

“THE GENTILE PENTECOST.”

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Scripture Texts: Acts 10:44-48

Prayer: Holy Father, humanly speaking the task before me is impossible. Rule and over rule now, like a stream of water direct all our hearts and minds to the truth of your Word and its application to our lives. Come, Holy Spirit, hear and help, for the sake of Jesus, in whose name we are bold to make all our requests. Amen.

Gospel.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

While Peter was saying what things? He was preaching the Gospel. He was testifying to person and work of Jesus Christ, His life, ministry, death, resurrection and coming again in judgment. I hope you are still preaching the Gospel to yourself daily.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 10:11-15, 17 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? ... 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Peter’s last words were to believe and receive the forgiveness of sins in Jesus name.

Peter spoke and God took His words and caused them to work powerfully and supernaturally in the hearts of the hearers. The Holy Spirit caused the words to bear the fruit of salvation.

Where the Gospel is preached there the Spirit is present. The essence of the Spirit’s ministry on earth is to exalt Jesus Christ, to make Jesus real to people, to show us who Christ really is in His glory and to testify to His power and authority. It is the Spirit who enables us to know Christ, to love Christ, to trust and obey Him.

“Everyone who believes in Jesus receives the forgiveness of his sins through His name.”

That is the basic need of every human heart. Have you acknowledged your sin and guilty, have you humbled yourself before Jesus, confessed and repented and asked Him for His forgiveness?

And if you have, have you recently paused to thank Jesus for what He went through to accomplish the forgiveness of your sins? Have you quietly, humbly bowed and said thank you for this amazing gift for which you did nothing and are so unworthy? Have you thanked Him for not only forgiving all your past sins, but all your future sins? That He has reconciled you to the Father and there is nothing left against you?

You should wake up every morning and go to sleep every evening aware of your forgiveness and your standing with God.

Spirit Baptism. The Gentile Pentecost.

Before Peter had finished speaking, meaning while he had it in his mind to say more, the Holy Spirit interrupted him.

This reminds me of a time the Holy Spirit interrupted Paul's travel plans.

Acts 16:6-7 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

First, the Spirit is God, meaning He is sovereign, He is free to come and go as He pleases, to do whatever He wants, to give gifts or withhold gifts, to convict of sin and bring to salvation whomever and whenever He wills. He is not bound by what we do or think.

Jesus said in **John 3:8**, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so is every one who is born of the Spirit."

Second, the Spirit comes to those who believe, so though we are not told we understand by implication that the Gentiles didn't just hear, but they responded to Peter's message with faith/belief, and God has accepted them and then sealed their faith with the Holy Spirit.

As soon as they heard, they believed, and as soon as they believed they received the Holy Spirit and were born again by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to our salvation and eternal life. Without the Holy Spirit there is no faith or repentance.

John 3:5 Jesus said "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

I Corinthians 12:3 no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

“Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

Consider what Cornelius received when he received the Holy Spirit.

The sinful centurion received the forgiveness of all his sins, something no Roman god could do. The Roman citizen received a far greater citizenship in heaven, and far greater privileges, and far greater riches, heavenly riches, the riches of grace.

The military commander received a far greater and more important power, power over spiritual enemies, power over sin and death.

Amazed.

To us this seems like no big deal, but to the six circumcised Jewish believers who were with Peter they were stunned, astonished, amazed. They couldn't believe their eyes and ears. Uncircumcised Gentiles, unholy strangers to the covenant, receiving the Holy Spirit, really?

Why were they amazed? What were they expecting would happen as Peter preached to them? Maybe they thought there would be some kind of sub-class of faith and belief. Or maybe they thought they would have to be circumcised and become Jewish Christians.

But there was no denying it, they saw it with their eyes and heard it with their ears. They were converted and given the identical same gift of God's Spirit. Clearly the Spirit had come. They are converted Gentiles, not converted Jews.

The point of the Holy Spirit coming in the same way He did at the first Pentecost was to make sure everyone understood the Jews and the Gentiles were on the same ground, in the church the playing field is level.

The dividing wall of hostility was broken down. Those once alienated by custom, culture, language, religion were now reconciled, joined together.

This is the crossing of the Rubicon, a point of no return. There is no turning back. The church of Jesus Christ would never be the same. The church would soon be filled with far more Gentiles than Jews.

Just as today the Church of Jesus Christ is filled with far more dark-skinned people than whites and far more foreign language speaking people than English speaking people. We will be the minority in heaven.

Their surprised amazement reminds us all how hard it is to let go of longstanding errors of thinking and prejudiced and pride.

There is a lot of talk about the divisions in our nation over many issues, politics, race, immigration, environment. Churches are not immune. We are divided over many things also. It can be over music, how we worship, or the future direction of the church. While we might have different tastes or preferences, we want to do our utmost to protect our relationships, our unity.

We may disagree over any number of issues, but let's make sure the devil doesn't get a foothold in stirring up disunity, strife, bitterness, or party spirit. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we must do all we can in so far as it depends on us to keep the peace.

Let us continue to face our sins of prejudice, of treating others differently. Who do we judge, look down on, think are beneath us?

Homeless people, the poor, people with tattoos and piercings, housekeeping staff at hospitals or hotels, concessions workers, migrant workers.

Water Baptism.

Since God has accepted them, the church must also. Since God had baptized them with His Spirit, the church must also baptize them with water. We must accept as brothers and sisters all those who are in Christ, regardless of race or ethnic or economic background.

They are just like us.

Why baptism if they already have the Spirit? Isn't that enough?

It is necessary because of God's command. He has ordained it to be done. It was the sign of cleansing of sin and receiving of forgiveness.

Baptism is the outward sign of welcome and inclusion into the covenant family, the people of God. Baptism is the sealing of the faith and is the sacrament of initiation into the church.

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality, the promise of the Spirit. How can the sign be withheld when the thing the sign signifies is present? So, where the reality is present, the sign can be applied.

In the name of Jesus is not a reference to the formula that is to be used. It is a description of the kind of baptism to be done. It was not to be a Jewish baptism but a Christian baptism. As for the formula to be used, Jesus gave that in Matthew 28. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the name of Jesus means by his authority, through faith in Him, believing in His doctrines, relying on His merits and righteousness alone, submitting in obedience to Him, being in union with Him.

Remember your baptism. Reflect on the meaning and significance of your baptism. Express gratitude that you have been adopted into God's family, that you belong to Jesus. When life gets hard, then Satan seems to be beating up on you, remember your baptism, who you are and whose you are.

Remember what Jesus has done for you. Remind yourself of the forgiveness of your sins, of the cleansing and purifying of what is unholy, of the being set free from slavery to sin, of being a covenant child of God, of having a place at His table, of your constant need for forgiveness, remember you have been called out of the world and set apart in a new family with a new identity for a new purpose. And that you have been indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

Invitation to stay.

Now that God has welcomed them into His household, they invite Peter to stay in their household.

For this action Peter will be called on the carpet and demanded to give an explanation. This gets Peter in big hot water with the leaders of the church back in Jerusalem.

Why did they want Peter to stay? The most natural reason would be to teach and nurture and strengthen their new-found faith.

Notice what this means. In one sense, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit isn't enough. We need human teachers. This is evident by Christ's Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Ephesians 4:11-14 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

We need to be growing, learning, being discipled, equipped for works of ministry.

Like them we should make diligent use of every opportunity given to us to make progress. Being a Christian is not a static event, a one and done deal. It is dynamic, growing, maturing, pressing in, further up and further in. If you are coasting, you are actually going backward.

Stay hungry and thirsty for the Word of God.

Application.

I began with an encouragement to remember and reflect on your forgiveness of your sins and the cost Jesus paid. Thank Him for what He has done for you. And continue to examine your heart for those besetting sins that linger and are hard to kill. Stay repentant.

Then I urged us to remember our baptism, what it means, what it says about us, who we are and whose we are. Make remembering your baptism part of your preaching the Gospel to yourself.

Finally, remember and reflect on your conversion. I realize some of you don't remember the day and time, but that doesn't mean you can't remember and reflect on and thank God that it happened. Consider what you have been spared from and what you have been saved for. Thank the sovereign God who has interrupted our life and brought you to that watershed moment, that Rubicon moment, that has forever changed everything.

Prayer: We believe in you, Holy Spirit. We affirm your presence and your power. We worship and adore you. We love you and we seek you. We want to know you better and to experience all that you have for us. Be glorified in our worship and in our lives. We surrender our lives to the flames of your refining, purging, purifying fire. Come Holy Spirit.