

## Pentecost – So What?

Ephesians 5:17-21

Today is Pentecost, the day we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church in Jerusalem, an amazing event recorded for us in Acts chapter 2. But at the same time, we should also celebrate that such an outpouring didn't happen just one time, not even in the Book of Acts. In chapter 8, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Samaritans, and Acts chapter 10 tells of a similar blessing on the Gentiles.

And the good news is that God continues to pour out His Spirit on all sorts of people even today. We hear from our missionaries in Lebanon that God is drawing many Muslims to Himself – perhaps more than at any other time in history. The ignorance and violence of ISIS is prompting many to challenge Islam in a fresh way, and God is granting many people dreams and visions, opening their hearts to hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But how can Pentecost be meaningful for us modern American Christians? It's obvious from the violence that makes up so much of our local and national news that we are in great need of a revival, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit such as we have not seen, really, since these hills echoed the sounds of gunfire from Union gunboats and Confederate batteries. And of course we should continue to pray for such an outpouring, on ourselves as well as on others who do not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

But while we pray and wait for such a revival, what does Pentecost mean for Christians today? How should our daily lives reflect the reality that all who trust in Christ have been filled with the Holy Spirit? Paul gives us several good ideas in today's passage.

In the first place, and most importantly, we should remember our relationship with Christ. After all, trusting in Jesus isn't just a legal transaction – relying on Him to pay the penalty we owe because of our sins. No, trusting in Jesus means that we live in Him and He lives in us – that's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. It is because of that relationship that Paul can write what he does in verse 20 – we can pray in the name of Christ because we are one with Him, part of His very body. It's because Christ lives in us that we have been adopted as children of God and can call God our Father, as we do when we say the Lord's Prayer.

So, if we really believe that's the sort of relationship we have with God, the rest of the way Paul describes the Spirit-filled life just makes sense, doesn't it? For one thing, the content of our prayers should be transformed as verse 20 says. Instead of constantly asking God for more things, or insisting that everything be done our way, the first words we have for God will be words of thanks, yes, for all the blessings we enjoy, the food and family and friends that surround us today, but most of all for His greatest gift to us – the gift of Himself.

And if we really do understand that in the indwelling Holy Spirit we already have God's greatest blessing, not only the greatest blessing that we can enjoy in this life, but the greatest blessing of Heaven itself, won't our attitude reflect what Paul says in verse 19? Won't such a realization lead us to sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, as we simply enjoy being in His presence? Won't our relationship with God make us content just to be with Him, no matter the outward circumstances of our lives?

And such a close relationship to Christ should change our words as well as our prayers. In verse 19 Paul encourages the Ephesians to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. As the Spirit of Christ fills our hearts, shouldn't we long to think like He thinks, filling our minds so much with Scripture and with words of praise to God that they become the hallmark of our daily conversation?

And perhaps most radically, if the Spirit of Christ is living within us, shouldn't that close relationship transform the way we treat each other? After all, Christ Himself didn't insist on getting His own way – He didn't insist on His own comfort. He didn't insist on being in control of His own life. No, He gave up everything for us on the cross. So, if His Spirit is living within us, shouldn't our lives be marked by the same kind of humility, the sort of mutual submission Paul describes in verse 21? Instead of insisting on our own way, shouldn't we be willing to be subject to one another, to put others' needs and even wants ahead of our own? If the Christ who lives in us died for sinners like us, doesn't it make sense for all of us to consider others as more important than ourselves?

So, yes, we should pray for revival to break out in the culture around us. And we should pray that our lives would be more and more filled with the Holy Spirit. But come to think of it, if we really did live in the reality of Pentecost, if we really did live as if we were filled with the Holy Spirit, if we really did display a close relationship with God with our thankful prayers, with our gracious words, and with our humble, selfless deeds, can we doubt that others would see Christ more clearly in us? And might they be drawn to follow Christ, even as we are? Could it be that God could use our Spirit-filled living as a means of revival breaking out around us?