

A Gift for All God's People

Numbers 11:24-30

Introduction

It may seem unusual to preach from the **OLD TESTAMENT** text on the Day of **PENTECOST**. But look once again at the words of Moses in **verse 29** when Joshua asks him to stop Eldad and Medad from prophesying like the other elders. *"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"* Moses' prayer will be answered some 1300 years later, on the Day of **PENTECOST**, when the **Holy Spirit** is poured out on all believers. What does this story tell us about the **Holy Spirit** and how we should look at **PENTECOST**?

Sent by God the Father

First, the **Spirit** doesn't come upon the elders on His own. God the Father takes *some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on* the 70 elders. The **Spirit** is sent by the Father, as we confess in the **Nicene Creed**: *And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.*

A Gift

Since the **Holy Spirit** is given by the Father, this makes Him a **gift**. A gift is freely given. These men didn't ask to receive the **Spirit**. As far as we know, they didn't know what to expect when they were called to the **TENT OF MEETING**. A gift is also not based on **merit**. (Read **Romans 4:4-5**) Paul, talking here about the free gift of justification, says that a gift is not earned.

The Words of the Lord

Neither did these men earn anything. This passage begins with the phrase, *Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord (v. 24)*. What were those words? In the preceding passage, the people had been complaining because they had no meat to eat. God was fed up with them and said they would have meat for a month, *until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome for you.*

Eldad and Medad

Look at Eldad and Medad. They were elders who didn't come to the tent like they were supposed to. But God gave **His Spirit** to them anyway. We don't and can't earn the gift of the **Holy Spirit**.

Purpose

The **Holy Spirit** was given for a **purpose**. These 70 men were to help Moses bear the burden. They were to help lead the children of Israel. God gave the **Holy Spirit** at **PENTECOST** for a purpose, too. It wasn't so the apostles could show off. Writing to the **CORINTHIANS** about the gifts of the **Spirit**, Paul said, *So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12)*. The Spirit as well as the gifts He brings are given to build the church. Later, Paul says, *What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up (1 Corinthians 14:26)*.

Our purpose for being and for being together in the church is to build it up. That is our calling, our **VOCATION**.

How Do We Build the Church?

How do we build the church? Building the church is advancing the **KINGDOM OF GOD**. The **Explanation of the Small Catechism** says, concerning the **Second Petition** of the **LORD'S PRAYER** that when we are praying for God's kingdom to come, among other things, *we are praying that He will use us to extend His kingdom of grace*. We do this through **words** and **deeds**. **Acts 4:29** says, *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness*. **1 Peter 2:12** says, *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation*.

How God Builds the Church—Means of Grace

We know that the church **will** be built, the kingdom **will** be advanced, because God promises it in His **WORD**. *So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11)*. God accomplishes this through the **MEANS OF GRACE, WORD** and **SACRAMENT**. That's why the **Holy Spirit** is **A GIFT FOR ALL GOD'S PEOPLE**. He's been given to help us fulfill our vocation of building up the church for Christ, as we seek to build it in word and deed.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
