

We are in the season of Pentecost and this is Trinity Sunday, reminding us that we worship God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But since Trinity Sunday falls in the season of Pentecost, I suspect that the purpose of Trinity Sunday is to remind us that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Just as we need to remember God the Father as our creator and need Jesus to be our Savior, we need the Holy Spirit in order to live the Christian life. The first followers of Jesus, from the Day of Pentecost forward, were dependent on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I punched in several of phrases into my Bible search program on my computer. I typed in "by the Spirit" and "by the Holy Spirit," "with the Spirit" and "with the Holy Spirit," "in the Spirit, and "in the Holy Spirit." When I looked at the results of my search, I noticed something very interesting. The Bible instructs all believers to "be baptized with and to be filled with the Holy Spirit." Paul says that God has poured His love into our hearts "by the Holy Spirit." He challenges us to "live in the Spirit," "be controlled by the Spirit," be "led by the Spirit," to "keep in step with the Spirit," and to "pray in the Spirit." Furthermore, it is said that believers were "compelled by the Spirit," "taught by the Holy Spirit," "enabled by the Holy Spirit," "sanctified" and "washed by the Holy Spirit," "preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit," were "carried along by the Holy Spirit," and "were made alive by the Spirit." The Bible says that believers "shared in the Spirit," "were renewed by the Spirit," "had joy given by the Holy Spirit," worshiped "by the Spirit," and had "fellowship with the Spirit." Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

This is not the complete list, but I hope you get the idea: The original followers of Jesus Christ, once baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, lived their lives with, by, and in the Holy Spirit. They drew power and direction from the Holy Spirit every day. They spoke by the Spirit, taught by the Spirit, loved by the Spirit, and drew upon the Holy Spirit for strength and courage. They were empowered, enabled, and controlled by the Holy Spirit. They breathed the Holy Spirit who had been breathed into them by Jesus.

Now it seems clear enough to me that if we would be the people of God that we are supposed to be today and have the

kind of church that honors God, we also need to be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit--not just baptized with water but with the Holy Spirit and with His power. If we are going to be Biblical Christians and a Biblical Church, we need to be just as immersed in and dependent on the Holy Spirit as they were. We need the Spirit's fire in our bellies, Holy Spirit-given love in our hearts, the Spirit's light in our eyes, and we need to learn the sound and be obedient to the Holy Spirit's voice. This is our inheritance as those who believe in Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:38-39 Peter says to the believers on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

The Holy Spirit and all He brings with Him is for us, and we will never be what we are supposed to be in Jesus Christ until we learn to live in, through, and by the Holy Spirit. But how do we get there from here? That is the question, and answering that question is the main point of our message this morning.

As some of you know I have a little ornamental garden pond in my flower bed at home. A couple of weeks ago I decided that it would be neat to add a working waterwheel to one corner of the pond. So, I drew up some plans and started tinkering in the woodshop. With a little experimentation and some help from pictures found on the Internet, I now have a neat little waterwheel adding interest and charm to my garden pond.

When I was doing research for my waterwheel, I discovered there are different ways of directing the water to the wheel. There is the underchuted waterwheel in which the water is channeled to the wheel underneath. Then there is the one to which the water is applied midway between the top and the bottom. Finally there is what to me is the traditional waterwheel in which the water is channeled to the top and runs over the front of the wheel like a waterfall. This is the kind I made and it took some experimentation to get the water coming out of the wooden chute I had crafted to hit the paddles on the wheel at the right angle. The chute was placed so that the waterwheel was in the center of the stream coming from above.

As I thought about the waterwheel and its connection to the stream of water that powers it, I began to think about our relationship as Christians to the stream of the Holy Spirit. There

are a several similarities. One is that the wheel cannot run unless it is in the stream of water; it has no power of its own but must depend on the water that runs over it. Likewise, we as Christians have no power to do God's work except for the power of the Holy Spirit. If we try to do God's work in our own strength and wisdom, we will fail every time. We need to let the power of God flow over us and energize us for service.

A second observation I made about the waterwheel is that the closer the wheel is to being in the center of the stream, the truer and faster it turns. I had to work at this with my waterwheel and the water chute to get everything lined up for optimal performance. It's the same thing with Christians and the Holy Spirit. We need to have our wills lined up properly with God's will for optimal performance. When we get on the same page with God, we can always count on the Spirit to bless what we are doing and to do more than we could ever hope or imagine without Him.

A third thing I saw about the waterwheel is that the stream that had the power to drive the wheel will flow whether the wheel is benefiting from it or not. If the water chute was too far back or forward or pointing off to the side, the water would still flow, but the waterwheel would not turn. The Holy Spirit is like an ever-flowing stream or an artesian well. His power is always flowing; there is never any lack of power to go around. The only questions are, do we know He is available to us? Do we want to be empowered by this stream? Are we willing to place ourselves in the Spirit's stream? And, how do we accomplish that goal; that is, what does it take for us to get into the stream of the Holy Spirit's energizing power and stay there? How do we get there from here?

As to the answers for some of these questions, I'm just going to give us the benefit of the doubt. I'm going to assume that we know that the power of the Holy Spirit is available to every Christian. I just told you that it is, and I'm going to assume you will accept this information. The second thing I'm going to assume is that we have a desire to be in the flow of the Spirit's stream; I'm going to believe that given the choice we would all opt to be Spirit filled and Spirit empowered. I'm going to assume that we have a desire for God to make a difference in this world and in the lives of others through us. I'm also going to assume that we are willing to place ourselves in the Spirit's flow. If all my assumptions here are correct then it's just a matter of knowing

how and being encouraged to move in that direction. Again what does it take for us to get into the Spirit's flow? How do we get there from here?

First of all, we need to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in Luke 11:13, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" We need to get down on our knees and ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14 tells us what the followers of Jesus were doing just prior to the day of Pentecost: "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." We need to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we need to do everything in our power to be responsive to the Holy Spirit's flow. Coming back to the waterwheel, I had to make sure that it could turn freely on its central axis--that it wasn't bound up in the middle. I also had to make sure that the rim of the wheel was not rubbing on the framework that supports it or dragging on the edge or bottom of the pond. Sin is the thing in our lives that binds us up, drags us down, and prevents us from responding to the motion of the Holy Spirit. So, the second thing we need to do is confess any known sin and turn away from it. The Holy Spirit cannot bless or empower those who cling to their sins. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened."

Thirdly, we need to give ourselves away in worship. In telling the woman at the well in John 4, how to receive living water, Jesus told her that God seeks those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. There is a little chorus that we sing sometimes that says, "so forget about yourself, concentrate on Him and worship Christ the Lord." When we give ourselves away in worship it opens the gate that lets the river of the Spirit flood into our lives. Worship is a key element to getting into the Holy Spirit's flow.

A Fourth thing we need to do to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit is to abide in God's word. Psalm 1:1-3 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he

does prosper." As we abide in the Word of God we stay close to and open our minds, hearts, and spirit, to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Abide in the word.

Fifth and finally this morning, we need to obey. The Lord will speak to us in the midst of every activity I have just mentioned. He will speak to us when we pray. He will speak to us when we confess and seek cleansing from our sins. He will speak to us in the midst of worship when we give ourselves to worship. He will speak to us as we meditate on His Holy Word. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a matter of being obedient to the word God speaks to us. Acts 5:32 tells us that the Holy Spirit is God's gift to those who obey Him. Of course there will always be resistance to obedience. Our own rebellious and fearful natures will put up a fuss. Satan will do everything in his power to keep us from doing what God says. Sometimes friends and family will put up road blocks to our doing the will of God. But if and when we want to be in the stream of the Holy Spirit more than anything else, we will obey God and the floodgates will open, and the power of God will flow into our lives.

Let us do everything we can do to be filled with the Holy Spirit, energized by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and taught by the Spirit. Let us seek to live in, by, and through the Holy Spirit. Let us pray, turn from sin, give ourselves away in worship, and abide in God's Word. Let us hear and obey God's voice that we might position ourselves in the center of that life-giving stream that flows always from the throne of God.

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### **Getting Into the Stream**

**Acts 2:1-22**

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