

# I Will Pour Out My Spirit

## Joel 2:28-32

**Series:** Joel and Malachi (Fall 2020)

**Preaching Date:** September 27, 2020

**Topic:** Amid the trials of life we turn to a compassionate and just God.

**Worship:** Pour Your Spirit Out

**Key Sentence:**

God pours out His Spirit as we find salvation in Him

**Outline:**

- I. I will pour out my Spirit (Joel 2:28-29)
- II. Wonders in the heavens (Joel 2:30-31)
- III. Everyone who calls will be saved (Joel 2:32)

**Joel 2:28-32** “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup>Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

<sup>30</sup>“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. <sup>31</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

<sup>32</sup>And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

## I Will Pour Out My Spirit Joel 2:28-32

We tend to think the church started with a “go.” “Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations.” But it’s just as accurate to say the church started with a “wait.” Acts 1:4 “While staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” Wait for the promise of the Father. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This band of half-educated, uninfluential, fishermen and zealots, could not properly be the church until God the Holy Spirit came to indwell them. They needed the Spirit’s words, His guidance, His boldness and his power.

Moments after this command to “wait” Jesus ascended into heaven and left the disciples alone. So they waited. Forty days later the Jewish festival known as Pentecost was gathered in Jerusalem. This was fifty days after the Sunday of Passover week, and that was the day when the first fruits of the barley harvest was celebrated. It was also, of course, the day of Christ’s resurrection. He was the first fruits of those who sleep. Fifty days later came Pentecost, or Shavuot, the celebration of the start of the wheat harvest. God chose this day as the public birthday of the church. Why? Because on that day God the Father and God the Spirit kept the promise God the Son had made. On that day the Holy Spirit was poured out to indwell every believer, and the church began to grow.

Acts 2 “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” This is Immanuel, God with us in a new and revolutionary way which had only been prophesied in the Old Testament, but never fulfilled. Today we’ll look at one of those prophesies, Joel 2:28-32, and its fulfillment for us, that God still pours out His Spirit as we find salvation in Him.

Acts 2 goes on to say that the tongues the Spirit gave were understood by people from all over the world gathered at the feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:5 “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>At this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.”

Many who saw this were amazed, but some said the Apostles were drunk. In Acts 2:14 Peter responds. “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup>For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour. <sup>16</sup>But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>“ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>18</sup>even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; <sup>20</sup>the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. <sup>21</sup>And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit fifty days after Christ’s resurrection fulfilled today’s text in Joel. Joel’s prophecy shows three distinct aspects of the last days, two of which began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, while the third has yet to be completely fulfilled. The first and main prophecy is of the pouring out of the Spirit. Joel 2:28-29 *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. <sup>29</sup>Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.*

“And it shall come to pass afterward.” The verses we studied last week showed how God responded to the repentance of the people, causing the land, which had been devastated by locust, drought and fire, to bloom and become abundant. The grain, the trees, the livestock and the people rejoiced in what God had done. This “afterward” simply means that the events depicted here are not the immediate result of that rescue, but prophesy something further off. And, as is common in the prophets, not everything that is far off is the same distance off. This prophecy, Peter said, was fulfilled or began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. It is a prophecy that has been fulfilled for us, and in a real sense it is a prophecy that shows we are living in the last days. This is not the Day of the Lord, but it is the final epoch leading to that great judgment and rescue.

The New Testament sees our days as the last days. Hebrews 1:1 “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke <sup>2</sup>to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” Peter says “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake” Paul says “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” He tells Timothy “in the last days there will come times of difficulty.”

Again, Peter says that “scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.” And John says “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.” So from the resurrection of Christ we’ve been living in the last days. As one commenter says “It is helpful to think of the Old Testament as the age of promise, where God promised his people a Messiah who would establish and rule over his Kingdom. With the advent of Jesus, the Messiah, we have the age of fulfillment. The promises of God are being fulfilled in these last days, even if they will not be ultimately or finally consummated until the last day.”

One of the central prophecies of these last days is that God the Holy Spirit will dwell with us and in us. “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” David Hubbard says “All flesh is defined as comprehensively as possible: sons and daughters, old people and young men, servants and handmaids. No exclusion will be made on the basis of gender, age or social station.” Paul celebrates this in Galatians “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” We might rewrite Oprah: “You get the Spirit, and you get the Spirit and everyone gets the Spirit.”

In Joel the evidences of the Spirit’s presence are prophecies, dreams and visions. These will no longer be limited to a few prophets, but distributed among God’s people. Peter echoes this, although at the time he spoke no future-oriented prophecies or dreams or visions had yet come through the Spirit. What had come was this miracle of tongues, of speaking in languages the speaker didn’t know but the hearers did. It’s likely that Peter is thinking of these languages as prophecy. Earlier in Acts 2 the hearers said “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” That’s prophecy. It doesn’t have to be forward looking or new revelation. Prophecy was and is most often the forth-telling of the mighty works of God. The gift of tongues, where understood by the hearers, is one vehicle for the glorification of God.

All that Peter speaks of, prophecies, dreams and visions would later be characterized by Peter himself as gifts of speaking, which, along with gifts of serving are the categories of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to believers. No longer is a formal priesthood required, for both speaking and serving are done by everyone. Not all these things are given to each individual, but all these things are given to the community. That’s why Paul teaches that each has received a different gift, or different gifts. No one list in the New Testament covers all the gifts, but together they show that the Spirit has been poured out to work for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the glorification of God.

The list in Romans is a good example: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Paul repeats some of these and adds other gifts like “wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discernment, tongues and interpretation of tongues.” All the gifts, he says are the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. That’s how we should regard and use them today, though sadly many don’t. Too often the Spirit’s gifts become marks of personal status or spirituality. “I have the gift of healing; I have the gift of tongues; I have the gift of prophecy.” “I” am not to be focus of the Spirit’s work.

In fact, the Spirit’s work as he dwells in us is comprehensive and beautiful. In the Old Testament the most famous promise is in Ezekiel 36 “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” The Spirit is at work in us, in the soft hearts that he gives, to want to do God’s will and obey his rules. That’s a tremendous blessing for each Spirit filled believer.

If you want to see what this is supposed to look like in us, look at Jesus. In Isaiah 11 God describes how the Spirit was revealed in the Son. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. <sup>2</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup>And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, <sup>4</sup>but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.” When the Spirit is poured out on us we begin to become like Jesus in wisdom, understanding, might, fear, righteousness, and equity,

But the New Testament makes the role of the Spirit even more clear. Again, we can only touch the most prominent verses, such as those in John’s gospel. John 14:16 “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup>even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” He’s the helper, the comforter, the encourager or the advocate: the Greek word is hard to fit into a single Greek word. He’s with us forever, for he dwells in us. He’s the Spirit of truth who guides us into all truth.

He's the teacher of God's people. John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." He teaches us what Jesus has said and given us. He convicts the world of sin, of its lack of righteousness, and of coming judgment, John 16:8. All that from John. Much more in other books.

For example, Paul says that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." He's God's voice in our hearts, Romans 8:16 "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." He prays for us. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." So "the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." And the Spirit's sword, the weapon the Spirit uses on our behalf is the Word of God. Finally, of course, the fruit of Spirit in our lives, that which the Spirit produces in us is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control." All this is what we really want. This is the character of Christ, given to us by the Holy Spirit.

We could go on and on with this, but the point is that Joel promises this pouring out of the Spirit and Peter confirms that this prophecy has already been fulfilled, for us, as post-Pentecost believers. If you are believe in Jesus, if you've turned to him in trust and received his free gift of forgiveness through his sacrifice, then you have the Holy Spirit. Paul says "when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him," you "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." You believed. You received the Holy Spirit. Now are we always aware of the Spirit at work in us? No, not at all. But he's always there. It's like your heart beat. Are you always aware of your heart beating? No. Yet everyone who is alive has a beating heart. Everyone who is in Christ has the Holy Spirit. If we had more time we would talk about the fact that you can grieve the Spirit. You can quench the Spirit. You can fail to keep in step with the Spirit. But the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Praise God that he promised to pour out his Holy Spirit and he has done it.

That's the main thing we want to say this morning, the main encouragement I want to give. God has poured out His Spirit. You have the Spirit living inside you offering all these things: supernatural gifts, fruit, comfort and encouragement, guidance, prayer, life and peace. You have, now, "Immanuel," God with you. God's big idea is that he will be our God and we will be his people and he will dwell with us. And that dwelling with us is not just in the last day or in the New Heavens and the New Earth. This promise began at Pentecost and is for you today. The Spirit has been poured out in our midst.

Yet there is more to come. Joel's prophecy and Peter's quotation look beyond the day of Pentecost to the Day of the Lord. Verse 30 and 31 *And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.* <sup>31</sup>*The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*

In context this sounds like it too should have occurred on the day of Pentecost, and I guess in a symbolic sense it did. The descent of the Spirit in tongues of fire was a wonder from heaven and on earth. But we studied the Day of the Lord two weeks ago and saw in Joel and through the Scriptures that this language is used for that day yet to come. To recall only one verse, we heard Jesus say "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup>Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Joel's words refer to that same great and awesome Day of the Lord. Why do they follow the verses fulfilled at Pentecost, so closely? This is just typical of prophecy. Joel is not the only prophet who goes from now to not yet in the blink of an eye. They look out on the waves of the future rolling toward them and the Spirit does not seem to have wanted them to distinguish the nearer or intermediate waves from the great tsunami of that final day.

Why did Peter quote these verses on Pentecost if they weren't meant for Pentecost? We've already mentioned a couple of reasons. First, Peter knew that with the coming of the Holy Spirit the last days had begun. What he and the others were experiencing at that moment would lead directly, in time, to that Day of calamity and judgment. I doubt that he knew or even suspected how long the time would be. He was warning his hearers it was coming, just as Joel had. But I think there is an even more practical reason why Peter included these verses. Guided by the Spirit of God he was preaching the first evangelistic sermon. He was not just informing this globe-spanning crowd, he was trying to win them to Christ. And so, to be blunt, he quoted verses 30 and 31 so he could get to verse 32, which would show his hearers how to take hold of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Joel says *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.*

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You couldn't make it much clearer than that. To call on the name of the Lord is to cry out to God for rescue based on his character, which is what his name signifies.

We saw last week that for Joel the heart of his character is that he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love so that he relents from judgment, he compassions those who cry out to him. We also saw that the fulfillment of that truth is in Jesus. God's saving work, his mercy and his grace are seen in Jesus. God's steadfast love is revealed in the one who takes our sin and bears our punishment so that we might be cleansed and forgiven. We are rescued, saved, through Jesus, and through him alone.

To call on him is to cry out for mercy and rescue. Y'all know my favorite Biblical example of this. It's the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who went to the temple to pray. "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup>But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other." Justified means made righteous, declared righteous. It's a rich way of saying "saved." The difference is that the Pharisee looked into himself for righteousness, but he substituted pride, arrogance and self centeredness. The tax collector cried out "have mercy." He called on the character of the Lord and he was saved.

That's the truth for all of us. Do you want rescue from the locusts of life? Do you want freedom from the addictions and selfishness and rebellion that haunt you? Do you want the Spirit's beautiful ministry in your life, and the fruit that only he can produce? Cry out to the merciful God for mercy. Look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who went to the cross, despising its shame so that we might be saved from our sin and shame. All the judgment of the Day of the Lord lies on one side of that cry, and all the beauty of the rescue God offers, and the beauty of the Spirit lies on the other. The difference between those two outcomes in any life lies not in the merit or goodness of the individual, but in the merit and goodness of Jesus to those who cry to him.

Joel says this in closing this section. "For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls." Joel is again looking forward here. He sees the ruin of Jerusalem, maybe in 66 AD, maybe in the Day of the Lord. But he sees also that some will escape that ruin. You expect him to say they escape by calling on the Lord, for those who call on the Lord will be saved. That's true. He just said it. But he doesn't say it again. He says the survivors will be those the Lord calls. The ones who call on the Lord are the ones the Lord calls. It's too late in the message to get into this but let me just say it: these two truths are not a contradiction in Scripture.

There has been a long and heated debate over what is sometimes called free will or predestination, sometimes Calvinism or Arminianism. The terms don't matter and are often not used well. Yet this long debate has been every bit as divisive as our current debates over COVID-19 or political candidates or racism and violence. And as in so many of these other cases, this division is unnecessary.

How is someone saved? Is it by their own free choice or entirely by a work of God. The biblical answer is yes. God is sovereign and chooses who will be saved. That's what this verse says. The survivors are those the Lord calls. But people are responsible and must cry out to God to be saved. That's what this verse says "all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved." The Bible is not embarrassed, here and in many other places, to put both truths in the same thought, not to mention the countless places where one truth or the other is emphasized. Does God and God alone save people? Yes. Must the Spirit work in people's lives to draw them to salvation? Yes. But are people like you and me responsible to choose, responsible to turn? Must we do that? Yes. And I believe God is so great that these two truths fit together without contradicting each other. No one gets saved whom the Lord doesn't call. No one gets saved who doesn't call on the Lord. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both accurate descriptions of the process, and both are always present. So, I like to get that off my chest once in a while. I just recently had a conversation where I needed to make the position clear to folks who were uncomfortable with it, thinking Trinity was too far on one side or the other, I won't say which.

But while this is the final point of this text, it's not the main point of this text. The main point is that God has poured out his Spirit. His Spirit is like water on dry ground, like a cup of cold water when you're suffering from thirst, like a plunge in a cool pool when you've struggled through the heat. You and I today are the blessed recipients of that Spirit, of his gifts, of his fruit of his comfort and encouragement, of his peace and life. All who call on the Lord receive this gift. God pours out His Spirit to all who call on Him.