

SPIRITUAL WINDSTORMS

JOHN 20:19-22, ACTS 2:2

I'd like to begin by reading two passages...

Turn in your Bible to John 20 and Acts 2. John 20 occurred on the evening of Jesus' resurrection... Acts 2 a few days following the Lord's ascension to heaven...

In John 20:19 we read, "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."

Then in Acts 2:2, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."

In John 20 the risen Lord surprisingly appears to His weary and defeated followers. The disciples believe in Jesus - and the Lord takes a deep breath. He breathes on them, and tells them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The Greek word translated "*Spirit*" is "*pneuma*" - from which we get our words *pneumonia* and *pneumatic*.

“Pneuma” means *wind or breath*.

When Jesus breathed on His disciples, He drew from deep inside, and gave them something of Himself.

The Spirit rose from deep *within Jesus...* carrying the *nature of Jesus...* to continue the *work of Jesus...*

In that moment the Holy Spirit came as a gentle puff of breath to indwell His followers. *Deep passed unto deep.* Eternal life - the life of Jesus - was imparted from the Lord to His disciples... *He breathed on them...*

But what was a gentle puff of breath following the resurrection became a **windstorm** seven weeks later at the Feast of Pentecost. Perhaps in the same upper room - the disciples gathered again - and once more received the Holy Spirit - but this time there was a greater intensity. It was a new manifestation.

Listen again to how Luke describes the disciples' monumental experience, *“Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”* **The breath of Jesus had intensified into a windstorm!**

And this was not the last spiritual windstorm in the book of Acts. They re-occurred on a frequent basis.

They can even happen today! In fact, I'm praying the wind will begin to blow in this room even as I speak...

Physical windstorms are powerful forces of nature that come in various forms - *dust storms, sandstorms, thunderstorms, blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes...*

The wind swirls in and blows hard. It drives the dust, or sand, or rain, or snow, or hail. It picks up whatever object it captures and unleashes it like a torpedo.

Tornados can pack winds as strong as 250 mph, and can cut a swath a mile wide and 50 miles long.

Hurricanes are massive windstorms. They can swell to 300 miles in diameter and impact an entire coastline.

My wife grew up in South Florida, and she tells stories of her father preparing for a hurricane... He would board up the windows of the house, and would climb up into the palm trees and pick the coconuts - lest they become storm-propelled cannonballs.

In both a tornado and a hurricane it's not just the wind that causes damage - but the debris it catapults.

And this is what happens in a ***spiritual windstorm***...

The power - the dynamic - of the Holy Spirit swirls into a church, and sweeps that community of believers off their knees. It propels the church to action.

The Spirit is now a driving force behind their witness, and service, and love. A church that was just taking up space becomes an influence on its community.

As in a physical windstorm a gust of the supernatural stirs up the debris. The Holy Spirit captures whatever is in His path, and launches it with heavenly propulsion.

And if the wind is the Holy Spirit; then, we are the debris... *I hope you're not offended by that analogy, but spiritually speaking there is no better symbolism.*

Psalm 103:14 says of God, “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” On our own, we’re as useful to God as the dust off the top shelf.

We’re nothing but lint... *until God’s Spirit grips us in His influence.* When caught up in the wind of the Spirit, worthless debris gets turned into spiritual missiles...

A church has no lasting influence on its community until it’s *stirred up and launched out* by God’s Spirit.

I heard of a news report from Cheyenne, Wyoming.

A large twister blew through the area, amazingly missing the downtown. It did though strike a church on the outskirts. The next day the local newspaper read, “Thankfully, the cyclone that destroyed Cheyenne Community Church, *did no real damage to our town.*”

How tragic! Such a statement should never be said of a church - *that if it were gone nothing would be lost?*

Yet this is the case with many churches today! If we’re going to make a difference in our community we need *fresh breezes* and *strong gusts* of the Holy Spirit.

And when this happens we call it **revival**.

This is what I want to speak about today, **spiritual windstorms**. I want to discuss the subject of **revival**.

The Baptist churches I grew up in always had an annual revival. The revival usually lasted several nights in a row. The best ones seemed to be in a tent. They’d bring in a guest preacher - add a soloist or a musical group - maybe someone who could relate to the youth.

There might even be a prize for the person who brought the most people. The whole idea was to generate some excitement in the local church... *But this is **NOT** what I mean when I speak of “revival.”*

A biblical revival is more than a block of meetings on the church calendar. It's **a spiritual windstorm** - a movement of God's Spirit in the hearts of His people.

Throughout history, the Holy Spirit has graciously visited humanity with spiritual awakenings. *These movements have **shaped** the Church, and **saved** the lost, and **sent** society in a more godly trajectory.*

Scottish preacher, William Nicoll, once wrote, “It is by revivals that the Church of God makes its most visible advance. When all things seem calm, when no breath stirs the air, when the sea is like lead and the sky is low and grey, when all worship seems to have ended, but the worship of vanity. It is then that the Spirit of God is poured upon the Church. Suddenly, the Christianity of the apostles and martyrs, not that of the philosophers and liberals, rises from the catacombs of oblivion, and appears young and fresh in the midst of the obsolete things of yesterday.” *And it's for this we long...* For real Christianity to rise, and for God's kingdom to advance.

This is what happened in the 12th Century AD with Peter Waldo and his **Waldensians**. These believers renounced the materialism of the Church, and believed everyone should have a Bible in their own language.

It was a prelude to the further awakening that was to come. The **Protestant Reformation** lasted over one-hundred years, and left behind the Five Solas of orthodoxy: [by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.](#)

We could also point to the 18th Century's *First and Second Great Awakenings* as tremendous times of revival. The **First Great Awakening** led to the abolition of slavery in England, and changes to child labor laws.

The **Second Great Awakening** saw American churches packed to the gills. In the South, both slave owners and slaves gathered in open fields to worship God, *because the churches weren't large enough to accommodate them.* It was the beginning of the "*Camp Meeting*" - a tradition of Southern evangelicalism.

In **1904** a Welch coal miner, named Evan Roberts, had been praying fervently for revival. He was just 25 years old - a tall, skinny fellow - an unlikely flashpoint for anything of colossal proportions. He had been studying for the ministry when he asked his pastor if he could hold some evening meetings in the church.

At first the attendance was sparse, but before long shops were closing early so employees could get to the church and reserve a seat for the meetings.

Soon the roadways to the church were clogged with out-of-town seekers coming to see what was happening. Often, the services lasted until 4:30 AM.

Sin was confessed. Sinners converted. Homes and families were restored. For the next couple of years, all across Wales bars closed, jails emptied, churches were filled - even soccer matches were canceled to avoid conflicts with the revival. Welsh miners were so transformed by the Holy Spirit their mules had to be retrained to work without the prodding of curse words.

During the **Welsh Revival of 1904**, two kids were one day heard offering their explanations of what was going on in their community... One child said to the other, *“Do you know what is happening in our town?”*

The other child replied, *“No, I don’t - except that Sunday comes every day now.”* The first child added, *“Why, Jesus has come to live in our town.”*

And here are two great definitions for a revival. It’s when *Jesus comes to reside and rule in a community*, and when *it feels like everyday is a day of worship.*

Of course, our family *“Calvary Chapel,”* was born in a revival. The 1960s spawned a generation disillusioned by materialism, war in Vietnam, and racial inequality.

The youth rejected the shallowness of their parents’ morality, and immersed themselves in drugs and free sex. That’s when God sent a **Jesus Movement** which taught the Bible, *giving the young people the truth that they lacked* - and emphasized the Holy Spirit, *providing them the heavenly high for which they craved.*

It began in the heart of Chuck and Kay Smith on the beaches of Southern California, and swept the nation.

When it comes to revival I like the observation by Preacher Alexander Whyte, “There is a Divine mystery about revivals. God's sovereignty is in them.”

In other words, when the Spirit of God moves in revival, patterns and predictability fly out the window. God takes the helm and the unexpected occurs.

Baptist preacher, Vance Havner once said, “When I was a boy, preachers talked about ‘holding a revival.’ But what we really need is somebody who will turn a revival loose.” Revival is more than holding a meeting.

It occurs when God turns His Spirit loose in the Church; then turns the Church loose on a needy world.

This is what happened on the day of Pentecost.

A spiritual windstorm sent from God’s throne caused the church in Jerusalem to *soar* and *roar*. Luke paints the picture in Acts 2:2, “*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*”

When you do a close inspection of verse 2, you find some interesting insights regarding spiritual revivals.

Let me share with you a few...

First, the Greek word translated “*suddenly*” means “*unawares or unexpectedly.*” When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples it happened **spontaneously**.

In nature when serious winds begin to stir the storms get tracked by meteorologists. As conditions become conducive

for a tornado a *watch* is issued. When a tornado is spotted they upgrade it to a *warning*.

But when the Spirit came upon the church there was no *watch or warning*... they were just *waiting* as Jesus had told them - **resting in what God had promised**.

Waiting implies *no anxiety, no uncertainty* - just the expectation that what the Father promises He delivers.

When the Spirit came upon the disciples **a sound was heard**. The word translated "**sound**" is the word "**echos**" - from which we get our word *echo*.

Here's its definition, "**a sound of uncertain affinity - a loud or confused noise - a roar.**" I've never been in high winds that would constitute a tornado or hurricane, yet here's an account I read from someone who has...

"The wind blew so hard the walls of the house shook. We looked outside through a window - and surprisingly everything was flying away. We couldn't even open the door because it would've been impossible to close it afterward. One unforgettable thing is the "whistle" of the wind, like a train approaching near your house."

This was what happened on the day of Pentecost when God's Spirit came upon the church, it was like a windstorm. They heard the roar of a ferocious wind.

One author paraphrases Luke's description, "**Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force...**" A wind from heaven rocked their world.

Immediately after His resurrection Jesus drew a puff of air and *breathed gently* on His disciples - but here He blows on them *a mighty, rushing, gale-force wind*.

Both experiences were indicative of the encounter the disciples had with the Holy Spirit at that time.

In John 20 the disciples saw the risen Lord, and their faith was rewarded with the indwelling of the Spirit.

But in Acts 2 at Pentecost when the Spirit came **upon them** it was for empowerment. This time Jesus blew hard on His disciples. He filled their sails with a wind that would cause the Gospel ship to sail to its destination, despite the storms it would inevitably face.

Don't forget the early church was born in a firestorm of persecution. The Greek word translated "**witness**" is "**martyr**." Today, a *martyr* is a person who dies for their faith. This meaning developed when most of the first *witnesses* paid the ultimate price to stand for Jesus.

Yet even in such a discouraging climate the church prevailed in its mission... *because of the Holy Spirit*.

Notice too, the word "**rushing**" means "**to carry**." A strong wind captures stuff and carries it through the air.

Remember, the impact of a windstorm is produced not just by its high velocity winds, but the winds pick up debris and propel it at *tremendous speeds* and for *far distances*. And this is what God wants to do with us!

We're the debris that He wants to launch, and send, and use to strike targets that need His love and truth.

Folks get *stirred up* and **sent out** in a windstorm! Missionaries get *raised up* in a revival. God gives out marching orders. In revival times, servants of God who were to content to *pack a pew*, begin to *get involved!*

And notice, the wind in Acts 2 was a **“mighty”** wind.

The Amplified Version correctly renders it, **“the rushing of a violent tempest blast...”** This is not a mild breeze that leaves you untouched. It’s a rustling wind.

The Spirit picks up the pieces of your life, blows them about, and rearranges them as He pleases.

The spiritual windstorm is a strong wind that impacts you, and dramatically **alters your life**. You’re different after you’ve been touched by a **“mighty”** wind of God.

And like a tornado or a hurricane you don’t experience a mighty wind without incurring some damage. The power of the Spirit *cleans you up* before He *sends you out...* *Conviction occurs - Repentance takes place - Brokenness sets in - Sin gets confessed - Old habits are abandoned - Evil gets renounced...*

Don’t think you can become an effective follower of Jesus; *and conduct business as usual*. To seek revival is to invite a windstorm of change to blow into your life and blow out all your selfishness and pride.

This **“rushing mighty wind”** definitely had a **violent impact** on the early church. Days later Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Spirit and played the hypocrite.

We're told God judged them quickly. He struck them dead.
As with most storms there were casualties.

Hey, the only people who stand up in a windstorm are those who bow down - *ask Ananias and Sapphira.*

It reminds me of the three preachers who were discussing the revivals that had occurred in each of their local churches. The Baptist pastor said, "Praise the Lord we had 10 new people come to know Jesus."

Not to be outdone, the Assemblies pastor fired back, "Well, we had 10 new people filled with the Holy Spirit."

That's when the Presbyterian pastor said, "I've got even better news than that! As a result of our revival we had 10 cantankerous people leave our church."

Sometimes that's what happens in a revival. Stubborn and unrepentant folks who dig in their heels and refuse to change, *get convicted or else uprooted.*

A spiritual windstorm is peaceful **and** disturbing.

God brings peace to our heart, but an unsettledness to our life. The Spirit *takes* us over, and *shakes* us up, and *bakes* us in the fires of adversity, and *makes* us what He wants us to be. A windstorm is the confluence of all kinds of pressure cells and atmospheric stresses.

My point is, if your goal is to maintain the status quo, and keep your life neatly arranged according to predetermined plans, a windstorm is an uncomfortable place to be. When stuff starts swirling about you're no longer in control. **But if you want to touch God and know His power, you'll want to be in the wind!**

Another great spiritual awakening reached the shores of Britain and Ireland around the year 400 AD. Men like Ninian, Patrick, and Columba risked their lives to spread the Gospel among local nature worshippers.

And the spiritual awakening that ensued had powerful and far-reaching effects. Celtic Christianity snatched the British Isles from the darkness of paganism into the light and truth of the Word of God.

And history tells us this brave brand of Christianity had a special name for the Holy Spirit. They called Him, “An Geadh-Glas” - a Gaelic phrase that means “The Wild Goose.” To these fearless Christians, not only was the Holy Spirit the gentle dove who rested on Jesus at His baptism, He was also the wild goose who roams the skies and lands wherever He pleases.

And I love this idiom for the Holy Spirit.

A **wild goose** can't be *trained* or *tracked*. You don't control him, or bend his instincts to your will. He has a mind of His own. And the same is true of God's Spirit.

A wild goose is noisy, and raucous, and aggressive.

The bird's honk is loud and challenging. Up-close, a wild goose can be unnerving - even frightening.

At Jesus' baptism the Spirit cooed like a dove, but in Acts 2, He swooped down from heaven, and filled the disciples with new wine. Overwhelmed with joy, they were *ecstatic in their praise* and *bold in their witness*.

Later, they were even accused of a morning drunk!

In Acts 2, *the Goose was on the loose*. God's Spirit stirred up His Church. He made His men bold, daring, and dangerous. They were a threat to the enemy.

The other day, I had a firsthand encounter with a wild goose. There's a lake near my house. Wild geese are often on the lake. I was strolling by, minding my own business, when one of the birds decided to land on me.

He might've honked, but I had on my headphones. I didn't hear him, or see him, until he was almost on me.

This huge goose was in the air behind me, and sailed inches from my head. His trajectory landed him three feet in front of me. His fly-by scared me to death.

If I hadn't *ducked* that goose would've hit me...

It was nearly my *swan song*...

It was definitely *fowl play*...

I'm just not *down* with the idea that wild geese are roaming my neighborhood... it gives me *goose bumps*.

From now on I'm looking around, taking a *gander*...

I'm definitely trying to be more nimble, in case I have to jump out of the way. I'm playing it *loosey goosey*.

*Well, enough with the **PUN**ishment*, but here's my point, Celtic Christianity got it right. Sometimes the *Gentle Dove* acts like a *Wild Goose*. Thus, our faith needs to be flexible. We should all live *loosey goosey*...

You never know when the Spirit will drop in on you to do a new thing! We're to be *led by the Spirit - live in the Spirit -*

walk in the Spirit - be filled with the Spirit! In a nutshell, the Christian life is **a wild goose chase.**

Before he died the world's foremost authority on the subject of revival was a man named *J. Edwin Orr.*

In the early 1970s he was presenting a series of lectures on revival at Columbia Bible College...

A student asked him, *"Dr. Orr, besides praying for revival, what can I do to help bring it about?"* Without hesitation, Orr replied, *"You can let it begin with you."*

Revival that's community-wide, even world-wide, always begins with a mighty rushing wind of the Spirit that blows through and cleans out God's house first.

Again verse 2, this *"rushing mighty wind filled the whole house."* Here's another revival insight. The word translated *"filled"* means *"to cram, or permeate."*

The wind of the Holy Spirit filled **every corner** of the room. Believers became so saturated with the Spirit, His influence colored all that they thought and did.

Again the Amplified Version describes the disciples in the upper room... *"they were all filled - diffused throughout their souls - with the Holy Spirit..."* *Have you been **diffused throughout** by the Holy Spirit?*

When my wife, Kathy, cooks a roast, she slow cooks it in a crock pot - and all day long the aroma of that roast rises and invades every corner of the house.

When it's time to eat everyone already knows what's for dinner. All day their senses have been primed.

And this happens in a revival. *Spiritual perception is heightened. Folks sense God's presence and power. His love and joy is so thick you can cut it with a knife.*

In a revival people sometimes get saved before the pastor preaches. They walk in, and sense so strongly that God is there, they immediately want to respond.

In a actual windstorm - say a sandstorm on the edge of the desert - there's nowhere to escape the wind and sand. It seeps into the house through its cracks and crevasses. It comes under the doors and between the window panes. The wind's influence is inescapable....

And this is the influence of the Holy Spirit in a spiritual windstorm... Revival produces such a weighty revelation of the reality of God, that people are forced to consider Jesus, and deal decisively with their sin...

It's as if they get sandblasted by the Spirit. He cuts through layers of veneer, to restore an inner purity.

In today's world it's so easy for people to ignore the things of God, and shrug their shoulders at Christianity, and assume a *kind of take it or leave it attitude*. The answer for this ambivalence is a spiritual windstorm!

And notice in Acts 2 the word "**whole.**" The influence of the Spirit "**filled the whole house where they were sitting.**" The Greek word is "**holos**" - from which we get the word "**holistic**" - it means "**complete or thorough.**"

Holistic medicine is the treatment of not just the body, but the body and the soul - *the whole person*. And the influence of the Holy Spirit is always holistic!

He lives inside us *not just on Sunday, but seven days a week...* He alters *not just our eternity, but our today...* He governs *not only my ministry, but my sexuality...* He affects us *not only spiritually, but morally...* He touches us *not only at church, but on the job and at home...* He influences *not just what we say or think, but how we go about our daily lives...*

When a spiritual windstorm begins to blow no corner of our life remains unaffected by the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the book of Acts, the author is describing *a revival... an ongoing windstorm.* In Acts 2 the wind blows hard. You even hear it whistle. By the end of that first day, 3000 souls had been captured in its swirl.

In Acts 4 the house physically shakes... In Acts 5 the wind whips violently. It takes out a hypocritical couple.

But even the *wake-up call* doesn't diminish the freshness and power of this mighty wind. It creates a storm of love that permeates all that the disciples do.

Acts 4 sums up life in the midst of this windstorm as “*great grace*” and “*great power.*” And for the remainder of Acts this wind howls and blows and sends Jesus' disciples to the four corners of the earth as His light and witness. *I want to be caught up in a windstorm!*

In my research for this message I discovered that hurricanes originate in a geographical area known as *The Doldrums.* It's a narrow belt of ocean with low pressure - little, if no, wind - and generally calm seas.

The doldrums lie near the equator - between the trade winds... In the Atlantic Ocean the doldrums are north of the

equator, thus there're no hurricanes in the South Atlantic... In the Pacific, the doldrums are on both sides of the equator, thus typhoons can hit in either Northern or Southern Hemispheres. **Ironically, all windstorms originate in the middle of the doldrums.**

And let me say the same is true spiritually.

Fresh breezes of the Holy Spirit - new gusts of supernatural strength - heavenly hurricanes of revival - also start in what we would call the *doldrums* of life...

One day, a Christian, or group of Christians, decides they've wasted too much time in the spiritual doldrums.

They get honest before God. They admit their life is lacking - that they're just going through *the motions of devotion* - and they're living below what God intended!

Their Christianity is powerless.

Their witness is listless.

Their service for Jesus has grown tedious.

Their spirituality has become monotonous.

Their morality seems meaningless.

One day this person or persons wakes up floating in the doldrums. They admit their discontent, and become desperate enough to pray to God to send the wind!...

Here's what we should realize, if you or I find ourselves in the doldrums - *if we've hit a lull* - it only means we're in perfect position to catch a gust of wind!

The Holy Spirit starts His work, at *the point of our neediness*. God begins *His movement* in *our doldrums*.

Again, Vance Havner wrote, “The greatest need for America is an old-fashioned, heaven-born, God-sent revival. Throughout the history of the church, when clouds have hung the lowest, when sin has seemed blackest and faith has been weakest, there have always been a faithful few who have besought the Lord to revive His work... And God has always answered such supplication, filling each heart with His love, kindling each soul with fire from above...”

I love that quote because it highlights the two keys to spiritual revival: **our desperation** and **God’s willingness**... *God is willing, but are we desperate?*

I once thought that as the years went by pastoral ministry would get easier - *instead it’s gotten harder.*

Without the Holy Spirit I’m just a sailboat on a stagnant sea. I’m dead in the water. As the years go by I realize more and more how much I need the wind!

Pastors tend to be like Kevin Fast. He’s a Lutheran pastor and a strongman competitor from Canada. On September 18, 2009, Kevin set his ninth Guinness World Record in the category of *heavy pulling*.

He strapped himself into a harness connected to a C17 Cargo plane. The aircraft weighs over 400k lbs.

With his sneakers digging into the runway He leaned forward, and with all his might, he started to pull.

Kevin moved that airplane 8.8 meters, nearly 30 feet, in 1 minute and 16 seconds - setting the world record for “**the heaviest aircraft pulled by a human being.**” It was a tremendous act of near-superhuman strength.

Yet sadly Kevin's feat resembles the approach many pastors and churches are taking toward God's work.

*Spreading the Gospel and planting churches and discipling people can be like that huge airplane. The enormous strength of a few gifted individuals can pull it along for *short distances* and for *brief intervals*.*

But there's a much easier way to move a C17 Cargo plane than **pull it...** *you can crank it up and let it fly!*

And this is what happens in a revival. When we get the wind of the Spirit under our wings - we begin to soar! Rather than inch forward, God's work takes off.

If Pastor Chuck told CC pastors once, he told us a thousand times. He would quote to us Galatians 3, "**having begun in the Spirit are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**" Pastors like sailors know, that the voyage is better when the wind is at your back...

And this is why we need revival - a windstorm!

Several weeks ago, on May 6th our country marked an annual observance sponsored by the National Weather Service - **Hurricane Preparedness Week**.

Americans in coastal areas are suppose to spend May 7-12 in preparation for hurricane-force winds.

But I believe if we could get a glimpse of God's calendar, this is also what these days are about...

All of us who live close to the heavenly shore need to be preparing for a windstorm. There's nothing we can do to

deserve such an outpouring. It's by grace, but we can care enough about God and His people *to ask!*

Don't you long for more of God and His influence?

That God's presence will be heavy as we gather...

That the strongholds of sin will be broken...

That love among God's family will flourish...

That God's peace will flow down like a river...

That a spiritual awakening will occur that stops the crime in our community, and dries up drug traffic, and brings back respect in our schools, and causes racial groups to live in harmony, and blesses marriages, and awakens men to be the leaders in their homes...

These days, I'm asking God for a spiritual windstorm, and I'm anticipating the first gusts in the near future...

*I hope you'll join me in **the asking...***

Let's cry to the Lord Jesus for a true, heaven-sent, Holy Spirit revival. *And let's pray that it begins in us!*