

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE BOOK OF ACTS WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS POURED OUT? - I'm assuming Sproul is involved in the "Strange Fire" conference with MacArthur's invitation and endorsement. So I want to give a quick overview of Sproul's explanation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts *as an act of redemption completion*. In other words, whenever anyone is filled with the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts it is the promised giving of the Spirit for the *inward regeneration of the heart*. It's the prophet Ezekiel's new covenant promised *heart of flesh* replacing the old covenant *heart of stone*. The outpouring of the Spirit is for people *getting saved* in the full new covenant sense of the word.

Sproul begins his message looking at the imparting of the Spirit of God to those appointed to be *Moses' assistants* in Numbers 11. The text says some of the Spirit that was on Moses was taken and given to the 70 assistants and they all began to prophesy. Two men, *Eldad and Medad*, who weren't with the 70 but had the Holy Spirit come upon them, also prophesied. *Joshua* was upset about this and complained to Moses. Moses responded, "...**Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!**" (Numbers 11:29). Sproul points out that Moses' wish was, at that time, not possible because the Holy Spirit wasn't poured out in a permanent, inward fashion under the old covenant. Moses *wished* it could happen. But it couldn't - yet.

From there Sproul goes to the prophecy of *Joel* quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Joel, writing about 700 years before the birth of Christ, spoke of a day when God would pour out His Spirit on all people. About 700 years after Joel made that promise, the Holy Spirit was finally poured out on the believers in the upper room in Acts chapter 2.

Now here's the important point. Sproul argues - and I'm quite certain MacArthur agrees - that the pouring out of the Spirit *throughout* the Book of Acts is the fulfillment of the Old Testament salvation covenant. Sproul goes to great lengths to point out that in each of the *four instances* where the outpouring of the Spirit is mentioned *accompanied by the manifestation of tongues and prophecy* it is God's way of *proving visibly* that the Holy Spirit - just as *Moses longed for* - was now being given to *all* of God's people. That's why, argues Sproul, in each of those four cases in the Book of Acts, *everyone present* speaks in tongues. God is *proving* His indwelling Spirit is for *all* believers. No one is left out.

Sproul argues Luke structures the Book of Acts to show the fulfillment of the church's witness of the gospel in keeping with Jesus' words in **Acts 1:8** - "**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem [Jews] and in all Judea [God-fearers] and Samaria [Samaritans], and to the end of the earth [Gentiles].**"

That's a lot to process on a Sunday teaching time. So let me try to boil it down into two main ideas. Here's what Sproul and MacArthur are saying: **Sproul's idea number one - Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter, is all about the new covenant inward regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.** Sproul says Joel's prophecy promises the very thing *Moses* wanted - God's Spirit for *all* God's people. **Sproul's idea number two - the Apostle Paul confirms that the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant crosses all the borders of gender and ethnicity.** That's the point Sproul tries to establish in quoting **1 Corinthians 12:13**. Sproul and MacArthur take this *conversion text* from Paul and try to apply it to the *baptism in the Holy Spirit* in the Book of Acts.

So I have two goals - just two - in the rest of this teaching time. **First**, I want to argue **Peter had a point to make in quoting Joel's prophecy, and it wasn't equating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 with new covenant regeneration.** And **second**, I want to argue Sproul's use of **1 Corinthians 12:13** doesn't apply at all to the outpourings of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts or Joel's prophecy as it's applied by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost.

- 1) **PETER'S POINT IN QUOTING THE PROPHET JOEL WAS CHARISMATIC IN EMPHASIS, NOT INWARD REGENERATION** - We need to look carefully at Peter's quotation from the Prophet Joel - **Acts 2:16-21** - "**But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: [17] '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; [18] even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. [19] And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; [20] the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. [21] And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'**"

There is simply no missing the *dramatic, visible empowering element in Joel's prophecy*. It is all about *prophecy, visions and dreams*. Yet there is *another* very important Old Testament prophecy about the coming work of the Holy Spirit - **Ezekiel 36:25-27** - "**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. [26] 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. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**" The focus here isn't the "*pouring out*" of His Spirit (Joel), but rather, "*I will put my Spirit within you....*" (26, 27). The clear emphasis of Ezekiel's promise is the giving of a *new heart*. The old stone heart lacked *spiritual receptiveness*.

Notice also how Ezekiel's prophecy has an inward focus of *inward cleansing* - **verse 25** - "**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.**" In addition to the *removal of what was dirty there is the moral direction for new life* - **verse 27** - "**....And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**"

There is no missing the linkage between Ezekiel's promise that the Holy Spirit would inwardly "*sprinkle clean water on you*" (25) and Paul's same terminology as he described the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in **Titus 3:4-5** - "**But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit....**"

Now to the point. Why didn't Peter quote Ezekiel's clear promise of the Holy Spirit's inward transforming, regenerating, moral work? Paul did. And so did Peter on other occasions. But when explaining Acts 2 he doesn't. Why does Peter quote Joel's prophecy of prophecies, manifestations, dreams and visions? There's only one good answer to that question. Peter *knows* the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 - and the rest of the outpourings as well - *are not descriptions or manifestations of regeneration*. Had Peter wanted to convey that idea - as Sproul and MacArthur believe - he had perfectly meaningful prophetic texts to use. He didn't use them because those wonderful texts didn't explain the events at hand.

When Peter chooses Joel's *empowerment prophecy* to explain the events of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit *after* the event he chooses a text that matches *Jesus'* description of the Spirit's outpouring *before* the event - **Acts 1:8** - "**But 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.**"

- 2) **THE CONVERSION TEXT(S) USED BY SPROUL AND MACARTHUR CAN'T BE APPLIED TO THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS** - As R. C. Sproul wraps up his teaching "*Undervaluing Pentecost*" he pulls his talk together referencing two New Testament texts. The first is **1 Corinthians 12:13** - "**For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.**"

Now let me show you the way this verse is translated in every other major translation:

1 Corinthians 12:13 - "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (NASB).

1 Corinthians 12:13 - "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (NKJV).

1 Corinthians 12:13 - "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (NIV).

And, very strangely, even the *Revised Standard Version*, on which the *ESV* is largely based, recognizes the thrust of Paul's argument in **1 Corinthians 12:13** - "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (RSV).

The *ESV*, while an excellent translation, has a very strong *reformed/cessationist component* in its translation committee. Every major translation *but the ESV* translates the Hebrew preposition "en" as "by" rather than "in" in **12:13**. It is translated both ways in the Scriptures and usually *context* determines which way it goes. And every other translation recognizes that that same Hebrew preposition is translated "by" in every other place in which it is used in **1 Corinthians 12**. Hence, almost every version selects the translation "**we were baptized by one Spirit....**" in **verse 13**.

This does *not* work in Sproul's favor. Paul clearly wants to picture the Holy Spirit *as the baptizer*. And the *Body of Christ* is the entity into which we are all baptized. Sproul, however, wants to take **1 Corinthians 12:13** and apply it to the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. In fact, he *needs* to make this text apply because he wants to argue that the "*baptisms in the Holy Spirit*" in the Book of Acts are not anything different from conversion.

But there's a problem. Paul teaches in **1 Corinthians 12:13** that *we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ*. This is a salvation text. This is being, in the words of John's gospel, "*being born of the Spirit*." The problem arises when we look at the Apostle Peter's very *different* explanation of what happened in the baptism *in or with* the Holy Spirit in **Acts 2:32-33** - "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. [33] Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." Notice the difference. It's important. In Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 12:13** the *Holy Spirit* is the *Baptizer* and the *Body of Christ* is what we are all *baptized into*. In Peter's explanation in **Acts 2** *Jesus* is the *Baptizer* and the *Holy Spirit* is what we are *baptized with or in*. This *baptism with the Holy Spirit* clearly lines up with the prophetic words of *John the Baptist* in **Luke 3:16** - "John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." In other words, I'm arguing Paul's wonderful point in **1 Corinthians 12:13** is proving the experience of *conversion* is a *distinct* experience, prior to the **Acts 2** explanation of the *baptism in the Holy Spirit*.