

We should not let the date of Pentecost on our church calendar (May 19 of this year) pass without some biblical comments taken from the Book of Acts, where the first New Testament Pentecost is recorded. Simply defined, Pentecost was timed on the calendar in Israel to take place seven weeks after Passover and the celebration of first-fruits, when all Israel was to remember God's deliverance of His people out of Egypt.

Fifty days after the exodus, God's people were to celebrate the harvest, which proved God's faithfulness to bring them into the Promised Land. This is the feast called Pentecost in Acts 2:1. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit used the Word through Peter to bring many in Jerusalem to saving faith – producing the spiritual harvest that was symbolically celebrated by the holy festival of Pentecost. This week we will learn that it is through God's effectively applying His Word that the harvest comes. The promise is for “all those who far off, whom our Lord will call” (Acts 2:39).

Monday: Read Acts 2:36-43

Awe of the Word

Line by line, promise by promise, Peter soaked his preaching in Scripture truths. The early church and the new converts added to their number responded by being Word-centered themselves. They “devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching” and held the Word of God in awe (Acts 2:42-43) as they discovered that it was God speaking through that Word to their fearful hearts.

Meditate and Pray: Lord, send a hush of awe on our soul as we feed on the Word, so much so that we will go through many trials and forge ahead through all obstacles in our way to have that life-giving Word in our lives on a daily basis. How did Peter put it in John 6:68: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.”

Tues/Weds: Read Acts 2:39-47 and Jeremiah 32:40

Great Awe came upon All

It is amazing to see the power of God's promised call to save so many in Acts 2:39-43 – and especially to note that what happened in the conversion of 3,000 on Pentecost was in line with God's covenant promise to Abraham, as we will see later in Acts 3:25. But for today, please notice what was the *result* of so many conversions: “Great awe came upon all” (Acts 2:43) as the multitudes in Jerusalem saw God's converting power. What, then, is this awe?

The fear, or awe, of the Lord is one of the most ignored and underappreciated fruits of the work of God's Holy Spirit. It is important, then, to think further about the importance of such reverence. We can divide such fear into two kinds. The first is representing both an *unbelieving response* to God, for example, on the part of those in Jerusalem who feared yet refused to come to Jesus. But the work of the Holy Spirit is the *filial reverence* on the part of those who know the Lord as their Savior and fear Him with the sensitivity of those who love God and want to avoid grieving Him as their Savior and Lord.

For the unbelieving, the fear of God is a terrible thing because it arises out of a warped view of God's gracious character. Instead of having the eyes to see that God is incredibly kind and inviting to sin-burdened souls, the hardened heart views God with distrust, believing the lie that “that God is a hard man, reaping what He did not sow, and gathering where He scattered no seed...” (Matthew 25:24). Such hard thoughts of God prompt flight *away from God* and into the company of scoffers and those who seek to reassure one another that God is not real and the fear of God something to suppress.

On the other hand, what joy comes to us when our fear is rooted in the assurance that we are God's adopted sons and daughters! Out of such security comes a sensitive heart that wants to please God, and is filled with a wholesome fear of hurting One who loves us so much! After all, this is what God promised in the New Covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" Jeremiah 32:40.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about such Gospel driven, holy awe of God in hymn # 35:

*My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty, how bright;
How beautiful Thy mercy seat
In depths of burning light!*

*How dread are Thine eternal years,
O everlasting Lord,
By prostrate spirits day and night
Incessantly adored!*

*How beautiful, how beautiful,
The sight of Thee must be,
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity!*

*Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.*

*O how I fear Thee, living One,
With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope,
And penitential tear*

Thursday: Read Acts 2:46-3:4

The Spirit of Unity

Another fruit of Apostolic preaching is that of unity in faith and purpose on the part of those called to serve together in the early church. For example, consider the remarkable unity in prayer and ministry which Peter and John share as Acts 3 opens. Though these two Apostles were so different in character and temperament, God's Pentecostal Spirit binds them together:

We have in Peter and John a prime example of the unity of the Spirit noted in 2:46. These two men were different from each other in almost every natural way. However, they were bound together by a supernatural affinity. From this point onward they become almost inseparable. What clearly makes them so is their common devotion to their Lord, as expressed in their going to the temple to pray. As they together walk in the path of such devotion to God, they find themselves led by God into the path of merciful duty toward their needy fellow man. Fruitful duty for Christ always follows faithful devotion to Christ.

Rev. William Harrell, Bible Notes Acts 2

Meditate and Pray: Lord, please give us in worship and in service the Spirit's love, "which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:14).

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Acts 3:1-16**Awe, Unity and Power from the Spirit**

We come now to consider the miracle of the healing of the lame man in Acts 3.

The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to select one of the many apostolic miracles (Acts 2:43) to record for the instruction and edification of the Lord's people. Peter and John were not the only ones going to the temple that day and at that hour. A man with a handicap which had afflicted him all of his life was being carried to the temple as well. Yet, whereas the apostles went to worship God, the man went to beg alms from men. Thus, this man serves to represent the many who are without the liberty, power, and treasures of salvation, who are paralyzed by their burden of sin, yet who are reduced to seeking and expecting no more from the Church than some of the transient trinkets of this world. The Lord demonstrates through His servants that He has far more than that to give.

Rev. William Harrell, Bible Notes Acts 3

What are to learn from this miracle? It is that Peter and John give this impotent, burdened and broken man far more than their silver and gold! They bestow on Him the power of the Name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:16) and through that Name this man experiences new life from the dead – both physically and spiritually! For as Peter says in that same verse, it is “by faith in His Name” that this lame man was healed!

So we have seen that there are really three ways in which the Holy Spirit of God fruitfully works through the teaching and preaching of His Word in Acts. He brings a holy reverence and awe upon all those who hear. He also brings a unity of purpose in worship and service to those called to follow the Lord Jesus as His witnesses in this world. Finally, He shows His power through the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to give new life to sinners, dead in body and soul.

Meditate and Pray: Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and we will surely do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Sing about the Name of the Lord Jesus, using hymn # 647:

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.*

*It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.*

*By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child.*

*Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.*

*Dear name! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace!*

*Jesus! my shepherd, husband, friend,
O prophet, priest and king,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,
Accept the praise I bring.*