Breakthrough – Part 4

# The Surrendered Life

## (Acts 1:1-8)

We are celebrating Pentecost Sunday today and that means different things to different people. I grew up in the church and as a little boy I heard about Pentecost Sunday, but it was like ancient history to me. And so, as I grew up the significance of Pentecost, what it really was, or what it really means was far removed from my own personal experience. Then at the age of 14, I had my first encounter with the Holy Spirit, but I didn’t really experience the breakthrough God intended for me to know.

You see, this is so important, to experience real breakthrough, the Holy Spirit is seeking the surrendered life. That’s what I want to talk to you about today, the surrendered life, and I don’t want to assume that all of you have been taught about Pentecost, because some churches and some backgrounds don’t really talk about it beyond it being a historical event. Some denominations within Christianity treat Pentecost as if it has no real significance in our lives today, but it’s my prayer that as we turn to the Word of God that the Holy Spirit will give us greater revelation.

As we turn our attention to the Word of God, to the integrity of the Word of God, we come with the expectation that it will bring some stability into our lives. The prophet Isaiah declared,

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

And so, we’re going to consider the Word of God regarding this celebration of when God first downloaded the Holy Spirit on his people.

Now, the Jewish Feast of Harvest was held annually 50 days after the Passover and was a celebration of first fruits, giving thanks for the wheat harvest. And so it was, after the offering of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world, 50 days after that Passover, as pilgrims gathered from all over to celebrate the Feast of Harvest in Jerusalem that God poured out his Holy Spirit. This wasn’t just on certain people as before, not just on priests, prophets, and kings, but on all who believe and were seeking the promise of God the Father.

The biblical account of this event is found in the opening pages of the book of Acts which was really a continuation of the gospel of Luke. It was later divided and separated from the gospel to make a clear distinction between Luke’s gospel and the Acts of the Holy Spirit. And so, as we begin reading the book of Acts, Luke is continuing his thoughts, transitioning from the gospel, and he says,

“In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven…” (Acts 1:1-2).

And so immediately we grasp the sense that Jesus is not finished, because the gospel recorded what Jesus began to do and teach. In other words, he is still working, he is still doing it now, but rather than doing it through his physical body, now he is doing it through his mystical body or his spiritual body. And so, Jesus is still completing the work that he began to do, but now “through the Holy Spirit and through the apostles he had chosen” (Acts 1:2).

“After his suffering”, after he was stripped naked, beaten like a thief, nailed to the cross and left to die, humiliated in front of everybody. After his suffering, the powerful now seeming powerless, the overcomer looking like he has been overcome, Jesus died like an ordinary man. But “after his suffering he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

I love that because there are some things that God will only reveal to people who believe in him. Jesus said, don’t throw your pearls to the pigs, and so the God who had walked among them every day for three years now started showing up for visits. I’m not just talking about goosebumps and heat flashes, but I mean real visits from God, and for the next 40 days he visits giving them many convincing proofs that he was alive.

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

And so, now the disciples are confused, trying to figure out what to do, and so when they met together, they asked him,

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

In other words, in spite of all the miracles, the sick healed, the lepers cleansed, the dead raised, still in the back of their minds they want to rule and reign. And everybody has a reason why they follow you, and some of Jesus disciples were getting political, wondering if this was the time when Israel would be freed from Roman oppression

“Jesus, when are you going to set up your kingdom?”

And so, the disciples are looking for Jesus to set up his throne like King David, they’re prepared to get the army ready, but Jesus wants them to know that he’s not a king like that, he’s not going to advance with politics, violence, and bloodshed. In fact, he’d already told them,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36).

And so, his disciples still didn’t get it, so he said to them,

“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7).

In other words, it’s none of your business when or how all that stuff will happen. And so many other great leaders conquered the world by demonstrating their power with the sword and bloodshed, but Jesus said,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8).

In other words, my kingdom doesn’t advance with the sword, he’s not going to win over our hearts with fear, threats, or force, but he conquers the heart in a different way.

You see, Jesus didn’t come to conquer like the kings of this world, he came to conquer from the inside out, he came to take the evil heart out. He said,

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

And so, he’s not going to do it with the sword, not by force, but he’s going to do it with love. Because it is the power of the Holy Spirit that changes the heart of a man or woman, so that you can function and live for the glory of God.

The kingdom of God comes in a way unlike anything the world has ever seen, it’s an entirely different type of invasion, it will be a different kind of advancement, a different take over leading to our surrender. The Lord said it will not be through hate, it will not be by might,

“Nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6).

And so, the Kingdom of God and Christ will advance through a power that is driven by love, and it’s this power we must take advantage of, because this is the solution for the problems we see in the world. This is the power that is offered to us today, Jesus said,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

And so, one day according to the time the Father has set by his own authority Jesus will come and reign, he will sit on the throne of David and nations will bring him glory. But until that day Jesus is not aiming to conquer kings and nations, he is aimed to win your heart, because he wants all of your love, he wants all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind (Matthew 22:37).

Now, I want you to notice something because this is interesting, this passage in Acts chapter one occurs sometime during this period of 40 days following the resurrection, and it was during that time that Jesus promised his disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. But if you look in John’s gospel, on the evening of Jesus resurrection, John tells us that Jesus came into a locked room and stood among the disciples, they were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. And John chapter 20, verse 22, tells us that he breathed on them and said,

“Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

And so, after three years of ministry with Jesus, three years of healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those who have leprosy, and driving out demons the disciples only had the Holy Spirit with them. We know this because earlier in John chapter 14, Jesus said,

“You know him, (speaking of the Holy Spirit) for he lives with you…” (John 14:17).

And so, for three years they were with Jesus, but the Holy Spirit was not in them, he was only with them.

In other words, this was the same as the prophets, priests, and kings of the past, the Holy Spirit was with them, and in situations such as the disobedience of Samson, Eli, or King Saul the Holy Spirit would depart. And so, we must recognize that this is still Old Testament, I know we consider the gospel to be part of the New Testament, but the Bible says,

“Where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives” (Hebrews 9:16-17, NKJV).

And so, prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples were still operating under the Old Covenant; and the Holy Spirit was with them but there wasn’t any change in them. In other words, they still argued, fought, and cheated one another; they still denied Jesus, they forsook him, and Judas even betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver.

That’s why Jesus came to them after the resurrection and breathed the Holy Spirit into them, because this was something greater, this is why he said,

“It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7).

And when they received the Holy Spirit, the moment the Holy Spirit went from being with them, to being in them, they were changed, they were born again. Now they were Spirit filled disciples and even though Jesus was no longer there physically they had a supernatural confidence because he was with them spiritually.

And so, today, on this side of the resurrection, when you put your trust in Jesus, God gives you a new heart, he gives you a new spirit, and you begin to change on the outside, because you were changed on the inside. But as we come to Acts chapter 1, verse eight, Jesus takes it up another level, he says,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8).

And so, the disciples have transitioned, progressing from the Holy Spirit being with them, to the Holy Spirit being in them, now to the promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon them. And Jesus says you will receive power, not power to start your own business, not power to make a name for yourself, but he says power to be my witnesses

“In Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Now, you would’ve thought that the disciples were already witnesses because they had been with Jesus for three years. They saw him walking on water, calming storms, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, feeding the multitudes, healing the sick and the lame, but that wasn’t the kind of witnesses he was talking about. In other words, they may have seen a lot of things, but they were not witnesses yet because the witness hadn’t come.

You see, just as the Lord promised Moses, “I will help you speak and will teach you what to say (Exodus 4:12). The Holy Spirit is the witness and Jesus said,

“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

God was ready to send the witness, and so Jesus told his disciples in verse four to go to Jerusalem and wait for it. If you don’t learn anything else this morning, I want to challenge you to learn to wait for it, because you’ve got to have enough faith to wait for it.

The disciples did and so they sat down and they waited on it. He said, I’m going to send it, and they waited for that divine download. Ten days later the Bible says in Acts chapter 2,

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4).

For decades following this event the Scriptures record the followers of Jesus being supernaturally empowered to be witnesses. Today, the promise of Pentecost remains, to fill you with the Holy Spirit and empower you to be witnesses, so that you are able to fulfill your purpose, sharing the good news about Jesus as his witnesses and making disciples of the nations. And so, the promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not just so that you can have greater intimacy with God, or a special prayer language, it’s so that you can have a bold, powerful, and effective Christian life, reaching the lost and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

The challenge for most of us today, if you’ve received the Holy Spirit, if you’ve been born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, is how to surrender completely to that which you have received. The Bible says,

“You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13).

I think the problem for many Christians today is surrendering to the Holy Spirit, letting the Holy Spirit live through them, and stop trying to be in control of everything. In fact, the Bible tells us,

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25, NKJV).

And so, if you want to release more of the Holy Spirit’s power in your life you have to start working on your relationship with the Holy Spirit. You live by the Spirit, cultivating intimacy with the Holy Spirit, not by trying harder, but by being led by the Spirit. You do it by trying differently, by daily surrendering to the Holy Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and keeping in step with the Spirit.

When you let go, giving the Holy Spirit control, letting him take the driver seat, you are acknowledging that you are no longer in control. It’s at that moment that you become truly free as you let the Spirit live through you. The apostle Paul says it this way in Galatians chapter 5, he said, you were called to be free.

“But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love … So, I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Galatians 5:13, 16).

In other words, the solution to so much that you have been struggling with in life is to surrender to the Holy Spirit. Live by the Spirit because the more you yield to the Holy Spirit, the less you will find yourself gratifying the desires of the sinful nature.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two what we see is the expression of that complete surrender to the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit came to rest on each of them, they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. And so, this is why the Bible encourages believers to “pray in the Holy Spirit,” because it’s an expression of that surrender. And when we speak in tongues, praying in the Holy Spirit, the Bible says that you,

“Build yourselves up in your most holy faith” (Jude 20).

In other words, it’s a spiritual workout, we build ourselves up, it’s building your spiritual muscles. The apostle Paul says it this way, he says,

“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself … unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified” (1 Corinthians 14:4-5).

The term to edify oneself means to enlighten, to inform, or improve yourself, because…

“Anyone who speaks in a tongue … utters mysteries with his spirit” (1 Corinthians 14:2).

but when there is interpretation, it strengthens the whole church. And so, when we surrender to the Holy Spirit, praying in tongues, the Bible says,

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. (Because) we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26).

And so, if you are a born-again, Spirit filled believer, you can release the power of the Holy Spirit that you have received by surrendering. Walking in the Spirit, yielding to the Holy Spirit, being still in his presence, spending time with and cultivating intimacy with the Holy Spirit. This will bring about times of refreshing and spiritual renewal changing things in the spiritual realm.

Pentecost was the beginning of the Spirit moving in the church, empowering the church, but it really wasn’t anything new. In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, and began creating by first speaking the world as we know it into existence. Because we serve a speaking God, the Holy Spirit speaks, and this is the normative experience of the church.

In fact, we see in Acts chapter 8, that when Peter and John placed their hands on believers, praying for them,

“They received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17).

And again, in Acts chapter 19,

“When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6).

And so, this isn’t a new teaching, this is the power of Pentecost. Jesus talked about it, the apostle talked about it, and the church has experienced it down through the centuries. In fact, as a child I remember my parents receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, because this is just a normal part of walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

This is Jesus empowering his church to be the body of Christ, John the Baptist declared this telling the crowds,

“I baptize you with water, but (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8).

I believe that Jesus wants to baptize people in the Holy Spirit right now, there are those of you here today and God has been looking forward to this day because he has wanted to connect with you in a deeper way.

There are others of you who are born again, you have already received the Holy Spirit, but if you don’t speak in tongues, I want to encourage you to surrender your tongue to the Holy Spirit. I believe God is going to touch you in a powerful way this morning.

As we close, we want to make room in our lives for the Holy Spirit, surrendering to the Holy Spirit, expecting miracles and praying bold prayers. In fact, Jesus promised, he said,

“How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

And so, the church obeyed Jesus command to stay in Jerusalem, they prayed and waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit. The challenge for many of us is that we don’t surrender to the Holy Spirit and so we don’t experience his power and we don’t receive the refreshing of the Spirit. But Jesus intends for the church to live by the Spirit, to have surrendered lives, so that he can produce the righteous character in us that we need. He wants to supernaturally empower us to share the gospel, to share the good news of Jesus, to make disciples so that we see the Spirit of God moving in our community. Today, we’ve got to give the Holy Spirit room to move, we’ve got to stop playing it safe, we’ve got to have surrendered lives.

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