

Sermon Text: Acts 2:37-47 ³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Sermon Theme: Amazing Acts of the Holy Spirit

- 1. With the confessors of Christ**
- 2. With the conversion of souls to Christianity**
- 3. With the religious fellowship in the Church**
- 4. With the charity of the early Christians**

In the name of Jesus Christ, who promised to send us a special Helper who would aid us in our faith life, our Christian fellowship, and our mission as Christian witnesses, dear fellow redeemed;

Looking back to the events of the first Pentecost Sunday and the early days of the church, is there anything about the work of the Holy Spirit that strikes you as being truly amazing? Are you at all filled with marvel at the supernatural way the Spirit of God gathered hundreds of thousands of people around the apostles to hear the preaching of God's Word, namely through that sound which came from heaven, making its way through the streets of the city like a mighty rushing wind? How about the fire-like tongues that suddenly appeared on the apostles' heads or the miraculous linguistic feat of their being able to speak in different foreign languages which they had never learned?

Miraculous, supernatural acts would quite understandably cause us to be amazed and astounded, because they are above and beyond our realm of everyday natural occurrences. But then, since we have heard about these miraculous acts by the Holy Spirit over and over again from our childhood, perhaps the wonder we once had as children has worn off.

Looking over the other acts of the Holy Spirit recorded in our text we find that they are of such a nature we should never really cease to marvel at them. They are truly amazing, because the Holy Spirit brought about a number of extraordinary changes in sinful man that we would not

naturally expect to happen.

First of all, the opening words of our text tell of the apostle Peter concluding his Pentecost sermon meditation. Upon hearing of the apostle preaching in public about the crucified and risen Savior to a vast multitude numbering into the thousands, some might think what is so amazing about that, aside from the fact that there were so many in assembly. Well, consider what happened with Peter about a month and a half prior to this when he was in the courtyard of the high priest during Jesus' hearing. You know how he vehemently denied and disowned the Lord Jesus three times when he felt the heat of being identified with Jesus whom the Jewish leaders intended to put to death. Fearing for his life, we don't hear of him staying by Jesus' side until He died like he claimed he would. And when Sunday came, Peter was cowering behind locked doors along with the rest of the disciples, who were afraid that the Jews would also arrest them and put them to death.

What a complete change seen in Peter and the other apostles on Pentecost Sunday! Instead of denying Christ and running and hiding for his life, Peter is out in the open, boldly confessing Christ before a vast number of Jews in Jerusalem. Were there any Jewish leaders in the crowd? Perhaps. But Peter didn't show any signs of being afraid of what they could do to him.

What caused this complete turn about? It wasn't a matter of Peter putting his mind to it or having a stiff upper lip. The risen Lord Jesus told His followers to wait in Jerusalem until He sent His Helper to them. This Helper who was none other than the Holy Spirit would not only remind them of His teachings, but He would also give them the spiritual courage to testify of Him, even in the face of threatening opposition. Peter's courageous witnessing of Christ in the stronghold of Jesus' enemies was due to an amazing act of the Holy Spirit giving him the strength of heart to do it.

This amazing act of the Spirit extended beyond the apostles of Christ. When a religious persecution broke out in Jerusalem, causing Christians to flee for their lives, the Bible tells us that wherever they went they shared the gospel of Christ with their new neighbors. They too had the courage to publicly spread the message of the Savior.

Do you ever have a timid and fearful spirit about talking to others about your Christian beliefs and about their Savior so that you remain silent? Oh, you may not experience the fear of great persecution like the early Christians. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus does not want us to hide our Christian light under a bushel basket out of any sense of fear. Even as He promised and sent the Holy Spirit to help the apostles and other Christians in that day to overcome their fears of speaking out for Christ, so also He does the same for us. The question is, are we drawing upon that divine source of strength and courage by praying the Holy Spirit to come to us and embolden our spirits to testify of Christ? Pray the Holy Spirit to help you both to see the opportunities God presents you with to testify of Christ and to have the courage to take advantage of those opportunities.

The second amazing act of the Holy Spirit revealed in our text is the kind of response Peter's sermon received, especially when we consider his audience. In the large crowd gathered to listen to Peter were Jews who just a month and half ago were involved in having Jesus put to death. Peter drew attention to this in his sermon when he said to them, "Him (Jesus Christ), being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death." (2:23) Even though these Jews did not personally pound the nails through Jesus' hands and feet at His crucifixion, still they had a part in it when they pressured Pontius Pilate to send Jesus to His death when they cried out for Him to be crucified.

Now we find these same people, who had cried out for Jesus to be put to death, being stricken with a guilty conscience and crying out for mercy with a sorrowful spirit for having killed the Lord of glory. And then we hear of them receiving Jesus in faith as their Lord and Savior from sin, and being baptized in His name in order to receive the gift of the Spirit. What an amazing turn around - from crying out for Jesus' blood to be shed to putting their trust in Jesus' shed blood for the forgiveness of their blood guiltiness.

If you would have been alive in that day, would you have expected such a change of heart in those enemies of Christ? Are you acquainted with any individuals which you have written off as being beyond the hope of their being converted to Christianity or of fallen Christians being led to repentance, because they have shown themselves to be so ungodly, irreligious, and rebellious? Never give up hope, for consider the amazing act of the Holy Spirit in turning around the hearts of so many unbelieving Jews on Pentecost Sunday, even 3,000 souls on that single day.

How did the Holy Spirit accomplish such an amazing act? It wasn't due to the apostle Peter having a charming and charismatic personality nor was it due to him speaking with great eloquence. No. If you will carefully look over Peter's sermon recorded in the Bible, you will find Peter proclaiming God's Word in a clear, simple, and straight forward manner, as he lovingly exposed the sin his hearers were guilty of, gave testimony of Jesus as the Lord who lived and died and rose again as their Savior. And in response to their plea for mercy and salvation, Peter simply said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." The Holy Spirit carried out His amazing act of turning the hearts of so many to faith in Christ Jesus that day by working through the Word of God that was proclaimed to convict, convince, and convert hearts to faith.

We also find reference to the Holy Spirit using baptism as an amazing means of creating faith in the hearts of babies so that they too were blessed with the gift of God's forgiveness and eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. For right after Peter speaks of adults being baptized for the remission of sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, he goes on to say, "For the promise is to you and to your children," yes, even to their little babes in arms.

This basic means by which the Holy Spirit carried out His amazing act of conversion on Pentecost Sunday should never be lost on us. Otherwise we could very easily be caught up in trying to gain or regain souls for God's kingdom through the popular use of manmade programs, gimmicks, and superficial trappings. The apostle Paul reminds us that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom.1:16)

Still another amazing act of the Holy Spirit is the religious unity with which He blessed the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem. We find evidence of this in verses 42 & 46 of our text where it says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God."

As those early Christians joined in various acts of Christian fellowship like the singing of hymns, praying, and celebrating the Lord's Supper, they did so on the basis of oneness of mind and heart, that is, they shared a common confession of faith. They were in complete agreement on the teachings of Christ, for as our text reveals they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

To hear this may not sound so amazing to those of us who have grown up in our church body, for by the grace of God we have enjoyed such a unity of mind and heart. But then, look around in Christendom at large and you will find the vast majority of church groups, who confess Christ, not fully agreed in the teachings of Christ nor do they believe it necessary or important. In fact, you will hear them say that it is impossible for Christians to share a common confession of faith.

When we consider the prevalence of this practice and way of thinking, and also take into account our own personal shortcomings in spiritual matters, is it not an amazing act of the Holy Spirit that He makes it possible for us to enjoy Christian unity. Like the early Christians, as we humbly give ear to and bow to the words and teachings of Christ, the Spirit of God opens our eyes to see, our minds to understand, our hearts to believe and our mouths to confess the gracious truths of our Savior God.

The final feature of our text that draws our attention to an amazing act of the Holy Spirit is the Christian spirit of mutual love and generous acts of Christian charity. In verses 44 & 45 we read of this, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”

What an amazing spirit of Christian community! The members of the congregation in Jerusalem had such a loving concern for all of its members that when any of them were in need of earthly goods, they were taken care of. In order to help one another out if there wasn't enough money in their bank account, they went so far as to sell off personal property so that they could contribute to the cause. This is what we might call sacrificial giving. When you consider our natural tendency of being selfish and self-serving, it is truly amazing to hear of such a display of Christian love and generosity.

This kind of spirit can only be possible by the working of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of Christ. In and through that message of good news, the Spirit of God changes our cold, selfish hearts into loving, generous self-giving hearts as we keep before our eyes the ultimate act of love and self-giving sacrifice found in our Savior Jesus. The Lord of glory became poor for us so that we could become spiritually and eternally rich through Him. Jesus gave up His heavenly throne to become the lowliest servant of all sinful mankind. He who was God over all who commands our obedience became a man so that He could submit Himself to and keep all His commandments for us. And He who will sit in judgment of all mankind at the end of the world suffered the heavenly Father's hellish judgment for all our transgressions so that we could be declared not guilty and forgiven through Him. This is the powerful message that the Holy Spirit uses to change our selfish, self-serving hearts into selfless, self-giving hearts that lovingly and generously help fellow Christians in need. What an amazing act of the Holy Spirit this is!

Thank God the Holy Spirit for such amazing acts that He carries out in our midst. May we never cease to marvel at them. And may the Spirit of God continue those amazing acts among us for Jesus' sake. Amen

