

The Gift and Gifts of Pentecost (*Acts 1:4, Eph 4:7-8*)

Introduction – Having ascended to His throne, the King of kings sends just what He promised (John 14:25-26, 16:7). These events are all related – resurrection, ascension, gift-giving. They mark the beginning of the new creation, the new humanity, the New Jerusalem, the born-again Israel, and the establishment of a holy people upon the earth.

The Promised Gift (Acts 1:4, 2:1-4) – This holy people had been given marching orders, but Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem for “*the Promise of the Father.*” In Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem would be constituted. Just as the Spirit hovered over the earth in creation (Gen 1:2), so the Spirit would hover over this new creation (Acts 2:3). There was a sound from heaven, and the army of Israel was born-again (Ezek 37:1-14). People had gathered from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5) and the curse of the tower of Babel was reversed, people now hearing and understanding the Word of God in their own tongues. The ministry of Christ was being fulfilled and secured, for the Holy Spirit was the gift of the Father and the Son to the church (Acts 1:5, 2:38).

Why Pentecost? – Pentecost is the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks (or the Feast of the Harvest) and was one of the great Israelite feast days before this event. Celebrated fifty days after the Sabbath following Passover, Pentecost was always celebrated on an eighth-day. Rather than unleavened bread, Pentecost was celebrated with fine, leavened bread and wine, and all the people gathered in Jerusalem to partake of the peace-offering meal with God and His people (Lev 23:17-21). Passover was a remembrance of the affliction of Egypt. Pentecost was a remembrance of the spread of the blessing of God upon the land for His people. Pentecost always celebrated the gifts of God. Pentecost is the day to remember and celebrate the gift and the gifts of God, sent from the Father and the Son, of and by the Holy Spirit, to the people of God.

The Gifts of Christ (Eph 4:7-8) – Paul, quoting Psalm 68, notes that when Christ ascended, He gave gifts to men. Following this, according to the work of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of Christ equipped some to be apostles and prophets (Eph 4:11). These were foundational gifts (Eph 2:20), and Paul is using temple-language, because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. He also gave some to be evangelists and pastor-teachers (4:11) to build upon those foundations.

Nature of the Gift – While the Word given to us is infallible, and the Holy Spirit perfect in holiness, the manifestation of these gifts in men not yet fully sanctified means that the apostles, prophets (then), and the evangelists and pastors (then and now) were never perfect. But the goal is that we grow up into the perfect man, the true body of Jesus (4:12-13). Because we are still in process of this perfecting, Paul instructs us to put off the old man and put on the new man (4:20-24). This is Pentecost-work. This is Holy Spirit work. Things are being renewed, reborn, recreated, and reversed in us by God. So we are told to not grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30-31), but instead we are to live in community in just the way the Trinity lives in community (Eph 4:32-5:2), giving ourselves to one another.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-7) – We do not have time to develop all that there is to learn in 1 Cor 12 about the gifts of the Spirit. But we should note a couple of corresponding truths. Gifts of the Spirit are given to everyone in Christ, and these diverse gifts are given for the profit of all. They are given so that we might give. The point of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is so that we become like God, united in our diversity by our love, our communal living, our mutual sacrificing of ourselves to one another. Remember, Paul was writing this to a church writhing in factions, schisms, divisions and rivalries. Imagine a riot breaking out in the middle of taking the Lord’s Supper and you get a picture of what was going on in Corinth. Paul knew that some were weak and sick, and some had even died because they failed to discern the Lord’s body (1 Cor 11:30). They had been given the Holy Spirit, but they were grieving the Spirit.

A Gift-giving God – The Father gave the Son. The Father and the Son gave the Spirit. The Spirit gives Himself, filling believers with the Word of Christ and manifesting His presence in various spiritual gifts. The Spirit writes the law of God upon new hearts born by His power, bearing fruit resembling God Himself (Gal 5:22f). A new humanity has been created.

The Work of the Spirit – The gospel does go out in power and we are the recipients of that Spirit-empowered gospel. This is Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39). This Spirit created your new life in Christ, and this Spirit will continue His perfect work in you. This is all of grace and all by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who sends His Spirit to us.

Grieving the Spirit – But we are not yet perfect. We see signs of the Spirit’s work, but we long for more. In our day, we do not see the kinds of awakenings as at Pentecost and in other days of the church since then. Come, Holy Spirit and grant regeneration. We still battle with internal strife and factions. Come, Holy Spirit, and grant us the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man. We still battle with the deeds of the flesh. Come, Holy Spirit, and root out our bitterness and malice and make us a kind, forgiving people, imitating the very God who dwells in us. What are we to do? “*...how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*” (Luke 11:13). That God has given and continues to give Himself is nothing less than amazing grace.

Little Saints Notes

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Acts 1:4-5

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Do you remember what day we call this when Jesus said these words (we talked about it last Sunday)? –

Then God fulfilled this promise 10 days later, on Pentecost. Read Acts 2:1-4. What were the three amazing things that happened, recorded in those verses?

1 –

2 –

3 –

God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit and His power to His church that day. What happened that day when Peter preached (read Acts 2:41)?