

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you all! Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost and the third most important festival of the church after Christmas and Easter. Pentecost marks the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the believers. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus talked at length with his disciples. His deep love and concern for them was evident as he prepared them for all that was about to come. He told the disciples, 'I must go away, but I will not abandon you, and the Father will send another counselor to be with you forever.' (John 14:16) Just before his ascension as he prepared to leave them, Jesus ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the gift the Father promised, 'the gift you have heard me speak about; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Jesus also reminded them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them, then they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The disciples returned to Jerusalem and continued in prayer waiting for the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost as they were altogether, the Holy Spirit of God rushed down from heaven like a mighty wind and filled the house where they were sitting. Tongues of fire scattered among the disciples resting on each of them and they were each filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had come to live within God's people. The promise of the new covenant according to the prophet Jeremiah and the promise of the Holy Spirit being poured out, according to the prophet Joel was being fulfilled.

What does the Holy Spirit do? First and foremost the spirit of God enables the confession- 'Jesus is Lord'. In the letter to the Corinthian Christians Paul clearly tells them that the confession of 'Jesus is Lord', would not be possible without the presence of the Holy Spirit. For Paul the ultimate criteria for the Spirit's activity were not the power and the gifts available but the exaltation of Jesus as Lord through those gifts. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the manifestations of the Spirit are for the common good. He uses the Trinitarian formula saying there are varieties of gifts- but the same Spirit; there are varieties of services- but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities- but the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

Paul then talks about some of the gifts. This is not an exhaustive list but a sample list of the gifts operating within the community at Corinth. The gifts represent the diversity of the workings of the Spirit of God. These can be clubbed into three sections : **Gifts of Revelation** – Wisdom, Knowledge and Discernment; **Gifts of Power** – Unusual Faith, Working of miracles, and healing and **Gifts of Communication** – Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues. The **gifts of revelation** - the word of wisdom which is an intuition or the ability to know what to do in a given set of circumstances. It does not come from human council but with the word of wisdom from God. Then there is the word of knowledge, which is information God gives about the situation of someone that you did not receive through natural means. The gift of discernment is the ability to see through things, to look at the true nature of the things, or at that person which is a spiritual experience. We see this quite often in the New Testament where Jesus knew what was in the hearts and minds of other people.

This is followed by a second set which we have seen as **gifts of power**. This gift of faith is more than natural faith. Then there is the gift of healings showing the many ways that God heals. Then there are gifts of miracles. The word used here is power, *dunamis*, the power of the Holy Spirit which is God's power active in our situations.

Then we have the three **gifts of communication**. In prophesy there is a foretelling and a forth telling where the mind and heart of God is spoken. It is primarily the word of God which is spoken to us. Then there are the gifts of tongues and interpretation. Tongues are given for personal edification and for worshiping God and should never be used as a sign of superiority. Speaking tongues is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and should not be taken as the only indicator of the presence of the Holy Spirit. This was part of the problem in Corinth as those who spoke tongues thought that they were superior to others.

These gifts are given for the sake of building of the church and to glorify God. The Holy Spirit is a free gift of grace and we can receive him our lives by faith with thanks giving. May we truly invite him to take control of our lives and use his gifts for the glory of God.

Shalom

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