

I.N.I.

Pentecost
May 23, 2010
Joel 2:28-32

In Christ Jesus, the Savior of His people Israel and a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

How has God revealed Himself to you? As we have been reading in our Old Testament study, God revealed Himself by dreams and visions and through the gift of the Holy Spirit by direct inspiration to His prophets. When God wanted young Joseph to know that he would rule over his brothers He revealed that to him in a dream. Years later when He wanted Jacob to not be afraid to journey down to Egypt, He spoke to the aged believer in a vision at night. God spoke to Moses in a burning bush. When God sent His prophets to reveal the truth of the coming Messiah who would be born of a virgin, who would suffer and die for all people, whose kingdom would be eternal and extend over all the world, He gave His Spirit in a special way to Isaiah and Daniel and Zechariah so they wrote by inspiration.

These revelations through dreams and visions and direct prophecy by the gift of the Holy Spirit did not come to all of God's people, but only a select few. Through these dreams and visions, God gave His prophets insights into His plan of salvation that the ordinary believer in Israel did not have. Until God revealed it to His prophet, no one in Israel but Isaiah knew for certain that the woman through whom God's Savior would be born would be a virgin. (Is. 7) Until God revealed to Micah that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem, no one knew that. (Micah 5) Until David spoke so clearly of Christ's crucifixion, no one could have known so many of the details of that event. (Ps. 22) Through dreams and visions, God gave His prophets a fuller revelation of Himself and His will and of His plan of salvation. Two weeks ago we heard of how God revealed His will for Nineveh to the prophet Jonah, who really didn't want to hear and obey His will.

There was one time when God took of the Spirit that was on Moses and inspired 70 elders who were to help Moses judge the people, so that they too prophesied for that one time. When Joshua heard of two of these elders prophesying in the camp he ran to Moses and told him to stop them. What was Moses' reply? **"OH, THAT ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM!"**

This wish by Moses was granted by God as Joel says, **"AFTERWARD...BEFORE THE COMING OF THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD."** The prophet Joel is prophesying of a time when the LORD would pour out His spirit on all of God's people; boys & girls; men & women; young & old, even the lowliest of slaves.

When would this be? Remember Scripture must interpret Scripture. We have it revealed for us here in God's Word. This morning we read in Acts 2 of the miraculous events of Pentecost. These disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages. When the people asked themselves **"WHATEVER COULD THIS MEAN?"** Peter answered them, **"MEN OF JUDEA AND ALL WHO DWELL IN JERUSALEM, LET THIS BE KNOWN TO YOU, AND HEED MY WORDS. FOR THESE ARE NOT DRUNK, AS YOU SUPPOSE, SINCE IT IS ONLY THE THIRD HOUR OF THE DAY. BUT THIS IS WHAT WAS SPOKEN BY THE PROPHET JOEL:** Then Peter quoted the verses of our text Joel 2:28-32.

Today some claim that Joel's promise is being fulfilled when people are moved to babble in tongues, in words that cannot be understood, and so they encourage one another to seek such a gift

of speaking in tongues. But that is not what the Lord is saying through Joel. We read again, **I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS; AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY.** Literally, the word “prophecy” means to proclaim and reveal God’s will. That’s what the disciples were doing on Pentecost; they were speaking of the wonderful works of God! In the New Testament era we have the revealed Word of God in written form. It is the Bible. All of God’s people can read this revelation—boys & girls; men & women; young & old; rich & poor, slave or free. And they then can tell others about it.

Old Testament believers were familiar with the Spirit of God and His life-giving work. In the first chapter of Genesis we read, **THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM, AND VOID; AND DARKNESS WAS ON THE FACE OF THE DEEP. AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS HOVERING OVER THE FACE OF THE WATERS.** King David, a thousand years before Christ, prayed, **DO NOT CAST ME AWAY FROM YOUR PRESENCE, AND DO NOT TAKE YOUR HOLY SPIRIT FROM ME.** If Old Testament believers had already received the Holy Spirit, why does Joel foretell the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Two Hebrew words in the first verse answers that question for us. “**Pour out**” and “**all flesh.**” The word “**pour out**” refers to an abundant outpouring rather than a sprinkling of the Holy Spirit. Even a few scattered drops of the life-giving Spirit would be a rich and unmerited blessing from God, but Joel promises that when God **pours out** His Spirit in the New Testament times, it will be a downpour of the Spirit and it will be on “**all flesh.**” This word is often used to describe the sinful condition in which all people are born since Adam fell into sin. When we understand our natural condition, that we are flesh and that all flesh is grass and spiritually lifeless, helpless, and worthless, we begin to realize what a glorious gift God promises through His prophet to pour out on all people. For although the flesh counts for nothing in spiritual things, the Spirit gives life as a gracious free gift to undeserving sinners.

So we have been entitled as our theme:

PRAISE GOD FOR THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I: IT IS A GLORIOUS GIFT

II: IT IS A NECESSARY GIFT

III: IT IS A PRACTICAL GIFT

IV: IT IS A SAVING GIFT

What is the gift—“My Spirit,” says the Lord. It is the third person of God coming upon us sinful human beings. This occurs when we are converted to believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Through the Word, God pours out His Spirit on all of His people, creating faith, strengthening faith and preserving us in faith in Jesus Christ. We have the Holy Spirit living within us in His powerful Gospel. We have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Through His Word the Holy Spirit produces fruits of faith in our lives and not only enables us but compels us to live for Christ and not for self. It is the glorious gift of the Holy Spirit upon us and it is absolutely necessary, for without the Spirit we could not be brought to faith.

But it is also a most practical gift. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was sprinkled, dripped out on only a few to be able to reveal God’s will and prophecy to the people as we mentioned earlier. But now in the New Testament times the Holy Spirit has been poured out in rich measure upon all believers; all followers; all of His disciples so that we all have the ability to prophecy; that is to speak and to tell others about Jesus.

So do we expect to get this revelation from dreams and visions? Can we trust and rely upon our dreams and visions? No, Joel is speaking in Old Testament terms to say that God will grant all His people the complete revelation of His ways, which in times past was reserved for only a few chosen

prophets. Much like Isaiah when he speaks of all of God's people becoming priests and offering sacrifices---he did not mean that we in the New Testament would continue to bring burnt offerings to God upon some altar dressed in priest's clothing, but that all of us could bring before God the offerings of our hearts, pray for one another and announce forgiveness of sins to all people. Already in the Old Testament, Isaiah warned against visions and dreams of mediums and spiritists, saying: **TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY! IF THEY DO NOT SPEAK ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT IN THEM.**

The rich man in hell wanted his brothers back in the world to receive a special revelation from God, but was told, **"THEY HAVE MOSES AND THE PROPHETS; LET THEM HEAR THEM."** Paul speaks of the good work of serving as God's prophets and spokesmen in the New Testament when he says, **ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE COMPLETE, THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.**

The work of the prophet was not just to receive God's Word, but to reveal it to others. So also we are not just to read and hear God's Word but to proclaim it to others as well. We see the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the believers and enabled them to speak in languages they had never learned so that the visitors to Jerusalem could hear the Good News of Jesus in their own language. He does the same today when our little children proclaim to us the Christmas story on Christmas Eve, or sing songs in our worship services. He does the same through you men and women when you teach in Sunday School or Vacation Bible School the wonderful works of God in Christ. He does the same when you, young and old tell your neighbors and friends about Jesus. That same Spirit opens the mouths of God's people to speak like prophets of God and to witness, and He does that without respect to race, gender, age, social or economic status.

Joel now jumps in time to describe the time before the end of the world. This is not unusual in Old Testament prophecies. The New Testament era was looked upon as one compact period of time when all of these things would take place; even though there are now more than 2,000 years between the events of Christ's first coming and His second. This word picture of the sights and sounds of battle and the signs in the heavens is similar to other prophetic descriptions of the great day of the Lord---Judgment Day. Jesus Himself said in Matt. 24:29: **" IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT; THE STARS WILL FALL FROM HEAVEN, AND THE POWERS OF THE HEAVENS WILL BE SHAKEN.**

Are these fearful, scary words? Not for the believer in Christ. Joel says, **AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.** We have inherited all of the blessings of Pentecost and have been prepared by the Spirit's working in our hearts to face, to survive and to be delivered from the final judgment. For the unbeliever, the last day is one of fearful judgment; but for the believing child of God in Christ the last day is the most joy filled day ever!

This gift of the Holy Spirit has been given to you, and to me--the gift of faith in Jesus Christ; the gift of knowing and learning His Word; the gift of being able to witness and testify to the truth of His Word and to profess what we know and believe in our hearts. The gift of the Spirit that will continue to prepare your hearts and mine through faith to be able to stand on that last day with confident joy relying upon the life and death, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus alone for our salvation.

The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in his letter to the Romans: **FOR "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED."** He then goes on to write: **HOW THEN SHALL THEY CALL ON HIM IN WHOM THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED? AND HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? AND HOW SHALL THEY PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? AS IT IS WRITTEN: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" ... SO THEN FAITH COMES BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.**

Some churches offer all kinds of social services, recreational activities and facilities. They get involved in governmental policies and promote the physical welfare of society and their community, and sometimes we feel a little apologetic for our own church when all it offers to the world is the Word! But what does this world really need more than the Word? **NOTHING!**

The Good News of Jesus' sacrifice for mankind is God's call to all sinners, near and far. **"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.** Jesus earned salvation for us, whoever is moved by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus, to call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel in the Word and the Gospel in the Sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Church is here to proclaim God's Word, to preach forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name to our community here and throughout the world. God has poured out His Spirit upon us and our children so that we can extend His Gospel call to others. May the Holy Spirit lead us to continue to do this work, day after day, week after week, year after year, until the final day of the Lord dawns and Jesus comes again to judge the living and the dead. Then we who rely and believe on Jesus for our salvation will hear the most glorious words of all: **'COME, YOU BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD:**

May the gift of the Spirit move us to GET THE WORD OUT!

Amen