

INI Hymns:
Pentecost 3

Acts 5:32

Sermon 25-27
06/29/25

On Pentecost we introduced our theme for our Summer Sermon Series, **“The Power of the Spirit in Your Life.”** What does the Power of the Spirit do for you? Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” Isn’t that incredible? The Holy Spirit uses His power to transform your life to be more like Christ our Lord.

We certainly see that in the lives of the Apostles. Their lives were dramatically transformed. They went from not understanding the things Jesus taught to understanding all things perfectly. They went from cowardly men hiding behind locked doors to bold proclaimers of the resurrection of Christ even in the face of persecution and death. They were filled with the Spirit and their lives were truly transformed.

Doesn’t that beg the question, do you and I really have the power of the Spirit working in our life? I don’t see that kind of transformation in my life. I still have areas in my life I wish the Spirit would transform, how about you? Do you wish you were a more bold and effective witness for Christ? Do you have some sin you wish you could overcome? Do you wish you had more peace, that you worry less? Do you pray about those things, but nothing seems to change? That might make you doubt that the Spirit is working in you with His power?

If you have ever had doubts whether you really have the Spirit working His power in your life, then take a closer look at our text. It is found in Acts 5:32.

“And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

There you have it,

God HAS Given You His Holy Spirit!

But wait a minute! This says God has given the Holy Spirit **“to those who obey Him?”** That doesn’t reassure me that I have the Spirit because I don’t always obey Him. Isn’t that evidence that I probably don’t have the Spirit? That’s actually a rather unfortunate translation, and sadly that is the same in every translation I checked. That makes it sound as if you must obey God’s commands before He will give you the Holy Spirit. If that were true, we would be in a hopeless situation, for we are not able to obey God’s commands at all without the Holy Spirit. It’s not that the word “obey” is a bad translation of the Greek word. That is the standard translation, but in this case it doesn’t give you the whole picture. The Greek word *πειθαρχέω* is actually a compound of two words. The first word means to be persuaded, the second refers to a ruler or some authority. So, in this context talking about our response to God it literally describes someone who has been persuaded by God to acknowledge His authority over us, and to acknowledge and confess our sins and know Jesus is truly our Saviour from sin. This is describing the obedience of faith. It is willingly submitting to God’s rule over us. That is the work of the Spirit. If you have saving faith, that is proof that God has given you the Holy Spirit.

We can see that if we look at the whole context of chapter 5. The Church was growing by leaps and bounds. We read earlier in chapter 5, “Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” Acts 5:14-16 As Jesus promised, they were doing even greater things than Jesus did. Multitudes were coming to faith by the Spirit.

That made the High Priest and the Jewish Sanhedrin furious. They were envious that the apostles were gaining more influence than themselves. They arrested Peter and John again, this time with all the Apostles. They put them on trial and said, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” The Apostles knew very well what these Priests and Pharisees were capable of. Yet by the power of the Holy Spirit “Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” They had a command from God to proclaim the resurrection of Christ and the forgiveness of sins to all. It would not be right to let the demands and threats of these enemies of God stop them.

That is when Peter spoke the words of our text. “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” Acts 5:28-32 Those who “obey Him” were all the multitudes of people that were persuaded and believed in Jesus Christ, as opposed to those Priests and Pharisees who still refused to believe. Do you believe that you are a sinner deserving God’s punishment? And do you believe that Jesus has come to save you from your sins? Then God has also given You His Holy Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit then you have His transforming Power. The Holy Spirit doesn’t go anywhere without His power.

If we do have the Holy Spirit with all His power, then why isn’t He transforming my life to be more like Christ? First of all, we only need to look at the people of the world who are in open rebellion against God to know that the Holy Spirit has already transformed our lives in many incredible ways. Listen to what Paul says in Colossians 1:13, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” What a tremendous transformation! He has changed you from an enemy of God to one who loves God. He has transformed you from one who resists God to someone who truly wants to do His will. The very fact that you desire the Holy Spirit to transform you even more is proof of that transformation He has already worked.

This is our sanctification we are talking about and that is an ongoing process. The Spirit already made the greatest transformation when He brought us out of darkness into the Kingdom of His Son, that is when He brought us to faith. But the Spirit continues to work His transformation in our lives. That’s the part we may get impatient with or get discouraged because we don’t see as much change as we would like.

Do you pray for God to change your heart and life. Do you want Him to strengthen you to resist some sin in your life, or want Him to change some other aspect of your life, but nothing seems to happen? Perhaps you are expecting something God hasn’t promised? We read in Acts how different individuals were filled with the Holy Spirit and then they did incredible things. For example: When Peter and John were arrested the first time and put on trial, we read, “Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit,” and he boldly proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ to those men who had killed Him. Acts 4:7-8

Do you wish the Holy Spirit would fill you and make you bold, or make you strong or whatever you want changed? Who says that He doesn’t? What do you think that was like when Peter was “Filled with the Holy Spirit?” Do you think Peter felt a sudden rush of power and boldness and had no fear before the Sanhedrin? We don’t really know what it may have felt like, if anything, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit because the Bible never describes that, it just tells us that it happened and the result of being filled with the Spirit. It’s just as possible that they didn’t feel anything special at all. They just did what they knew they had to do, and God

tells us why they were able to do what they did.

Does boldness mean you have no fear or that you do what needs to be done in spite of your fear? It could be that Peter was shaking in his boots but this time, instead of denying Jesus He boldly proclaimed Jesus to them in spite of his fears, because the Spirit had filled Him. If you are expecting the Holy Spirit to fill you and just make you more bold, or make you resist some sin, or whatever changes you desire, then you are expecting something God doesn't promise to do. The truth is the Holy Spirit has already given you all the power you need to make those changes in your life. After He brought you to faith, He doesn't just change you with His power. He has given you the tools you need to resist sin and to become more bold or worry less.

Look again at our brief text. “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” There are two witnesses mentioned here. Peter says, “We are His witnesses to these things.” He is talking about himself and the other Apostles who were on trial. They were eye witnesses of everything Jesus did and said. Especially of His death and resurrection. They were sent out by Jesus to tell everyone what they had seen and heard. We still have that witness in the written word of Scripture.

Then Peter says, “And so also is the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit witnesses together with the Apostles. The Holy Spirit is the internal witness. The Apostles testified to the historical facts that they saw. The Holy Spirit confirms their witness in the hearts of those who heard so they would believe. The Holy Spirit always does His inner witness in connection with the outward witness of the Apostles. In other words, **the Holy Spirit only works through the means of grace**, that is the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

The Holy Spirit used the Means of Grace to bring you to faith in the first place, whether it was through baptism or through someone bringing you God's word. The Holy Spirit confirmed His word in your heart. On the Day of Pentecost “Peter said to [the people], ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 2:38. The Holy Spirit convicted them and 3000 people were baptized that day. Then we read, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:42 The Spirit continues to work through His word and sacraments which are shared in our fellowship with each other.

Those are the tools the Holy Spirit gives us to grow in our sanctification. They contain all the power you need to make the changes in your life. But don't expect the Spirit to change you if you don't use those tools. That's like trying to cut through a 2x4 with a butter knife when you have a chop saw sitting on the shelf. Of course we still have our sinful flesh. We will never completely overcome sin in this life, or become totally like Christ. We are sinners. Sinning is a part of our nature. There will always be things in our lives that we regret and wish we could change. We have the assurance of the Spirit that Christ has paid for all those sins and has given us His righteousness. Before God we are righteous like His Son.

That doesn't make us think, well then I don't need to work so hard. Rather God's grace in Christ instills in us an even greater desire to put sin behind us and live righteous lives more like Christ. The good news is, the Spirit has already given us the power to transform our lives. We just need to **Learn to Use those Tools**. That's what we will be doing in the weeks to come. We are going to take a closer look at the various tools the Spirit gives us and learn how to use them more effectively. In the mean time remember, they are all contained in His Word. Like the first Christians, may we all “Continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Amen.