

**Joel 2:28,29. <sup>28</sup> 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.**

### **God Pours Out His Spirit On All His People**

#### **1. So that his Word is Proclaimed**

#### **2. So that We Have New Life**

The Spirit of God came upon Ezekiel and he saw a vision of dry bones (Ezekiel 37). David writes of the speaking the Word of the Lord after having the Spirit of the Lord come upon him (2 Samuel 23). In the Old Testament this is a rather frequent refrain. The Spirit of the Lord came upon a prophet and he spoke God's Word to God's people. This is how God chose to reveal his will in the Old Testament. God spoke through a chosen few. He used a few people exclusively to share his word and reveal his will. He spoke to and through Moses and the prophets. He spoke to and through David and the patriarchs like Abraham and Jacob. One author put it this way. *When God wanted Joseph to know that he would rule over his brothers God sent Joseph a dream. When God wanted Jacob to know that he need not fear going down to Egypt he spoke to the aged patriarch in a vision at night. Because God wanted his people to trust in a Savior who would bear their sins, he gave his Spirit to prophets such as Joel and Isaiah to let them see prophetic visions and to inspire them to write about "a man of sorrows" on whom the Lord would lay the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:3-5). (People's Bible: Hosea, Joel, Amos: page161).*

This was God's chosen method in the Old Testament: the Spirit of the Lord came upon the prophet and God's Word was revealed. This was so much the accepted way of divine revelation and communication that when 70 elders - who had been chosen to help Moses care for God's people - when they began to prophesy and speak God's Word to God's people a young aide of Moses (named Joshua) objected. To proclaim God's Word was the blessed work of God's prophet alone he seemed to say. But do you remember how Moses responded to Joshua's objection. He answered, ***"I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29).***

We are in these last days of which Joel foretold and in this time Moses' wish has been fulfilled. God pours out his Spirit on all his people and we are able to do what those prophets did. We are able to speak the will of God. We are able to sound the call to repentance and we are able to share the good news of forgiveness and heaven

through our Savior. We have been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his Word and we are able to proclaim the very words of God.

But too often we take this wonderful gift for granted. We fail to see the blessing of our calling, perhaps we see it as an intimidating obligation, or we fall prey to our timidity and fear, and instead of using God's gift and speaking God's truth God's people remain silent. This wonderful privilege is often neglected. Old excuses are brought out again and again. *"I can't share God's Word, I don't know how. I don't know what to say. I don't know where to begin. I don't know if I can."* And so many times even God's people don't even try. But once again the Lord reminds you on this blessed day of Pentecost that you have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through Word and Sacrament timid hearts are touched and empowered to speak God's Word of truth. As Paul once wrote, ***For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. <sup>8</sup> So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.... (2 Timothy 1:7).***

On Pentecost Peter and the rest spoke with great courage because they had been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. We can speak with great courage and confidence too. You may not be called upon to give a rousing testimony or a stirring sermon before crowds of people like Peter did, but fathers and mothers, you have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore you are able to speak God's Word to your children. Children, through baptism and instruction in God's Word the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out on you and you are able to speak and sing and proclaim God's Word to your parents, your aunts and uncles, your relatives and your friends. Proclaiming the word of God is not just the work of a pastor or a teacher, but it is something that we can all do, because we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, dear children of God we are all able to speak the very words of God because we have them written down for us, and favorite passages have been engraved on our hearts and minds through years of hearing and learning God's Word. We have been given the gift of faith. We have been given the very words of God to treasure and to share, and we have been given the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit who leads us to proclaim God's Word.

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is the promised gift, the wonderful miracle foretold and fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The most remarkable thing on Pentecost was not the sound of the rushing wind that filled the room, it was not the outward sign of those tongues of fire flickering above the heads of the disciples, but the most remarkable thing that happened on Pentecost was that courage and capability that was granted to those disciples so that they could speak God's Word. A timid group of disciples, a motley bunch of men and women, from all walks of life who followed Jesus were now lifted to the forefront of God's church on earth. Simple people, many from one small sliver of the world, were now able to speak a different language and were given the courage to boldly share the message of salvation to people from all nations. On Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus, God poured out his gift of the

Holy Spirit upon his people and they proclaimed the message of Christ. And this word spread and grew. It was not just through one or two select prophets or apostles, but hundreds even thousands of witnesses went out carrying with them the saving truth of Jesus, for on that day many disciples were given the gift of the Holy Spirit and on that day alone 3,000 people were baptized and were saved and they too were able to go out and share the good news that they had received.

God has produced a grand harvest for his eternal kingdom and we are part of that, we are part of this new era. We are members of God's holy priesthood. We are joined to Christ and to the great multitude who have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and we are able to proclaim God's simple yet amazing message of salvation through Christ Jesus. Peter and all the disciples gathered together on Pentecost got to witness the dawn of this new era as Moses' wish was granted and Joel's prophecy was fulfilled.

Joel's prophecy was given in a rather unique context that serves to illustrate the new life and abundant salvation our Lord brings. During the time the prophet Joel served, God's people would see the wonders of God and his mighty deliverance as he saved them from a terrible drought. The book of Joel deals with God's people struggling to survive a great famine and a devastating army of locusts. Both had ravaged their land, but not by chance. God sent these hardships to call his people to repentance and they responded. In their trouble and distress they had called out to the Lord, they had turned back to him and God heard their plea. God in his goodness would send bountiful rains that would water the earth and bring back abundant life to his people. The cracked and withered ground would become soft and fertile. The barren fields ravaged by locusts would be replaced by well watered fields that once again brought forth golden fields of grain waving in the gentle winds. The threshing floors that were bare and the oil presses that were empty would soon be teeming and abundant once again. The trees that were wilted and stripped of life would be fruitful once more.

The people that Joel ministered to would indeed see some remarkable things. They would know that the Lord was God, they would proclaim his name. But then Joel, as if to say, "*I can't wait to tell you about the greater things are coming,*" jumps to this time simply labeled "**afterwards**" when God would pour out his Spirit on all people. The prophet Joel looks ahead to this day of grace that God would provide through his gift of the Holy Spirit and he marvels at the blessings that God would send before the end of all things.

In this new era, God would speak through his apostles and send visions and dreams to men like Peter, John, and Paul, but he would also pour out his spirit on all people. In faith men and women, young and old would be able to proclaim the good news of Jesus. Much more beneficial than babbling in nonsensical and so called "spiritual" tongues, God has poured out his Spirit on all believers, so that people like you may clearly share the precious Word that brings eternal life.

Recently we have been privileged to view the remarkable blessing of life and growth that he brings about every year. On our recent trip back from the southwest we were able to marvel at the beauty of God's creation. We left behind the dry dusty red rock that is found in much Arizona and returned to find the grass is even greener than when we left and the seed that had been planted has sprouted while we were gone. The black and fertile soil of Minnesota was a noticeable contrast to the cracked dry ground we had seen in the southwest. The contrast was noticeable and it served as a reminder of how remarkably God blesses us through natural means, and how he brings life to this earth.

But one thing that is far more remarkable is the gift of his Spirit. Working through the Word and Sacraments the Spirit grants life and faith to the hearts of mankind. People, precious souls, dead in sin are given the new life that comes through Christ. Cracked and wilted and lifeless because of the oppression of sin and death and hell, precious souls are watered and saved and brought back to life through the word of God. This is the gracious way that we were saved by the work of the Spirit and now with the Spirit's help we are able to proclaim that word. We are able to share that message with our children. We are able to give them that Word of life and raise them up and nourish them with this life giving message that will bear so much fruit in their lives.

This precious gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out on us and now we can share the message of Savior, who graciously took away our sins. We can share the message of Savior who rose from the dead and has defeated death. In this world of uncertainty we can share the message of our ascended Lord who rules over all things for the good of his people. We can share the message of Jesus with people who are hurting, who are lost, who are languishing in the bleak wilderness of sin and we can share the message of Christ which brings life and peace and joy. We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and we can also speak rebuke to those who have been living contrary to God's Word and call them to repentance so that they turn from their sin and live. What a blessed power and privilege we have been given through the gift of the Holy Spirit. And Christian men and women, young children and the elderly, those who are gifted intellectually as well as those who suffer different handicaps, they all share in this wonderful truth. The Spirit of the Lord has been poured out on God's people, on us.

As Christians we are all given this miracle of new life. The Spirit comes to us through the powerful Word. You have had the Spirit poured out on you in your baptism. We are given the Spirit so that we may have life and be a part of this bountiful harvest. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on each one of you so that you may declare the praises of God, by proclaiming his simple saving gospel to each other and to those around you. The gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all of us. Praise be to God. Amen.