

“THE POWER OF THE UNSEEN SPIRIT!”

Joel 2:28-29

May God's Spirit inwardly strengthen you with power in order that Christ live in your hearts by faith... {Eph 3:16-17}

Dear People of God Made That Way By God's Spirit,

“These guys are out of it! They're not normal – somethin' doesn't add up. They never talked like that before. It takes years to be able to converse in our language that well. Are these guys juiced? Have they been hitting the sauce? It's only 9:00 AM – they must've had Mogen David for their breakfast juice instead of Minute Maid.”

Thus was the reaction to bystanders and skeptics who heard the disciples fluently speak the language of the Parthians, Medes, Elamites; Cretans, and Arabs; the language of the regions of Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and Libya. They heard them, but they couldn't believe what they were hearing.

50 days after the Passover Sabbath, every pious Jew journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Harvest when they brought generous free-will offerings and sacrifices to worship God. Thousands of people were in one place for one reason just like other years. Only this time, God had a special plan to bring His message of Jesus Christ in a way that has never been duplicated before or after this event.

The Acts account of Pentecost describes the events of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter rises to defend the disciples against the accusations of the crowd when he preaches on the text before us today from the prophet Joel. To God's people then and today, we realize how...

“THE POWER OF THE UNSEEN SPIRIT!”

1. On people everywhere
2. To build God's church

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Little is known about the Prophet Joel. But his name means “The Lord is God”. His book which scholars estimate around 800 BC speaks powerfully and often about “the day of the Lord” which in Joel's day was a horrific plague of locusts that wiped out tons of grain and crop which devastated the Land of Judah. God used him along with Amos & Hosea to be a warning siren that Judgment is coming unless you repent. **Like a weather warning today** – you can either heed the warning and be saved from destruction OR you can disregard it and perish accordingly. Joel was the spiritual warning alarm of his day and to a degree remains the same to this day.

Pentecost credits the Holy Spirit for the birth of the Christian Church. Rightly so, for **the power of the unseen Spirit is on people everywhere.** **AND AFTERWARD,** (after OT. Prophecies reveal the Messiah), **I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE. YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS WILL PROPHECY, YOUR OLD MEN WILL DREAM DREAMS, YOUR YOUNG MEN WILL SEE VISIONS.** God revealed himself during OT. times by dreams and visions and gifts of the Spirit to His prophets. He revealed to Joseph by dreams that he would one day be a powerful ruler in Egypt over his brothers. {Gen 37:5-9} God encouraged Jacob to travel to Egypt without fear or threat. {Gen 46:2} God empowered his prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel to see visions to inspire them to point to Jesus, the Messiah, upon whom the Lord would lay the iniquity of us all. {Is 53:5} **The power of the Unseen Spirit** came to those God chose to reveal His will to a rebellious people.

Joel's prophecy is that the God's Spirit might come **to people everywhere.** **EVEN ON MY SERVANTS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS.** He looks forward to a time when the Lord will put His Spirit on men, women, boys, and girls, young and old. He longs for all people everywhere to be privileged to receive the Lord's Gospel message of peace and joy revealed by the mouth of God through His Spirit.

And on that 1st Pentecost Sunday in Jerusalem, Joel's prophecy came true! When Jesus' followers were gathered together in one place, the sound of a violent wind came from God and filled the house. You've seen news clips of tornadic activity in the Midwest recently. Imagine you're in this house and you hear that frightening sound all around you. Then you see what looked like flames flickering over people heads, yet nothing was burning. And finally, you hear phrases and sentences from foreign languages that disciples could never say before but speak fluently now. They weren't babbling or making up some gibberish. The languages they spoke made sense to the people who spoke them. These were all signs from God of **the power of the unseen Spirit on people everywhere.**

Pentecost marks the birth of the Christian Church. God sent His Spirit to Joel to bring God's people back from their sins of idolatry and disloyalty to trust in the Lord's will and ways again. Peter had the same task on this day in Jerusalem. And the only way he could be God's mouth is by **THE POWER OF THE UNSEEN SPIRIT** which God used **TO BUILD HIS CHURCH!**

ON MY SERVANTS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT IN THOSE DAYS. "In those days" are today's days. God's message is sorely needed in a world of absolute disloyalty and rebellion against God. Sportcasters make the remark after a huge play: "**Wow, I didn't think he had it in him.**" When Peter stood up that first Pentecost, he didn't have it in him either any more than we do. We don't have it in us to be patient, loving, cooperative, non-judgmental, unselfish. We are part of this sinful world where the only god people really worship is the one called "**ME**". We love the world and everything in its trunk. We love its treasures that sparkle like jewels in our hearts. We love its pleasures that draw us to them like magnets. We enjoy such attitudes that back stab, argue, and demean our neighbor. We wallow in our anger, revenge, or bitterness when something doesn't agree with us. When the will of God stifles our conveniences, then we refuse, reject, and just disregard what God says and go on our merry ways much like the nations to which Joel was sent to preach repentance. God says: **REPENT** and we say: **Ah, no!** And we lose our trust, weaken our faith, and head right for the doors to hell and its judgment!

What do you suppose the disciples told the Jews on Pentecost in different languages? They told them the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **EVEN ON MY SERVANTS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT.** If we didn't have it in us by nature, then God put something in us through the Means of Grace, the Gospel in the Word and Sacrament. That sweet message of Jesus Christ **has miraculously called you to be alive** as the Spirit gave you the faith at your baptism to believe that Christ lived, died, and rose again for you. As Jesus hung on the cross, His precious blood poured out on you and God's grace oozed all over you. Christ sat in your seat to be condemned and punished for you. Christ endured God's steaming anger for your sins and deposited a **PAID-IN-FULL** receipt to your accounts. Now your debt of sin is wiped clean and your path to heaven clearly paved.

Paul says: **No one can say, "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit.** (1 Cor 12:3) **God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.** (Rom 5:5) and he keeps pouring it everytime the Gospel is shared.

In 2 Kings, chapter 4, a poor widow has only two sons in her life. She owed debt and the creditors were threatening to take her two sons as payment of her debt which left her with just a little olive oil. God sent the prophet Elisha to her to tell her to borrow all the cups, pitchers, bowls, and dishes she could get. Then he told her to start pouring and pouring and as long as there was another cup, the oil never ran out.

At Pentecost and today, just as God promised through Joel, **Christ poured out his Spirit on people everywhere to build His Church.** And as we heard at the **WW District Convention** this past week, the power of the unseen Spirit continues full force blessing our Missions and missionaries in ways we could never imagine. God's church has been blessed with men, women, son, daughters, old and young on whom God has poured out His Spirit. And it never runs out. Every time another baby is baptized, every time the cross of Christ is taught in class, every time absolution comforts the sinner, every time Christ's body and blood is received, the Spirit just keeps on pouring and pouring and God's church just keeps building and building!

May God's Spirit continue to strengthen and keep us strong in faith and lead us to pray:

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. {Ps 51:10-12}

AMEN