

Going Together

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd like to grab a Bible and turn to Acts chapter 2, that would be fantastic. It would be helpful to keep that open in front of you. I'm going to have to nip off before the end of this session, unfortunately, because of prior family commitments.

But I didn't want to let any of that get in the way of me spending the day with you. And I'm really glad I did. I've had many good conversations with a number of you today. Enjoyed being here and being welcomed as part of the family for the day.

So I want to thank you for the privilege and I want to encourage you. I'm grateful for the many evidences of grace that I see in you and that your pastors comment on.

I've been enjoying chatting with some of your elders as well and hear the ways in which they are encouraged in their heart at the strength and the vitality of the church, but also of their vision for what's next for the coming years and how you guys might take things up a level by the grace of God.

That's what we're all seeking to do as churches in Edinburgh, isn't it? When faced with so many people facing a lost eternity. And actually, that's what I want to focus on just now. The last talk and this talk are almost a little bit of a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, really.

[1 : 12] We've talked at the start of the day about the importance of what it means to share our life together and the way in which the Spirit who lives in us helps us to relate to one another even as we relate to God.

The second session really helped us to think through what it means to grow together and how we need to be filled with the Spirit of God and live among the people of God at the same time.

Now, I think in this third session, we'll see that the Spirit of God filling the people of God is to enable us to speak to other people about God.

So let's read from Acts chapter 2 and we'll read from verse 1 and following. Here's what God's Word says. Now there were, staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. And when they heard this sound, the crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked, Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?

[2 : 39] Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Jerusalem, Cretans and Arabs.

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, They've had too much wine.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowds, Fellow Jews and all you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet 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.

[3 : 51] I will show wonders in the heavens above, signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Men of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him, I saw the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices. My body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

[5 : 07] But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on the throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father, the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear.

For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this.

God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you, and for your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.

[6 : 21] Amen. This is God's words. Well, few born-again believers would ever consider belonging to a church that didn't take evangelism seriously, would they?

Few people who would call themselves Christians would ever want to be a church that is unconcerned for the lost around them, the members of their family, friends, who are lost without God and without hope.

Few bona fide believers would ever want to belong to a church family that had no consideration for the three billion people across the world who do not know Jesus and who need to hear about Jesus in order to be saved.

Yet one of the most common deficiencies that we can see in churches, and I think even across our nation, is that the majority of money and time can be spent on serving and sustaining the organisation rather than reaching the lost.

Why is that? Well, it's not because we don't believe the gospel for ourselves. We do. It's not that we don't really care about people's plight apart from knowing Jesus. I think we do. It's not that we actually have logical reasons for our practice in church life.

[7 : 36] Actually, we don't have logical reasons. So what is it? What is it for you? What is it that for you as a church family or even as individuals makes evangelism tough?

Where is the reluctance to share the gospel? Sometimes it can be put down to a fear of man. We worry about what people will think of us. Sometimes it's down to a lack of vision.

We've just ended up doing what we do. And actually, we're very programmatic as a church family without actually being concerned for the people out there. Sometimes it's just a lack of planning. We never really seem to make time for non-Christians. Well, if we do, if we don't make time for non-Christians, we really can't expect them to ever come to a point where they hear the gospel and believe it.

So it seems that there's some disconnect somewhere. And what I want us to see to encourage your heart is that what we see in Acts chapter 2 is true for you.

[8 : 40] It strengthens and encourages you. At least I hope it will. So let me map this out for you. I've got three points in this in particular. I've tried to make it memorable for you by using a line from a song changing one of the words slightly.

You'll know the Getty song where we sing filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name. Well, point one is filled with power. There's a word I've changed.

Power to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name. Points one, two, and three. I'm impressed by that. I don't like it. I don't mind. Anyway. Graham liked it. First of all, I want us to look at filled with power. Let's see if it'll work. I keep pointing to the screen where I'm supposed to point over there. Never mind. Acts chapter 2 is all about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, of course, not an impersonal force. He's a person. He is God. He is the third person of the Trinity. He possesses all the attributes of divinity. He's everything the Father is except the Father.

[9 : 40] Everything the Son is except the Son. He is deity. And what does he do? Well, the Old Testament tells us that he was involved in creating and sustaining the world. That one of the main things he did was he gave prophets and kings in the Old Testament the ability to speak God's word.

So we would read the Holy Spirit spoke through your father, David, your servant, David, sorry. But in Jesus' ministry we see the Holy Spirit working as well and Luke is very careful to record for us in his own gospel account in the events of Jesus' baptism because he wants us to see that Jesus is empowered by the Spirit.

So you remember at Jesus' baptism you both heard something and you saw something as well. So you heard the Father's voice so this is Heaven's audible affirmation of the King who is being baptized.

This is my Son whom I love with Him I'm well pleased. And then you had this visible accreditation if you like of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit descending like a dove.

There was something that was heard that was something that was seen. And Luke's careful to show us that because he wants us to see that Jesus is empowered for a preaching ministry, a speaking ministry by the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 58] And that's what we're going to see in Acts 2. There's a direct link between filling and speaking. And again this is what we see at Pentecost. The disciples who are filled they heard something and they saw something.

So what they heard verse 2 suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from Heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Now I'm sure most of us know what it's like to roll the window down in the car and stick your head out and you hear it.

No? Just me? Okay. Maybe you've just heard you've been up the top of Arthur's seat on a windy day half blown off but you hear the roar of the wind across your ears.

Yes? Good. Well we hear that and I think that's the kind of sound the disciples are hearing. And I say kind of it is a sound. Do you know Luke doesn't actually tell us that there was any wind.

It's just the sound like a wind. So the sound itself is described by Luke as coming from Heaven.

That alerts us to the fact that these are the acts of the risen Lord Jesus.

[11 : 57] In chapter 1 Jesus had said go into Jerusalem wait for the gift I have promised. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you'll be my witnesses. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria ends of the earth.

That's what they heard. They heard the wind. So something's happening. The Spirit's being poured out. What they saw verse 3 tongues of fire. Fire was a common theme in Theophanies in the Old Testament when God manifested his presence in some form.

You remember Moses and the burning bush? There's an example of a Theophany in the Old Testament. So the bush was on fire but not burned up. And I think you've got something significant going on here where we have these tongues of fire separating okay that's important and resting on everyone.

Every one of the guys who was in the room. Now God's Spirit is not just present in his people corporately as like one big tongue of fire if you like. No, every individual is touched by the fire which tells us that no longer would it be special individuals like in the Old Testament like Moses or David who were anointed.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit won't be just for select people like prophets capital P prophets and kings. It's for everyone.

[13 : 15] It's for the whole church. And here's what it meant. With these signs came the filling of the Holy Spirit. But what did it mean? What did it signify? It marked the dawning of this new era in salvation history.

The age of the church. An age of mission. Where all people need to hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it marked this tremendous outpouring and spreading of the Holy Spirit's ministry. Now for the 120 that were gathered here the wind and the fire were outward signs of the inner reality that God has made his home in them.

And that inner presence was then evidenced by what was produced in them. Words. News. Gospel. Proclamation. Okay. When the Holy Spirit lives in you you have power to proclaim. Power to proclaim. And that's what we see.

[14:17] Power to proclaim. You are enabled as a Christian to talk to others about Jesus. Now Luke is very very careful in this to show a direct link between filling and speaking.

Okay. Filling and speaking. Verse 4. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

And this link between the filling of the Spirit and speaking is seen throughout the passage actually. In chapter 2 verse 14 Peter filled with the Holy Spirit raised his voice addressed the crowd.

You've got two words in there that refer to him proclaiming. 2.17 I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Here's the promise from of old your sons and daughters will prophesy declare the word of God.

2.18 I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy declare the word of God. Okay. Now tongues. Let me be clear the tongues here are languages that people from other parts of the world can understand.

[15:23] And Luke says there are people in that crowd from 15 different cities or regions. The tongues here in verse 4 are the languages in verses 6 and 8. So they say how is it that each of us hears them in our own native tongue language use whatever word you feel like.

It's the same word. They were speaking foreign languages they had never learned and you can see how that would come in handy when you're called to reach the nations that you've never ever been to who speak languages that you don't have a clue what it sounds like.

I mean that would be like me bursting into fluent Mandarin without having ever been taught how to speak Mandarin. I'm not going to some of you are looking at me expectantly here no I'm not.

Then what does he say not just tongues so people speaking in languages he talks about prophecy and the spirit comes his people speak that's essentially what prophecy is in the broad sense of the word as the spirit comes the result is this miraculous intelligible proclamation of the mighty works of God to all nations.

Do you see that? In the text there is a direct link between filling and speaking that says something to us doesn't it? But not only is there a direct link between filling and speaking there is a direct link between filling and fearlessness.

[16:52] drunkenness this is what the drunkenness accusation in the text is all about. The crowds hear a commotion and verse 13 they say oh they've had too much wine now why would they think that?

Why would they think that? Well think about what happens when a person gets drunk they lose their inhibitions don't they? What do you think why do you think people sing in the streets or at night or why do you think karaoke gets more popular as the night goes on?

Well it's because people lose their inhibitions and alcohol does that to people alcohol is a depressant that doesn't mean that it makes you depressed it means that it dulls your brain function and the reason people lose their inhibitions is because it kind of just makes you stupid but not with the Holy Spirit when he fills you when you're intoxicated by him if you like he gives you joy by sharpening your awareness to realities so heavenly that you lose your sense of fear and you lose your inhibitions and express a fearless joy in declaring with words the great truths that you have come to know in your heart and actually if you have it in your head that Christ died and to live is Christ and to die is gain for you then actually going to an unreached people group a million miles away will be no deterrent to you we do not fear those who can kill the body do we yeah we speak we declare the words of God we as we are filled with the spirit are filled with this ability to speak but there's a direct link between filling and fearlessness as well you know these people here who are hearing this message and hearing the noise and the commotion of the other languages and so on they're saying you can't be that happy you can't be that bold without being drunk that's the world's explanation for Christianity but listen to

Peter's explanation verse 15 these people are not drunk as you suppose it's only nine in the morning no this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel in those last days God says I will pour out my spirit on all people and that's what leads to Peter's sermon think about who is doing the

speaking here now these are the disciples as a group of individuals in the gospel stories they are presented as dull confused rash selfish and downright scared throughout they had spines of jelly when Jesus was arrested they abandoned him and ran for their lives verse 11 be now they're all boldly declaring the mighty works of God who cares about the Romans who cares about the Sanhedrin who can do to us what they just did to Jesus 40 days before no there is a fearlessness that comes with the filling of the

Holy Spirit a boldness that comes with the filling of the Holy Spirit a desire to proclaim the words of life when you're filled with the Holy Spirit zoom in on Peter Peter Peter with the foot shaped mouth you know there won't be many people in heaven who can claim to have rebuked the Son of God it's not his best moment but now look at him verse 14 Peter stood up with the eleven raised his voice addressed the crowd fearless fearless everything has changed with the coming of the Spirit that's what Jesus almost kind of gave a trailer for that's what Luke is trying to show us in his explanation of this account the violence and the loudness of the wind had drowned out all their puny fears the flames on their heads had ignited their hearts with an unquestionable unquenchable passion for the Lord's glory and every ounce of timidity and hesitancy and uncertainty is swallowed up in the knowledge of

[21 : 08] God's greatness and what he is doing as his glory will spread across the earth as the waters cover the sea and then as a result Peter and the apostles will preach with incredible boldness and with unwavering zeal they would unashamedly tell the world about Jesus now listen if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if you love him with all your heart the same Holy Spirit lives in you the same Holy Spirit lives in us and we are filled so that we might have that deposit guaranteeing what is to come us we are filled that we might with boldness approach the throne of grace seeking mercy and in prayer make great requests of a great God we are filled with the Spirit the Spirit who helps us change with ever increasing glory into the likeness of

Jesus but we would be in error to think or to omit rather the fact that we have been filled so that we can speak filled to proclaim with a fearless joy the good news of Jesus Christ so why don't we do it maybe we've convinced ourselves that the Holy Spirit only lives in us as a deposit maybe we've convinced ourselves that the Spirit only lives in us as a chisel shaping us into the likeness of Jesus maybe we forget all those things accompanied by the power to proclaim that work in us a joyful loss of inhibition and a passion for sharing the best news ever salvation in Jesus name and that's exactly what Peter goes on to proclaim I think in our fear fearfulness we keep our mouths shut at times I've experienced that in my own life I think we're scared of losing our reputation we're worried about what people will think of us people will think ill of us when the person who first told me that she believed in Jesus so I became a Christian when I was 19 I didn't grow up in a church my teenage years were turbulent shall we say when the girl who first told me about the gospel first explained it to me that the reason why she believed the way what she believed and did what she did I just thought you're nutcase I did I thought I thought only people like I thought it was like believing that Star Wars was real and I thought the Bible was unequivocal with Aesop's fables you know nice stories and all that but historically reliable you know an historical person come on we've moved on from that but I came to see that that's not the case but I say that to say that people will reject us but that doesn't deter us you might lose your reputation but you might not you might be the very person who by your joyful fearlessness and declaring the word of God might be the person who gets to become the spiritual midwife for that person that you're speaking to as my wife did for me I married her six well I didn't marry her six months later that would have been weird six months later I became a Christian a year and a half later we were married who knows what you might do no one would have given me any hope in those days trust me except those who with a joyful fearlessness and an understanding that the gospel really is the power of salvation to everyone who believes they would speak and they would see it we're not the ones who decide who can and cannot be welcomed into the kingdom and we must not be those who sin by preferring our reputation to their salvation if we do we just become complicit in their lostness that's dangerous brothers and sisters we must repent of that and do you ever think your inhibition in sharing the gospel might just be the thing that puts people off that your lack of a willingness to share it might be the very thing that makes a person think well they're that reluctant so they can't really do what they say it will do no we must be bold with a joyful fearlessness and declare as the apostles did not just in Acts 2 but throughout the book of Acts as we see the gospel go north and south with the Ethiopian into Africa with Paul into Europe to the point that you see at the very last the last word of the whole

book of Acts is unhinderedly the word of God spread with great boldness and without hindrance that's the way the gospel spreads so what do you say what will you say well maybe you can say what the apostle Peter said in declaring this salvation in Jesus name look what he did he had this little thing in his head that he just thought well he's filled with the spirit clearly but he is declaring the mighty works of God and he presents a little fourfold pattern here Jesus lived Jesus died Jesus rose Jesus reigns okay Jesus lived Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited to you by God and he talks about his miracles and so on so in other words

[27 : 30] Jesus is a man he really did live and God put him on display that's what the word accredited means in the Greek he put him on display for you and showed him who he was but you put him to death you killed him and Jesus really died but Jesus rose again it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him because for death to keep its hold on anyone that person must have sin in their account but Christ the righteous one had no sin therefore sin death had no claim on him that's why he could loose the bonds of death and walk free from that tomb three days later of his own will and volition and Jesus reigns he ascended now to people who've just killed Jesus to hear that he ascended and is seated at the right hand of the father which is the place of ultimate power you're going to be scared you know

I've just killed I could say I've just killed Jesus he's no longer a problem for us unless he's alive and actually death can't keep him you know you can't kill him again he is immortal so what Peter does is just counter everything that these guys are thinking and declares the gospel really in a nutshell and says in fact you guys have killed him you've got it wrong you thought he was a curse you just killed the king of life that's why we see so many of them being cut to the heart at the declaration of this word Peter is filled with the spirit and filled in order to speak the word with fearlessness and people become Christians you see it again and again in the book of Acts sometimes it's not so much a gospel in a nutshell like this it is on many occasions at times it's I was once blank but now I'm blank all because

Jesus died for me so when you think of the way the apostle Paul gives his testimony a number of times later on in the book of Acts it's incredible to see and I wonder if that might help us practically you can learn gospel presentations like two ways to live or something like that so that in the moment you know if you've got a friend with you and you're in a lift with them and they actually say what is the gospel and you've got between level one and level five to tell them what are you going to say we should be equipped in that respect to be able to say something punchy and with a fearless joy that will strike their hearts and we pray that God will move in their hearts as you speak or you might share your testimony I was once a sin ravaged kid dealing drugs by the age of 14 but now I'm I'm a Christian and I love

Jesus and I've turned away from that life of shame and I'm living a life of love where I love him and love everybody else all because Jesus died on the cross for me and wiped that sin away what would you say how would you fill in the blanks in that regard my encouragement for you is to do this now one of the things a major thing that gets in the way of us doing this and this is something to think about as a church family together is that we preoccupy ourselves with so many Christian relationships that we have no time for the non Christian that's dangerous that's dangerous because it's often those relationships it's relational connections with people that provide something of the platform you know we have an events based mentality at times where we think you know what was that Kevin Costner movie you know build it and they will come you know that's an ancient thing I'm sure my age but it was about baseball it was a rubbish sport but you basically build it and they will come you know we just put this on and people will flock in that doesn't happen look back over your the past two weeks and figure out how much time did I spend in connection with Christians how much time did I spend at work how much time did I spend with my family how much time did I spend with non

Christians my guess is that most of us will see that last section has shrunk down considerably make time we've my wife and I have tried to do this a lot where we live and we've seen immeasurable benefits and my wife has conducted a Christianity explored course with six mums from the area you know God has opened doors that we've never seen I go out once a month with some guys and without fail somebody will turn around to me an hour into the night and say so what are you preaching on a Sunday these are non-Christians I'm making time to spend time with them and I'm a busy guy lots of things at church that I have to show up to or I get a P45 you know make the time and don't retreat from it there is a direct link between filling and speaking so we must declare the

gospel don't go with any of this preach the gospel and use words if you have to oh it's heresy it's awful the word is news the gospel is news must be declared preach the gospel tell people about Jesus and his love and his death in their place and the fact that he rose again because he is the sinless saviour and God raised him from the dead declaring him his sacrifice on the cross to be acceptable to him the resurrection is the receipt of that sacrifice on the cross paid in full tell them about that tell them how it's transformed your life and often I think you know one of the things that we see is we often feel like the onus of responsibility is on us to give an account for the things that we believe about the gospel the onus is on people for not believing it you know for putting their faith in all sorts of things where they have no credible substantial evidence for it even evolution tell people about Jesus use words tell them about all that he has done and as a church family look to encourage one another in this pray for one another and that's what we must do because this this and I close with this is a day of opportunity this is what

[34 : 11] Peter declares at the sermon in Pentecost this is a day when the spirits poured out he says Joel says it's a there is another day though a day a coming day of the Lord a day marked by fire and billows of smoke a judgment day and five times Joel says the day of the Lord is near yet Joel spoke of this open-ended period before the day of the Lord when the Holy Spirit would be poured out and available to all not everybody irrespective of their readiness to repent of their sin and believe in Jesus but everybody irrespective of their past their background their age their sex or status in other words this is the time of open invitation this is the age of the church this is the age of missions to keep our mouth shut is to be disobedient to the nth degree then Peter quotes Peter quotes Joel making one subtle change Joel says it shall come to pass Peter says it's already begun it's begun now with the pouring out of the

Holy Spirit at Pentecost these days are now here which means the final day that day of the Lord is nearer than it has ever been God's clock has moved on and now there is this window of opportunity where everyone young old rich poor educated or not may come and call upon the name of the Lord so my question is what will you do you say you're filled with the spirit declare the mighty acts of God that would be consistent with your filling and be fearless in it brothers and sisters enjoy it and God will save his people from their sins amen■■■ the nd nd nd und lesser nd nd