

There are times when we feel left out. We may hear of a great introductory deal about some service, only to have them say at the end that it is available only to new customers or only if you meet certain qualifications. Even if you want what the deal is offering, you cannot have it — you are left out. When our governor has begun to open our state by regions, and we are not in one of those regions, we feel left out. But you are not left out of what Jesus promised to send after He ascended into heaven.

Today we are celebrating a special festival in the church year, and that is the festival of Pentecost. On this day, the Lord Jesus poured out His Holy Spirit on His disciples, and they began to proclaim His Word. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out into the hearts of His disciples, and then they publicly professed their faith in the risen Savior, Jesus Christ. That special outpouring of the Holy Spirit may make us feel as though we have been left out, for we have not received those special gifts of the Holy Spirit. But what Jesus promised with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has continued to this very day — we have not been left out. This is in direct fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Joel. So today, let us look at the Old Testament prophet Joel, as he foretold of this wonderful event. As we look at his words, we shall see that JESUS POURS OUT HIS SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE. We shall see that the Holy Spirit works through the Word, and that by doing so, He works faith in the heart.

When we speak about the work of the Holy Spirit, we may think of the way in which He brought special revelations to people in the Old Testament. Many times He spoke through those special people — whom we call the prophets — in order to reveal God's message to His people. Not many people received this special revelation from the Holy Spirit. But those who did receive it were required to speak it faithfully to God's people so that all would know the will of the Lord. But they all desired a time when this type of revelation would no longer be necessary — when it would not be needed for the Holy Spirit to reveal something new through a specially chosen prophet.

That is the time about which Joel prophesied. He was looking ahead into the future when the Holy Spirit would no longer have to give special revelations through chosen prophets. Joel writes, “**And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.**” On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers, Peter recognized that this prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. The Holy Spirit guided and directed the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament to write down for us all of the things which the Lord wanted us to know. Those writings have been preserved for us in the Bible.

God no longer needs to send new revelations of His will to us through specially chosen prophets. Now He reveals His will to us in the Word which He has given to us. We do not need to look forward to more special revelations through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are people who think that speaking in tongues, or doing a miracle, or prophesying is still needed to fulfill Joel's prophecy of all people, men and women, young and old, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. But Peter directed the questions which were asked on that day of Pentecost, not to the miracle of speaking in tongues, but back to the Scriptures which had been recorded for them. It is the same for us today. All of our questions, all of our uncertainties, all of our fears can be answered when we look at what the Holy Spirit has recorded for us in His Word. The results of that outpouring of the Holy Spirit can still be felt in our hearts today. All of us, men and women, young and old, can still read and study this Word, and then share it with others. This is in direct fulfillment of this prophesy. Our littlest ones among us are able to share their faith by relating that Jesus loved them, that Jesus died for their sins, that they are going to heaven. As they do so, they are showing that the Holy Spirit has been poured out and will continue to be poured out to all men.

But that is not the only way that the Holy Spirit is still being poured out into our hearts today. As we read and hear the Word of God, either through our own personal study, or our studying it with others, the Holy Spirit continues to do His work upon our hearts. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to use the Word to bring

about faith in our hearts. As we learned in the explanation of the third article, as we study the Word, He calls us to faith, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps me in the one true faith.

The gospel lesson this morning showed us how the Holy Spirit does His work. He uses the law to convict the world of guilt. The law shows us our sins and the need which we all have of a Savior. Without that law pointing out the greatness of the sin which we might otherwise overlook, we would never even have thought we needed a Savior. Then, after showing us how sinful we are, He also shows us that one and only Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, then rose again on the third day, He wiped away all of our sins, and gave us the assurance that we had the gift of eternal life with Him in heaven. All of the work was done and completed, but it would not have benefitted us at all unless we would come to faith.

That is the work of the Holy Spirit. As we hear or read the Word of God, the Holy Spirit works faith in our heart to accept it as true, and then to put our trust in the one Savior from sin. He calls us through the wonderful gospel promises, and then enlightens our eyes so that we can see the wonderful gifts which Jesus has won for us. This is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. That is the gift of the Holy Spirit which has been poured out into our hearts. We have not been left out.

Then He goes on to continue to work in our hearts so that we lead a godly life here on this earth, putting that faith into practice in our words and actions. As we see that change taking place in our lives, we know that the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out to us. As we continue to read and study that Word which He has given to us, He will use that same Word which brought us to faith to keep us in the one true faith as long as we live.

So on this day of Pentecost, as we remember that the Holy Spirit is still being poured upon our hearts even today, may we remember that without Him, we would not be believers. Without His work, we would not know who Jesus was, nor would we put our trust in Him as being vital to our eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on all people, young and old, men and women, so that we can all come to faith, and be kept in that faith until we receive the crown of our eternal life in heaven. May we continue to see the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit Who has been poured out into our hearts.