

JJ¹

Have you ever been forgotten? I'm not just talking about a forgotten birthday or even anniversary, as awful as that is. I'm talking about really forgotten. It happened to one of my cousins when my uncle and family were serving as missionaries in Japan. They had a lot of kids, and one time one of the girls got left behind at a store. No one realized until they got home! The police had found this lost blond hair blue eyed American girl all alone, brought her to the police station and tried giving her coffee to calm her down. While the family was united, this young girl is now about 30 years old and still reminds her family that she is the forgotten child.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is considered the forgotten person of the Trinity. God the Father is emphasized as the Creator and Preserver. God the Son as our Redeemer. But God the Holy Spirit? "Who is he again? What is his work called again? Oh yeah, one of those '-tion' words." (Sanctification / Sanctifier) You might be surprised to hear me say this, but Pentecost is just as important as Christmas and Easter. Without Pentecost, you and I wouldn't be here today. You see, you could call Pentecost the birthday of the New Testament Church. Pentecost marked the change from God primarily

bringing his Word to the people of Israel and now bringing it to the world. God's task with Israel as a nation was done. Now Israel's purpose was no different from any other nation. Now God the Holy Spirit would be sending out the Gospel to all nations in all languages, through the likes of you and me! And it started in Jerusalem with common men who loved their Lord.

For ten days the disciples waited in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended into heaven. They stayed in Jerusalem even though it was dangerous for them to do so because Jesus had promised "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw divided tongues that were like fire resting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, since the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak fluently."

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

We're told that they went outside and spoke to all the people gathered in Jerusalem from all kinds of places throughout the Roman Empire. Each person hearing God's Word spoken in their own language! Instead of recognizing that God was pouring out a beautiful gift on his people that day, some tried to discredit the truth of God's Word by accusing them of being drunk. Peter speaks for the group and begins his great Pentecost sermon. Peter starts by assuring the people that they are not drunk, but that this was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

"This is what God says will happen in the last days: I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and a rising cloud of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And this will happen: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The New Testament era had officially begun. It was the beginning of the end as

the world now moved into the Last Days. The Lord speaks through Joel of many wonderful gifts he would pour out on his people. But the greatest gift is the one found at the end of our text today: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Yes, tongues, prophecies, visions and dreams are beautiful gifts, but they are all various results of *the* gift—faith. The greatest, most important gift is faith. All the other gifts are results of having *the* gift of faith, as they are given to various people in varying degrees as the Spirit chooses.



Sometimes people get all enamored with or shocked by the smaller gifts the Spirit gives and fail to see that *the* gift of faith is the most shocking of all! You could say that every other gift/result of *the* gift is easy for God to give. They're all given to hearts that already believe. But

to give faith, God must conquer and crush our sinful hearts. That anyone would be given *the* gift to be able to call on the name of the Lord and be saved is amazing.

By faith, we confess the painful truth with King David: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5 NIV84). By faith, we acknowledge with the Apostle Paul that "all have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NIV84). By faith, we see how deeply this sin not only infects us, but all people and that by nature "[we] were dead in [our] transgressions and sins," and left to ourselves we would only seek to satisfy "the cravings of our sinful nature and [follow] its desires and thoughts" (Eph. 2:1,3 NIV84).

Finally, by faith you know the terrible tragedy to which all these truths lead. "The one who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek. 18:20 NIV84). And you know this death is threefold—it is spiritual, physical and eternal. You know that by nature you cannot call on God's name and be saved, but only hate and curse his name.

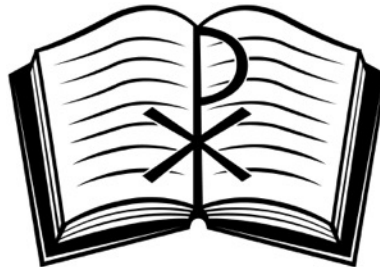
And that's why God the Holy Spirit stepped into your lives personally when you were baptized. In faith and love your parents brought you into God's house. They brought you to church where the pastor did something that looks silly and insignificant, even cultish, to the unbelieving world. As simple water was sprinkled on your head, the Name on which you call was proclaimed over you. The name of our Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It was then that God the Holy Spirit did the impossible and made his home in your hearts! It was then that he made the blessings of the Son's sacrifice your very own. The Holy Spirit rescued you from the great danger of unbelief, the power of

the devil and even hell itself! **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** He is your companion through this life. He leads you to Christ your Savior and builds you up in your faith every time you hear his Word.

God the Holy Spirit has given you spiritual gifts, each one uniquely given to make you, you. Each one given that you would use those gifts to praise God and give him thanks by serving him in all that you do.

But as I've said, the greatest spiritual gift he has given you is your faith. That gift of faith which we sometimes describe as a new organ the Lord has given us, one that allows us to hold on to the promises of God and call upon Christ as our Savior.



The same Holy Spirit working on Pentecost is the same Holy Spirit who works today. He works the same way today as he did on Pentecost. He works through the Word. The wind, tongues of fire and miracle of speaking in languages formerly unknown to the apostles are not what converted people that day. It was the same Word of God that speaks to us today. Sometimes that may seem like old hat or not exciting enough. Because of this, many seek gimmicks to get people to attend church or are convinced that "method" is what will grow a church. Whole committees, departments and even ministries have been built on one method or another. Methods receive so

much attention today that what we see on Pentecost is often forgotten—the truth that the church grows through the power of the Spirit working through the Word of God.

Friends, be thankful that though the outward signs of wind, tongues of fire and miraculous speaking in languages have not been repeated, the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost has never ceased. You are proof of that today because **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** The proof is found as you daily turn to your baptism and find the strength and desire to drown your sinful nature through repentance. The proof is found as the Spirit continues to speak to our hearts through the unchanging Word of God. The proof is found every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper and believe Jesus' words, "This is my body, given for you...This is my blood, shed for you," so that we can leave God's house with peace in our hearts. The proof is found in the fact that the Holy Spirit continues to take up residence in new hearts every day.

Friends, the Holy Spirit has been given to you to assure you that God's promises are true and are never to be doubted. Especially the promise that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be

saved." Friends, rejoice that **THE SPIRIT IS YOURS!** Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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