples as believers prior to this divine encounter with Paul.

They began to speak “with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19: 6). Prophecy (“to proclaim divine revelation”) can be foretelling, that is, revealing events to come. It can also be forthtelling, or a revelation of pertinent information concerning the present, as we see in Acts. This was not a onetime or temporary manifestation. The Greek tense used indicates that this became a normal part of their Christian experience, as it should be in ours. This Spirit event did not make them Christians; it resulted from a prior acceptance of Christ as Saviour. They were now prepared for service (1: 8). Baptism in the Spirit is not the climax of the Christian experience, but rather the beginning of our journey of holiness, service, and worship, as the verse implies. T

he disciples “were about twelve” in number and are distinguished as “men” (19: 7). Luke often uses “about,” even when being specific (see Acts 1: 15; 10: 3). Either there were no women and children in the group, or Luke defines the group by the number of males, a common first-century practice (cf. Matt. 14: 21). We do know, however, that women were active in prophecy in the early church (Acts 2: 18; 21: 9; 1 Cor. 11: 5).

Bible Study

1. What did the Ephesians' response in verse 5 say about them?
2. What happened when the Holy Spirit "came on them" (v. 6)?

"The willingness to yield our tongue to God may indicate a more profound surrender than almost any other act. The tongue is the primary instrument of expression of the human personality, and until God has dominion over the tongue, His control over us is relatively slight."—Don Basham

CONCLUSION

The power of Pentecost is still relevant for today. God still wants to change hearts and transform lives. In all three accounts in today's lesson, the groups who received the Spirit did so on their own turf, not in a church setting. We must be willing to go to places we do not normally go, minister to people with whom we may not be comfortable, and allow God to get the glory as they receive the blessings. And, we get to be part of it! Isn't God good?

GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

"THEN REMEMBERED I THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW THAT HE SAID, JOHN INDEED BAPTIZED WITH WATER; BUT YE SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST" (Acts 11: 16).

As the people in Cornelius' household spoke in tongues, Peter remembered the words of Jesus regarding people being baptized in the Holy Spirit. This promise is found in Acts 1: 5. It is a word from the risen Lord to His church. It also served to authenticate the ministry of Peter as preaching baptism in the Spirit, rather than John's baptism of repentance which took place in water.

The household of Cornelius was already prepared to receive the fullness of the Gospel. As a God-fearer, Cornelius' heart had already turned in repentance from the ways of sin to the ways of God. Thus, the preaching of Christ served to clarify what God had done in his life and also prepared him for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Today, it is still God's will for us to be saved from our sins, to follow Christ's example by being baptized in water, and to receive the gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Daily Devotions:

M. Spirit-Inspired Judge • Judges 6: 34-40

T. Spirit-Inspired Levite • 2 Chronicles 20: 14-19

W. Spirit-Inspired Prophet • Ezekiel 11: 1-5

Bible Study

T. Spirit-Inspired Mother • Luke 1: 39-45

F. Spirit-Inspired Father • Luke 1: 67-79

S. Spirit-Inspired Martyr • Acts 7: 54-60”

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