

# A Turning Point

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Acts 2:14-21

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon 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 upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

## 1. Turning Points

In our lives, our experiences are marked by turning points. High school or college graduation, marriage, children, a new job, and our retirement can be turning points in our lives. Becoming a follower of Jesus Christ is one of the important turning points. The most important turning point might happen when we have a sense of call. My turning point was when I began to go to church when I was in high school. My dream before I went to church was to become a CEO of a big global company in Korea. However, when I had a sense of call from the Lord, my dream disappeared. My turning point pushed me into a totally different direction.

In Acts chapter two, we see that Peter has a major turning point in his life when the Holy Spirit comes to Jesus' followers at Pentecost. Following Jesus was an important turning point in Peter's life. But when the Holy Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost, Peter experiences a dramatic change in his life. Peter was no longer the same person after he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus was crucified, Peter promised that he would not deny Jesus, and yet he denied Jesus three times. The reason for Peter's denial was fear.

## 2. Peter Has No More Fear

Peter's life was full of fear before the arrival of the Holy Spirit. However, when the Holy Spirit came to him, Peter was transformed. Peter became bold and filled with confidence. He was no longer afraid of anyone or anything because the power of the Holy Spirit made his fear disappear. Acts 2:14 says, **“Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.’”** Peter heard the criticism of the people around them. Yet instead of being afraid, he stood up with the eleven disciples and began to explain what was happening.

Last Tuesday, Christine and I went to the Cape Cod Nursing Center to see Alice Cooper and Nancy Armstrong. At the time, Alice Cooper was getting better, and she will probably be going home tomorrow. Nancy, however, wasn't doing well. She could barely recognize who I was but thanked me for my visit. I was saddened when she told me that she was dying. And yet, I was glad when she told me that she was not afraid. Nancy did not fear death. Yesterday about twenty people got together with Nancy and celebrated her life and gave thanks to the Lord for her life with us.

### **3. Peter's Eye-Opening Experience**

In addition to removing his fear, the power of the Holy Spirit brought another change to Peter. When Peter was baptized by the Holy Spirit, he had a spiritual eye-opening experience. Peter was able to interpret what the prophet Joel had said in the Old Testament. It is truly amazing that Peter cites Joel 2:28-30 to defend what was happening to people speaking a variety of different languages. With Peter's background, it isn't likely that he would have learned about the prophet Joel. And yet, when the Holy Spirit came on the disciples, he believed that the miracle of speaking foreign languages was the fulfillment of the prophecy from Joel. Peter realized and explained that God was in charge of human history. Peter tells us that the speaking of tongues was not from drunkenness but from the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **4. The Holy Spirit Was Given to Everyone**

When we read Acts chapter two we might think that the Holy Spirit is given only to chosen people. However, in Acts 2:17, Peter says citing Joel 2:28-32: **“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”** In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to only God's chosen people. But Acts chapter two says, in the last days, everyone will

receive the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, we will prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. We will see, know, and recognize what God is doing in our world.

## 5. The Holy Spirit Has Come

If the Holy Spirit is given to everyone, have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit? I am sure you have. 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, “**no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.**” No one is able to believe and confess that Jesus is the Lord and Savior without the help of the Holy Spirit. I personally believe that every Christian gets the gift of the Holy Spirit when he or she becomes a Christian. Why are all Christians not the same in terms of their commitment after they receive the Holy Spirit? I believe it is because of a control issue. When we accept Jesus as the Lord and Savior, we have to give Jesus total control over our lives. And yet, often times we still want to be in control even after we decide to follow Jesus. Unless we let God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit be in charge of our lives, we may receive the Holy Spirit, but we don’t experience the power that comes with having the Holy Spirit.

Let us think about how we pray to the Lord. When we pray, we often ask the Lord to give us what we want instead of asking what the Lord wants us to do. Becoming Christians means that we die with Christ and let Jesus be the one who controls our lives. Jesus’ lordship applies also to the church. Ephesians 1:22 says, “**he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church.**” Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the church was born and the head of the church is Jesus. When we become Christians, we become part of the body of Christ that is part of the church.

It may sound weird to you, but I want to confess that when it comes to our church and my role at the church, I keep the perspective that the pastor of our church isn’t me but is Jesus. Jesus is alive and works in our church. You and I are called to trust the Lord with every aspect of the church and to try to follow steadfastly after what Jesus wants for our church and for our community. Then we need to make sure what the mission of the church is. For me, the mission of the church is the salvation of all humankind. Salvation is often associated with being saved from sin and death. However, another important aspect of salvation is to recognize that we are called to take a part in God’s mission in the world. We are called to prophesy, to see visions, and to dream dreams. Prophesying, seeing visions, and dreaming dreams are

every Christian's job. Visions and dreams are not our own, but are what God has for us.

Acts 2:21 says, "**everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**" We are called to help everyone believe and call on the name of the Lord. Medical doctors are called to help save patients through physical treatments. But we are called even further to be in the spiritual life-saving business. The call that we have is a call deep within each and every one of us. It gives us a sense of urgency to reach out and help others encounter and follow after Jesus. If we don't have that deep sense of urgency, perhaps God is calling us this morning to ask and encounter the Holy Spirit again to be renewed in our minds and to follow even harder after Jesus.

## **6. Conclusion**

The transformation of Peter and of the disciples by the Holy Spirit was a turning point in the lives of the disciples. The Holy Spirit marked the turning point for the church and for each of us today. I believe that our time here at Swift Memorial is a turning point in our lives and in the lives of our community. I ask the Lord that the Holy Spirit may encounter each of us and our church to overcome any fear by empowering us to see and understand the times that we live in. And the Holy Spirit may give us a sense of urgency to reach out so that our neighbors, our friends, and our community can experience the same love and life-changing power of the Holy Spirit.

## **7. Application**

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit gave birth to the church. In the same way that the early church followed after Jesus, our church is called to be a turning point for our community, our nation, and the world. I pray that each of us would be empowered by the Holy Spirit and God's visions and dreams would be fulfilled through us.