

May 23rd, 2021
Pentecost Sunday

The Three Convictions

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Welcome to Pentecost Sunday and to the season of the year that is going to take us all the way to the end of November, first part of December when we begin a new church year with Advent.

Pentecost, well, time out. I'm not quite done with Easter yet! You see, over the Easter season we have been focusing on what Jesus did, what He taught, everything about His ministry leading up to the resurrection and immediately afterward. We have seen that Jesus took great pains to prepare His disciples for ministry. And we saw last week that He promised the Holy Spirit would come to them, and the Holy Spirit would bring with Him a remembrance of what Jesus had said, an understanding of the teachings of Jesus had given down and the very words to profess when they testified or went and made disciples of all nations. Add to that what we heard this morning, that the Holy Spirit would convict them. Now you have to understand that in the Greek language that word, that we translate convict, can mean convict as in judgment. But it can also mean to convince. What would the Holy Spirit convince or convict the disciples of? Well, first concerning sin; and then Jesus said, 'because they do not believe in me.' He's speaking here about the sin against the Holy Spirit. It's an understanding that there is judgment of people who are left in their sin because they have rejected Jesus and His washing away of their sin.

The Holy Spirit would convict them concerning righteousness; because, Jesus says, I go to the Father and you will see me no longer. Well first off, there's a huge change there. A shift in how Jesus speaks. He speaks of the Father, not my Father. What we see here is already an indication of the disciples' and our adoption as sons and daughters by God the Father, Almighty. But what is Jesus saying? 'That He will convict them of righteousness because I go to the father and you will see me no longer.' It's very simple, Jesus was their example of righteousness,

who they could see; but the Holy Spirit would now be the One who would convince them or convict them of the righteousness to follow in the very footsteps of Jesus, to be powerful witnesses, as Jesus was. The Holy Spirit would convict or convince them of judgment. Again, this is not judgment of sin; no Jesus says because the ruler of this world is judged.

That's why we have to just take a little time out here on Pentecost Sunday to get the full grasp of what Jesus is saying is coming with the Holy Spirit. A conviction or convincing concerning judgment that the ruler, Satan, of this world is judged. And that's the reality of Easter. Satan's greatest threat, his greatest tool that he can use against us is death. The wages of sin is death. On Easter morning, Christ utterly destroyed and defeated death! He did so because the grave could not contain Him, because the soldiers who were placed there to stop Him could not stop Him.

And now I come to the major point that really prepares us for Pentecost. Death couldn't stop Jesus. The grave could not hold Him. The soldiers couldn't stop Him, and Satan and all his demons did not show up or dare to even try to stop Him, because they knew they stood no chance. This is an overwhelming victory! Christ's resurrection is so great that Satan hightailed it out of there. He was not going to try to take Jesus on. Of this we need to be convinced and convicted; that Christ has risen, has defeated the devil, sin, death; has judged it. It's over!

Now that takes us to Pentecost. Pentecost the Greek word literally means fifty, and it's a reference to the fifty days following Passover. In the Jewish language, the Hebrew language, it's 'Shavuot' that means seven, seven, the number of perfection. Seven weeks following Passover. Forty-nine days or seven weeks and one day, boom Passover, the 50th day. To the Jewish people Shavuot, Pentecost commemorates the single most important event in Israel's history. By the way I'm quoting this from a Hebrew source. It's the giving of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible to Moses at Sinai. It is founded on the Law found in Deuteronomy 4:10-13 where the Lord reveals that we are to remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb or Mount Sinai, which is in that region called horrible. They were called to remember that day when they stood there at the base of a mountain. God spoke

directly to them and gave them the Ten Commandments. Then Moses went up to get it, and got that and all the Law, the ceremonial law all of it that went with the Ten Commandments. Israel celebrated their deliverance from Egypt Shavuot, Pentecost celebrated their new life under God's rule. The Jews have a second word for it they call it 'atzeteret.' It means the completion. It was the completion of God's deliverance from Egypt and making them His people, His nation, under His rule, with Him as their King.

Now we take all of that and wrap it together and we're ready for had to Pentecost, the event we heard of in Acts chapter 2. Just as Jesus had commanded his disciples, they went to Jerusalem and they stayed there waiting for the Holy Spirit. But since Pentecost, Shavuot came they went to celebrate it. That is what they were doing. They were remembering the deliverance, the giving of the Law, the new life they had undergone, and the completion of God's work in that deliverance. They were in for a huge surprise because they were going to see the real completion. Christ had fulfilled the Law on their behalf, all righteousness, for we are to be righteous as the Lord our God is righteous. For we are to be holy as our Lord our God is holy. All righteousness had been fulfilled by Christ. Satan had been totally, utterly defeated and they had been promised that the Holy Spirit would come on them with power. Boy did He! And the sound of a rushing wind as they were gathered together, tongues of fire appeared on their head and these fishermen; not well-trained people, not terribly literate, began to speak in the tongues and languages of every people. And we see they had now a tremendous understanding of the law and the gospel. We see that just as Jesus said, when the Holy Spirit came with power, its more than tongues of fire on their head, its more than speaking in the different languages, he brought to their remembrance scripture. Peter quoted whole sections about the Prophet Joel, and King David's writings, and psalms. The Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised gave him the words of our New Testament reading this morning. Three versus that brought it all together for the people he was talking to. Words that cut right to their heart.

How I wish I could do a sermon in three sentences that is as powerful as Peter's. With the Holy Spirit I could, but I have already run past those three sentences. What did Peter say? What was his foundation? Number one, Jesus was attested to by God by mighty works, wonders, and signs. Those three things, three is the number of God, it symbolizes the godliness of Christ and what He did. But no one could deny that Jesus did mighty works, wonders, and signs. Whether it be His unbelievable teaching, a teaching beyond what the scribes and the Pharisees and the priests would do, to the miracles, to raising the people from the dead to Himself being raised from the dead. He was attested to by God as the promised One. He had also always done what was right. He's the righteous One. No one else could ever claim that. Only Christ and the people, Peter points out, God made this evident to you. You saw it, you heard Him, you experienced that righteousness, and I quote "you crucified and killed Him by the hands of lawless men, but God raised Him up."

Those three sentences, with that message squeezed between his quotation of the Prophet Joel and the quotation of King David to put it all together so that the people were convicted, convinced by the power of the Holy Spirit; that Jesus is the Christ and they looked at Peter and the other disciples and said, "What must we do to be saved?" Peter's answer, "repent." Notice, what must we *do* to be saved; they were thinking we need to go and do good works. We need to go and do this, and this, and this. And repent is not what you are doing, it is saying you are sorry for what you have done. It is taking what you've done and acknowledging, 'I've done wrong.' And it's the power of the Holy Spirit that enables people to transition from that concept of what do I do to be saved; to this is what God has done to save me because I have done this, and I need to repent.

And then Peter tells them, follow it up with baptism. That means we have a determined sacrament; but it's a mystery of God. It is what He gave us, the avenue by which the Holy Spirit comes into us through the water and the word of Baptism. Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And three thousand people that day were baptized. Wow! That is a thousand people per verse of the three verses of Peter's sermon.

But what do we do with that today? If the Holy Spirit dwells in your heart, and you have repented, you have received forgiveness. If you have been baptized, you have received the Holy Spirit with all the same power and benefits that Peter and the disciples have. This is a day to rejoice and say, "I am a disciple of this generation. And if you have not repented and you have not been baptized, it's time to bow your head before God Almighty and confess that you are a sinner in need of the Savior. And then let's get some water. It's time to be baptized and become His disciple. In our Savior's name, Amen.