

SERMON SERIES ON OUR BELIEFS

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, which includes:

- the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from regeneration;
- His indwelling, by which the Christian is enabled to live a godly life;
- His supernatural gifting and empowering of the church for its work, life and worship (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8, 2:1–4, 10:44–46; 1 Corinthians 12, 14).

Title: ***PENTECOSTAL!***

Introduction

In this series of sermons on our beliefs, we are defining who we are as a church. One of our most defining characteristics is that we are a Pentecostal church.

What does that mean? While there may be different ways of defining “Pentecostal,” we define it as: *believing in the present-day ministry of the Holy Spirit*, which includes:

- the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from regeneration;
- the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by which the believer is enabled to live a godly life;
- as well as the Holy Spirit’s supernatural gifting and empowering of the church for its work, life and worship (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–8, 2:1–4, 10:44–46; 1 Corinthians 12, 14).

Let’s briefly consider each of the elements of this belief.

AN EXPERIENCE DISTINCT FROM REGENERATION

One of the things about the New Year that we look forward to is that it represents a new beginning. And new beginnings inspire hope for better things. But if we keep doing the same things, we’ll continue experiencing the same things. So we really need more than just a new year.

God provides a new beginning for us in *regeneration* when we are *born again*. And we are regenerated or saved when we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and confess Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9). And then the Bible says ***if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*** (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

But even though we have this new beginning, we need more than a new beginning to realize all that God intends for us.

After Jesus' resurrection He appeared to His disciples, and John records in his gospel that **he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.** (John 20:22 NIV) And then after spending 40 days with His disciples, Jesus ascended into Heaven.

But just before He did, Jesus told them to wait until they had received power. He said, ***I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.***" (Luke 24:49 NIV)

Ten days later, when the day of Pentecost had come, the promised Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers, and they were empowered to be Christ's witnesses and to live extraordinary lives.

So we can see two distinct experiences of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the disciples. The first was their reception of the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus' resurrection, and confessed Him as Lord (see especially Jn. 20:28). The second was the baptism of the Holy Spirit for empowerment to be Christ's witnesses and to live a godly and abundant life in the Spirit.

These two experiences can happen simultaneously, as it did with Cornelius and his household. (see Acts 10:44-47) But regardless of whether they happen simultaneously or separately, both are essential to the abundant life Jesus came to give us.

AN ENABLEMENT AND AN EMPOWERMENT

Jesus said, ***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,*** or have it ***abundantly.*** We can't experience or live that abundant, powerful kind of life in our own effort; we need the power of God. We need the promised power of His Holy Spirit, just as Jesus' disciples did. Jesus told His disciples—who had been with Him for three years, who believed He was raised from the dead, and who confessed Him as Lord—not to leave Jerusalem without this empowering experience.

Paul explains that ***it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.*** (Philip. 2:13). And in another place he says God ***is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.*** (Eph. 3:20-21) That power comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit—the same experience the disciples had on Pentecost.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is necessary because of our sinful nature and a lifetime of sinful patterns, because of an environment that is hostile to God, and because of an enemy that is hell-bent on perverting and destroying us. The Bible says, ***though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*** (2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NIV) These divinely powerful weapons are provided by the Holy Spirit. There's no way we can live the abundant and godly life and in our own strength and effort.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is also necessary for us to be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ. Jesus operated in the power of the Spirit. We see that power in the miracles He performed and in His authority over Satan and demonic forces. And He said ***I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*** (John 14:12 NIV)

The Pentecostal experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit provides the enablement and empowerment that God intends for every believer.

A GREATER ABILITY TO WORSHIP

I'm grateful for the talented musicians we have, and for the equipment and facilities that we are blessed with. But should our worship and service of God be dependent on them? Should our worship and service be hindered if we don't have such things? I believe we would all agree that our worship of and service to God is far greater than such things.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is also necessary for us to pray, worship and serve God in the Spirit, which allows us to pray more effectively, worship in a greater way, and serve more effectively than just with words, rituals or human efforts, or even talent, facilities and equipment.

Paul explains that

... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Romans 8:26-27 NIV)

And in another place Paul says, ***I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.*** (1 Cor. 14:15) And Jude tells us to ***build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.*** (Jude 20) Paul exhorts us to ***pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*** (Ephesians 6:18 NIV)

The danger with religion is we tend to rely on its form and rituals, and on our abilities rather than on God and His power. Jesus said,

... a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24 NIV)

The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to worship and serve God in Spirit and in the fullness of truth.

Summary

This is what we believe because we are a Pentecostal church. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, which includes:

- the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as an experience distinct from regeneration;
- His indwelling, by which the Christian is enabled to live a godly life;
- His supernatural gifting and empowering of the church for its work, life and worship (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-4, 10:44-46; 1 Corinthians 12, 14).

Invitation

When Paul encountered some believers in Ephesus, he asked them ***“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”*** (Acts 19:2)

I would ask the same question: *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*

How can we know if we’ve received God’s Spirit? We receive Him by faith, not by feeling. But when the Holy Spirit comes in to our lives, He changes us.

The disciples were radically changed when they were baptized with the Spirit. Before they experienced the baptism of the Spirit they were fearful and timid, hiding behind locked doors. But when they were baptized with the Spirit, they boldly proclaimed their faith and the Good News of Jesus Christ because they couldn’t help speaking about what they had seen and heard. And the Lord confirmed their message by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders (Mk. 16:20; Acts 14:3).

Jesus said, ***Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*** (John 7:38-39 NIV)

We are a Pentecostal church. Are you a Pentecostal believer? Have you received the Spirit? Have you been baptized in the Spirit with power for life and service and worship?