

Commentary on Acts, Chapter 2 by Chuck Smith 1.15.23

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January memory verse Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

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Now when the day of Pentecost ([Act 2:1](#))

This would be feast day following the Passover, of which Jesus was crucified. And fifty days after the Passover, the second major Jewish feast, the Feast of Pentecost, or the Feast of Ingathering. This is the time when they would gather the winter wheat, the winter grains that had been sown, and the early part of June; they're ready for harvest. The Feast of Pentecost was marked by them taking a portion of their field and harvesting it. Tying the wheat and the sheaves, bringing them in and offering them before the Lord as a wave offering, as the priest would take the sheaves and wave them before the Lord and offer them before the Lord as the first fruits unto God. "God, to You belong the first fruit. There's a harvest that is coming in, but this, Lord, is the first fruit. It belongs to You." And they would give to God the first fruits of the increase of their land at the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Ingathering. And as was the custom in all of the Jewish feasts, there would be Jews that had gathered from all over the world to celebrate these feasts. And so the day of Pentecost: the feast had come.

And the disciples were with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as [the Spirit gave them the ability, or as the Spirit prompted their speech, or as the King James] the Spirit gave them utterance ([Act 2:1-4](#)).

But better, as the Spirit gave them the ability or prompted their speech.

We notice certain phenomena accompanying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There was a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind that filled all of the house where they were sitting. And notice, they were sitting. It doesn't matter whether you're sitting, standing or whatever. It is not the physical position. I am tired of trying to formulate God. I think that God defies any formulation by man. But people are always trying to put together a formula, and I guess it's only natural. You know, when you pray for someone and they're healed, you try and think, "Now, how did I pray? What did I do? Something happened here. Ooh that's great! Now how did I do it?" You're immediately wanting to

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formulate it. "What did I say?" Magic words, magic movements, or whatever, but God defies being formulated by man.

And so they were sitting in this particular case, and there appeared unto them these cloven tongues like fire, and it was above or upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And in this case, began to speak, *glossa*, other tongues, as the Spirit gave them the ability and was prompting their speech.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, who were devout men, out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad ([Act 2:5-6](#)),

What was noised abroad? Making the sound of the wind. The people heard this whistling sound like a hurricane or something coming out of the house, they came running to see what in the world was this noise coming out of the house.

the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own dialectus ([Act 2:6](#)).

In his own language or dialect.

And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all of these which speak Galileans? How is it that we hear every man in our own dialect, wherein we were born? And the Parthians, the Medes, the Elamites, the dwellers of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our dialectus [languages] the wonderful works of God ([Act 2:7-11](#)).

Notice that when they understood the languages, these people were not preaching sermons in these languages, nor were their words addressed to men, but it was addressed to God. They were proclaiming the wonderful works of God.

Somewhere along the line, the Pentecostal churches have gotten a mistaken notion that God often speaks to the church through tongues and interpretation of tongues. That is not scriptural. In I Corinthians 14, Paul says, "If a man speaks in an unknown tongue, he is not speaking to man, howbeit, in the Spirit he is speaking to God divine mysteries, or secrets." And thus, he tells them that, if in church a person speaks in an unknown tongue, that he should pray that they might interpret. And if there is no interpreter, then he should not speak, but keep silent and speak unto himself and unto God. For if he gets up and speaks in an unknown tongue in a service and no one interprets, how is the person who doesn't understand what he is saying going to say, "Yes, and amen"? At his giving of thanks, not at the message that God had for the church, but at his giving of thanks, in that he does not understand what he's saying, indeed, you do bless God well. It's a good way to praise the Lord, but not in church where the people don't understand what you're saying.

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So still and always, whenever tongues were understood, or when Paul teaches on the subject, never once is there an instance in the scripture where God spoke to man through tongues and interpretation. The closest thing would be in the book of Daniel when the writing on the wall was interpreted by Daniel. But that was not tongues and interpretation, and God was giving a message to the pagan king Belshazzar. When a man speaks in an unknown tongue, according to the scripture, he's speaking to God divine secrets men do not understand, and it's not addressed to man; it isn't necessary that man understands him, he is conversing with God in a special language that God has given him.

So, they were praising God, or they were glorifying God. They were declaring the wonderful works of God in the various languages and, of course, this amazed the people.

And they were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? ([Act 2:12](#))

Notice they have a question. "What does this mean, or what meaneth this?"

And others mocking said, [Hey,] they've just found some good wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all of you who are dwelling at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and listen unto my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, in that it is only the third hour of the day ([Act 2:13-15](#)).

It's only 9 o'clock in the morning, too early to be drunk.

Now, what was their question? "What meaneth this?" And Peter's message is, first of all, addressed to their question. And I think that's important, that messages answer the questions that are in the minds of the people. I think there's a lot of preaching that's so totally irrelevant to anything. Well, thanks for the information; I really didn't need it and I don't understand what it is after I've got it, but uh... But he was addressing the question, "What meaneth this?" And the answer is,

This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ([Act 2:16](#));

And he began to give them a scriptural basis for the phenomenon they had just observed. And let me say that I think this is vitally important. I think that you are on dangerous ground when you are seeking spiritual phenomenon for which you can give no scriptural basis. Because whenever you get into the area of spiritual phenomenon, people are going to ask questions. "What is this?" And if you are practicing some kind of spiritual phenomenon for which you cannot give a solid scriptural basis, you're in big trouble as far as I'm concerned. I am not interested in any kind of phenomenon for which I cannot give solid scriptural basis. And I think that it is very irresponsible for evangelists, or whoever, to promote spiritual phenomenon without scriptural foundation.

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So Peter leads them right to the Word of God. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." And now notice how Peter quotes from the prophet Joel. You see he had a good working knowledge of the Word of God. And I point that out in order that I might point out to you the characteristics of the men that God used. And we'll be following this as we go through the Acts. But one of the first characteristics that we find of the men that God uses is that they are men of prayer. Peter and the others were waiting daily in prayer and in supplication, you remember. The men that God uses are men of the Word; a second quality that God is looking for. Peter had a good working knowledge of the Word of God. He's able to quote from the Psalms, remote little Psalms. Psalms that are not apt to catch your attention, and yet he is quoting from them, putting them together, making sense out of them. Now, as this phenomena is taking place, and they're saying, "What means this?" And he said, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel."

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and upon my servants and handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; and blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: and the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved ([Act 2:17-21](#)).

Quoting out of Joel, chapter 2. And what does he quote? The promise of God to send the Holy Spirit upon the world. Now notice that in context, this promise was for the last days, and Joel actually carries it right up to the second coming of Jesus Christ, through the great tribulation period right into the second coming. "I will show wonders in the heaven above, signs in the earth beneath, blood, fire, vapor of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood," things of the great tribulation period. "Before the great and notable day," the day of the coming again of Jesus Christ. "The great and notable day of the Lord come, and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

So the empowering of the Holy Spirit was not limited to just a short period of church history, but is to continue through out the church history, right unto the coming again of Jesus Christ, the great and notable day of the Lord. And it is wrong to try to put limitations upon the experience of being empowered by the Spirit of God.

Several years ago our older daughter came home from a prayer meeting, and we were sitting and sharing with her. And she was telling us how that at that prayer meeting God's Spirit came upon her, and she began to prophesy by the Spirit of God. And what a beautiful and exhilarating experience it was for her to just speak forth God's word under the anointing of the Spirit. Our son Jeff, who we were having problems with at that time, who was in high school at that time, I turned to him and said, "Well, son, the Bible says that your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Now that my daughter is

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prophesying, when are you going to start prophesying?" And he quickly, without any hesitation said, "When are you going to start having dreams?" Smart kid!

Now he's going to expound on the scripture. He gives the text and now the exposition.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth ([Act 2:22](#)),

Identifying who he's talking about, because there were many named Jesus. And so He's Jesus of Nazareth, so they knew exactly who he's talking about. And here's what he says of Him first of all,

He was a man approved of God among you ([Act 2:22](#))

The word *approved* is literally, "proved to be of God among you." How was He proved to be of God?

by the miracles and the wonders and the signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourself also know ([Act 2:22](#)):

So, He was proved to be of God. Jesus said, "Believe me or else believe for the very works' sake." And Jesus often called upon His works as the proof of His origin, of His authority and of His ministry, of His identity. "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake." And so here Peter is pointing out that the works Jesus did attested to the fact that He was proved to be of God--from God. Remember they said, "No man can do these works except God is with Him."

Then he goes on to say,

Him, being delivered by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ([Act 2:23](#)):

Notice as Peter talks about the cross he's not speaking of some horrible, tragic accident that happened. But in referring to the cross, he is talking about it as God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge. It could not be any other way, because the cross was prophesied in the Old Testament. And the very fact that there are prophecies of the cross, death on the cross: [Psalm 22](#), [Isaiah 52](#), "lifted up" a term used for crucifixion, and His death prophesied in [Isaiah 53](#). There can be no other conclusion but what the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was planned by God long before Jesus ever came into the world. And thus, it is manifestly wrong to try to blame the Jews or to try to blame the Romans or anybody else for the cross. It was something that God had predetermined by His own foreknowledge--a method by which He might manifest the extent of His love for lost man. And so, as he refers to the cross, he talks about God's predetermined counsel, and thus the scripture speaks of Christ crucified from the foundations of world. Before man ever sinned, God had in mind to send His Son to redeem man from his sin, and thus to manifest God's love for sinning man. It's all part of God's predetermined plan, His foreknowledge.

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Peter isn't really laying the blame on them. "You with your wicked hands did it, but it was all part of God's predetermined plan." But then he declares, and this is the central part of his message:

Whom God hath raised up ([Act 2:24](#)),

Remember, they were looking for someone who could bear witness of the resurrection. And the central message of the church is always the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was not possible that death could hold Him. It's the message of the church today. And wherever the church has denied this message, it has ceased to be a church. It is the central hope of man; we have to proclaim to man that Jesus rose from the dead. Peter said, "Thank God that we have been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he could be held by it ([Act 2:24](#)).

Why wasn't it possible? Because the scripture not only prophesied His death, but it also prophesied His resurrection. And because God predicted it, prophesied it in advance, it had to happen. It was not possible that He could be held by death.

For David speaking concerning him said, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is at my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because you will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you allow the Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shall make me full of joy with your countenance ([Act 2:25-28](#)).

Again he is quoting from the scriptures. Notice how he just has the capacity of just quoting God's Word. It was something that was really there in his heart. The men that God uses are men who have hidden that Word away in their heart. They have that ready access, the ability to just quote from God's Word.

Now Peter is going to expound on this text. He said,

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, his sepulchre is with us unto this day ([Act 2:29](#)).

Now, there is today on Mount Zion a little room where you may go where there's a very ornate sepulchre that they call "The Tomb of David." I don't know if David was buried there, but at the time that Peter was talking, David's sepulchre was still around.

Now David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne ([Act 2:30](#));

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David knew that God promised that the Messiah would come through him. That's when David said, "Lord, what can I say? I was nothing. You took me from the sheep coat, from following after sheep. You made me the king over Your people. You've done so much for me, and now you speak of the days to come. Oh, God, what can I say?" David was overwhelmed by the goodness and the grace of God. And that's always a beautiful experience to have. Have you ever had that? You're just totally wiped out by God's goodness and God's grace. I love those experiences where I'm just totally wiped out by the grace. You can't say anything; you just have to sit there and enjoy it. I have to pull off the road; it's dangerous to drive in those conditions.

David was a prophet. He knew that God had promised that the Messiah would come through him.

And he, seeing this before, was speaking of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption ([Act 2:31](#)).

When Jesus died, He descended into hell and preached to those souls that were in prison.

Now you remember [Isaiah 61](#), a part of the prophecy of Christ would be that He would open the doors to those who were bound and free those from prison. Set at liberty those who were captive. Jesus descended into hell, because prior to the death of Christ, it was not possible that the Old Testament saints could enter into the full glory of God's presence. The Old Testament sacrifices could not put away their sins. All they could do was cover their sins as they spoke of a better sacrifice that was to come, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These men all died in faith not having received the promise of God: having reserved a better thing for us that they without us couldn't come into the perfected state. So when Jesus died, He descended into hell, preached to the souls who were in prison. But according to Paul in [Ephesians 4](#), when He ascended, He led the captives from their captivity. "He who has ascended is the same one who first of all descended into the lower parts of the earth." You remember when they were asking Jesus for a sign, and He said, "No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" ([Matthew 12:39-40](#)). He descended into hell, and those who were waiting with Abraham for the promises of God to be fulfilled, He preached to them the glorious victory of the cross. The sacrifice has been made; it is now complete. And He who has ascended is the same one who first of all descended. And when He ascended, He led the captives from their captivity. He freed them. Death and hell was partially emptied at that point. Two resurrections. The just to everlasting righteous, and the unjust to everlasting condemnation. That resurrection has not yet taken place. It will not take place until the time of the thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth.

Now,

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses ([Act 2:32](#)).

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We've all seen it; we've all seen Him. Therefore, he comes back now to the resurrection. Notice this is the central part of the message; he's throwing out basic facts about Jesus. "He's a man proved to be a God among you by the signs and miracles which He wrought, whom you, according to God's predetermined counsel and foreknowledge, with your wicked hands have crucified and slain. But God raised Him from the dead because it was not possible that He could be held by it." Now when he gets to the central message, he expounds on it. He goes back, he gives scriptural basis, and he's talking about the resurrection and shows that it is a Biblical concept. Then he says again, coming back to this point, "This Jesus hath God raised up and we are witnesses of that fact."

Therefore ([Act 2:33](#))

Now he is going to continue his message concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Therefore, he is exalted at the right hand of God ([Act 2:33](#)),

So Jesus today is in an exalted position there at the right hand of God in the throne of glory.

and having received of the Father the promise ([Act 2:33](#))

"And it shall come to pass in those days, saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit." "And having received of the Father the promise..."

of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this ([Act 2:33](#)),

Now he's back to the question again, "What meaneth this?" The outpouring of the Holy Spirit that they were observing. And having ascended to the Father, being there at the right hand, exalted, He received from the Father the promise and He hath shed forth this,

which you now see and hear ([Act 2:33](#)).

There was visible tongues of fire and audible evidence of the outpouring of the Spirit as they were glorifying God in these languages.

For David is not ascended into the heavens [he had not yet ascended into the heavens]: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Messiah ([Act 2:34-36](#)).

Now, the Bible tells us that there is coming a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. And Peter is laying it straight on the line, "This Jesus, you better know that God has made Him both the Lord and He is the Messiah."

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Now when they heard this ([Act 2:37](#)),

And this is the first message of the church centered on the theme of the resurrection.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? ([Act 2:37](#))

Aware of their guilt, made aware by the conviction of the Spirit.

Then Peter said unto them, "Join the church, pay your tithes, keep this ministry going brother."

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ([Act 2:38](#)).

Literally in the Greek he said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you *into* the name of Jesus Christ," which is an interesting point to make *into* a relationship with Jesus Christ. There are those who call themselves "Jesus Only." They make a big deal over baptismal formula, and say if you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that you weren't really baptized. That baptism didn't really count; the only baptism that really counts is the baptism in Jesus' name. But it's not actually in Jesus' name, but *into* Jesus' name; into the very relationship with Him, into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. "And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

For the promise ([Act 2:39](#))

What promise? The promise that God made to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Who is it for?

It's for you, and it's for your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call ([Act 2:39](#)).

No mention of just being good for the apostolic period, but on down through the church ages. "As many as the Lord our God shall call."

And with many other words he did testify and exhort, saying, Save yourself from this untoward generation. Then they who gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls ([Act 2:40-41](#)).

So you've got the beginning of the church growth program. Rapid church growth program, suddenly they've increased manifestly. Now this is important. What was the early church's function? What were they doing?

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers ([Act 2:42](#)).

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These were the four institutions of the early church. First of all, the apostles' doctrine: the study of the Word of God. Second, the fellowship: the *koinonia*--a very interesting Greek word. Its implications are beyond translation into English. But this coming together, interrelating, becoming a part of each other, a strong bond and tie and communion and commonness and fellowship. Breaking of bread, the symbol of that inner relationship and prayers.

A lot of the things that the church does today are not listed here. I think a lot of the things that the church does today are extraneous and supercilious, and we'd do well to let them die a natural death instead of trying to keep them alive by artificial means.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all who believed were together, and had all things [koinonia] in common; And many of them sold their possessions and their goods, and they parted them to all men, as every man had a need ([Act 2:43-45](#)).

There was a early communism, in a good sense, in the church, prompted by love. Those who had, were selling in order that they might distribute to those who did not have, that they might be able to help them.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house ([Act 2:46](#)),

So the church actually began in both the fellowships in the temple, but also in the home fellowships. Breaking bread from house to house,

They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart ([Act 2:46](#)),

What was the result? As they were,

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved ([Act 2:47](#)).

When the church was what God wanted the church to be, then God did for the church what He was wanting to do.

Today the church is spending all of its efforts in church growth programs. How to increase our attendance? Studying psychology and sociology and making demographic studies of communities and determining what will appeal to the people of this particular community. What type of an advertising program will be most effective, taking polls and census and putting everything together so that we can have a church growth program because we want to add so many members to our church. You can get professionals to come in and do all of these studies and, for a fee, they will go ahead and develop your whole program. There are other professionals who'll come in and set up a whole financial program for us, and they will, for ten percent of the take, will set up the whole program of how to take you. And many churches hire these professionals for the church

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growth, or the fundraising programs. The early church didn't know anything of that. They were not very sophisticated, and they hadn't gone to seminary. So all they could do is what they knew to do, just get together and study the Word and pray and fellowship, break bread. "And the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved." It was a natural spontaneous growth as the Lord added to the church.

"Oh, times are different." Why? Has God changed? God's hand is not short that He can't save, neither is His ear heavy. But we are no longer relying upon God; we're no longer relying upon the Holy Spirit. We've sought men's devices and man's ways. And we have forsaken the Word of God and gone to entertaining programs. And we have tried to attract the people by this lavish program of entertainment. "Come and be entertained. See the tallest Christmas tree in the world. See Elijah ascend directly into the clouds." And oh what a trap that is.

There was this particular church that every Christmas was putting on the spectacular program, and the problem is when you draw people to that, you've got to get more spectacular every year. And so, they had the "Living Christmas Tree." "Come and see the living Christmas tree!" And, of course, all of them there in the shape of a Christmas tree singing the carols. Well the next year it had to be a bigger Christmas tree, you know, bigger than the year before, because it's got to be the best. "The greatest living Christmas tree ever." Different costumes and different little gimmicks and gadgets, and finally, as they were developing this Christmas tree, living Christmas tree, year by year, they had just about run out of ideas, when someone had the idea of taking and putting a live angel at the top of the Christmas tree. And they lowered him out of the ceiling, and as the Christmas tree was being formed, he would come out of the ceiling and would be there at the top of the Christmas tree, the live angel. Well something happened to the gears, and as they were letting him down, he got suspended in mid air over the auditorium, and began swinging around and around. And the angel began to cry out, "Get me down from here!" And he got so upset--this is true--he began to curse. "Someone stop this damn thing from swinging!" And he got so sick from spinning, he began to throw up. May that be the fate of all man's endeavors and programs so that we can learn to rely upon God and the power of His Holy Spirit to build the church and to do His work.

"This promise is unto you, and to your children, and to those who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you and you'll become a witness." The gift of God's Holy Spirit is for you tonight. I pray that each of us might be open to God, to receive whatever it is that God may wish to impart to us. That we might become whatever God would have us to be. That we might, indeed, be His witness of His love in this world in which we live today. And so, may God bless you as you go forth, to bear witness of Jesus Christ. And may your life show forth the works of God that He has wrought in you. In His name.