

Evotional

Date: 11th May 2008 (pm).

Speakers: Neil Durling.

Message title: "Repent and receive the Holy Spirit."



Bible passage: Acts 2:14-41.

The message in brief:

The Holy Spirit has descended on the one hundred and twenty followers and the crowd are amazed and perplexed - they're bewildered. Peter interrupts them with a message; not like my first sermon in Rusthall to six (gracious) elderly people and a dog. It was more like William Wallace in *Braveheart* who turns a nation against tyranny (at least according to Mel Gibson!).

One hundred and twenty unwashed men stand before the crowd, the eleven disciples come forward, and Peter stands up to speak. **PAUSE! WHOA.. STOP.**

This is Peter speaking, the guy who denied and deserted Jesus. How dare he now stand up and speak for Jesus! Peter is a loser, but he's in good company in the Bible - there are murderers, liars, adulterers, terrorists, prostitutes, corrupt officials, traitors, to name but a few... Why can he speak for Jesus? Because God uses losers, and he loves them (and you and me) and fills us all with his Holy Spirit when we ask him to.

Peter tells the crowd that they aren't drunk; it's only 9am! What they're seeing is the outpouring that Joel prophesied. He then tells them that Jesus was accredited by God - they killed him, but then God raised him (death couldn't hold him). Even King David wrote of Jesus in Psalm 16 - he saw that Jesus would be exalted and pour out the Holy Spirit (it is Jesus who refreshes us with the Holy Spirit, he does it personally). Peter tells them plainly that God has made Jesus, who they crucified, Lord and Christ.

During the Azusa Street Revival one of the leaders, Frank Bartleman, wrote of his experience on 3rd July, 1906: "...my whole being seemed to flow down before him, like wax before the fire. I lost all consciousness of time or space, being conscious only of his wonderful Presence. I worshipped at his feet. It seems a veritable Mount of Transfiguration. I was lost in the pure Spirit. The Lord had said nothing to us, but only overwhelmed our spirits by his presence. He had come to strengthen and assure us for his service. We knew now we were workers with him, fellowshippers of his sufferings, in the ministry of 'soul travail'. Real soul travail is just as definite in the spirit as natural human birth-pangs. The simile is almost perfect in its sameness. No soul is ever born without this. All true revivals of salvation come this way."

The crowds response to Peter is that *they were cut* (pierce thoroughly, agitate violently, or prick) *to the heart* and asked: "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter tells them they must repent (180 degree turn of the heart) and be baptised (in their day this was one harmonious action). When they do this they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is promised for everyone. I think the Holy Spirit has sometimes been made out to be too spooky or too wet. I imagine the Spirit to be like a Linebacker in American Football (the one who runs in front of the person with the ball to protect them from the opposition, guiding them towards a touchdown and encouraging them to keep going.)

Peter continued, and the 3,000 who accepted the message were baptised. Where were they baptised? Who did it? Imagine the mess! Having read about the Welsh Awakening (1904) over the past few weeks, it seems that God often works wonderfully out of mess. It started amongst the youth in New Quay, West Wales and then Evan Roberts (26 yr. old apprentice working at a forge) decided to *devote his whole life to Jesus Christ and his work*. One writer comments that "Evan Roberts violated almost every church growth principle. He was neither educated nor eloquent. The only thing he had going for him was the Holy Spirit's anointing. That was all he needed." (Derek Hills) As the movement grew, the prayer "Bend us Oh Lord!" (in response to God's love) became the cry of Wales. Many would have agreed with Seth Johnson's thought: "The irresistible possessed me." 250,000 became Christians in this two year period.

Peter says we should repent and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, two questions:

1: How do I repent?

We have to be "cut to the heart". When this happens we could do worse than follow Evan Robert's guidance from one hundred years ago:

- a: All sin must be confessed to God and repented of.
- b: Get rid of everything that is questionable in our lives.
- c: Obey the Holy Spirit.
- d: Publicly confess Jesus as Saviour.

2: How do I receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Physically like a present: Close our eyes and open our hands, simply trusting that God will give us what he has promised us.

Question: Do I need a refreshing touch and infilling from the Holy Spirit?

A prayer: Dear Father, I repent of my sin and receive the gift of your Holy Spirit. Amen.