

“The Holy Spirit”
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
Romans 8:22-27
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

We have gathered Pentecost Sunday to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s right, simply a cognitive recognition of the power of the Holy Spirit is not enough. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, the very presence of God living in us, is helpful, but until it connects in our lives, and we can experience God at work in us, well.... Regarding having an experience of the Holy Spirit, Stan Jantz, author of *Fire & Wind*, relates the following real-life example:

My name is Stan, and I have ignored the Holy Spirit for too long. It’s not like I’ve purposely ignored or shunned him. Throughout my life, I have simply forgotten about the Holy Spirit; I just haven’t thought about him all that much on a personal level.... I believed in God at an early age and accepted Jesus as my Savior by the time I was seven years old.... Being saved is all about Jesus. As for the Holy Spirit, I knew he was there, but I didn’t know what do with him. So he sat quietly in my heart and soul while I directed my attention to God and Jesus.... Not long ago I was at the point where my spiritual life was stagnant and predictable.... Spiritually I was feeling flat. Uninspired. And I figured that maybe the Holy Spirit was the key to this life I was missing.... So I said to the Holy Spirit, “It’s time I got to know you better. I know about you, but I don’t really know you.” And the Holy Spirit said, “I’m ready if you are. Let’s do something together.”¹

Experiencing the Holy Spirit is developing a listening ear to your soul.

In April 2013, an article in the *USA Today* Money section reported that Apple’s stock was slipping in value. According to the article, the Apple stock crash reached an historic order of magnitude, shaking the faith of investors who piled on in large part on Jobs’ showmanship. Shares were down 44 percent and the crash obliterated \$291.2

¹Stan Jantz, *Fire & Wind* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), 7-8.

billion in shareholder wealth. What precipitated that particular crash of Apple's stock? The causes may be complex, but the article focused on one primary factor; the death of co-founder Steve Jobs on October 5, 2011. Research shows "a sick or dying CEO is generally a big problem right away for stocks." It is amazing, and appropriately so, that the death of a CEO of a fortune 500 company can cause shockwaves in the stock market.² The stock value of being a follower of Jesus must have taken a dive when Jesus informed the disciples that he was going to die and leave them.

It was fifty days after Passover. A celebration was upon Jerusalem. The celebration was the "Feast of Weeks," the annual observance of the giving of the Ten Commandments. I agree with John Calvin, that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred on a festival day, because of the sheer number of persons in one place, in order to produce the greatest results. Calvin writes, "Therefore in the choice of the day God had regard to the usefulness of the miracle; that the news of it might, in the first place, be more widely talked of in Jerusalem at a season when the Jews were more inclined to give thought to the works of God, and secondly, be spread abroad to the remotest lands."³ As the story is told in Acts, Pentecost is remembered as the sound of a rushing wind filling the room and that all began to speak in tongues. Each person was filled with the Holy Spirit. They could hear one another speak in their own native language. According to Psalm 104, the Spirit is life-giving. Christians renamed the "Feast of Weeks," Pentecost.

²The Apple Stock story is adapted from Mark Krantz, "Leadership loss shocks stocks," USA Today Money (4-19-13). Taken from Matt Woodley's posting, "Steve Jobs' Death Causes Apple Stock Crash" on *PreachingToday.com*. Matt Woodley is the managing editor for *PreachingToday.com*. Woodley made this post 5/06/2013.

³John Calvin, *Acts*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 49-50.

The Holy Spirit is God living with us. Pentecost brings the power and love of God to us in the Holy Spirit. The struggle of believing during suffering, all the while holding on for a hoped-for-future, is the plea of all humanity. The text in Romans reminds us that we do not pass over the hardship and distress of life, because we are followers of Jesus. Rather, we pass through the hardship and distress. The Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus in our lives and advocates for the words and actions of Jesus to be evident in our lives. The Holy Spirit advocates for the ways of Jesus.

John speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate. Raymond Brown writes that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, becomes “a way of life or something that penetrates [our] very being.”⁴ The work of the Holy Spirit is experiential, it is a way of life. First, the Holy Spirit makes sure that Christians faithfully tell about Jesus and his mission. Second, the Holy Spirit testifies on Jesus’ behalf through Christians. Third, the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to walk through distress and suffering fully depending on God. Fourth, the Holy Spirit guides Christians into the truth. And fifth, the Holy Spirit is the glue that keeps Christians intact emotionally, physically and spiritually regardless of life’s ups and downs. Wherever works of love, peace, and justice are apparent, the Holy Spirit is at work. The Holy Spirit is at work through all who name the name of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; children, youth, young adults, middle-aged adults and older adults.

Experiencing the Holy Spirit is an integration of mind (doctrine) and soul (lifestyle). Jesus said that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Moreover, the Greatest

⁴Raymond Brown, *Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible 29a (New York City, New York: Doubleday, 1999), 699.

Commandment, The Sermon on the Mount and Matthew 25 show the way of Jesus, the truth of Jesus and the life of Jesus. Again Jantz writes,

The Holy Spirit is the wind that blows, the breath of God that breathes new life into our dead lives.... When the Holy Spirit gives us this new life, he doesn't just blow into us and then step back. The Holy Spirit indwells—lives inside—every believer.... The plan of salvation was authored by God, accomplished by Jesus, and applied by the Holy Spirit. It's yours through faith by the grace of God. The transformation is real—as real as anything you will ever experience—but the evidence is ethereal. It's felt, not intellectual, knowledge.⁵

The Holy Spirit seals our salvation by assuring us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that all people are created in the image of God.⁶

The message of Pentecost is this: Jesus speaks and lives his life through you. The Holy Spirit lives in you. The Holy Spirit convicts you to do the things Jesus did. The Holy Spirit leads you through a life-long process of conversion. The Holy Spirit gives you the assurance of your salvation. You are loved by God and the Holy Spirit loves others through you. Amen.

*This sermon was preached (In-Person with COVID-19 protocols and Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Pentecost Sunday, 23 May 2021
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⁵Stan Jantz, *Fire & Wind*, 50, 53, 56.

⁶In the four paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of David Gambrell, Christopher T. Holmes, Mark F. Sturgess, Lance B. Pape and Jason Byassee in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 2* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 317-319, 320-321, 322-323, 324-326 and 326-327.