



MORAVIAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Pentecost Meditations 2024

OVERALL THEME: THE ENABLING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
 (“...as the Spirit enabled them.”) Acts 2:4

INTRODUCTION

Fellow Moravians, recently I had the unique privilege to listen to one Preacher from the Pentecostal Church background who lamented bitterly how the Pentecost festival somehow has faded on the Christian Calendar. In other words, this important festival has really been pushed to the periphery of the life of the Christian Church. The Preacher’s argument was that ironically the Christian Church was born directly out of the Pentecost experience by the first Christian Church and therefore owes its existence to the Third Person of the Trinity as it was poured out on the Disciples on the day of Pentecost, yet she does not celebrate Pentecost as much as she should. Simply put, the question to be asked is why the Pentecost Festival is not enjoying the same coverage and prominence as Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, for example. If there is any merit in the assertion by the Preacher, then all of us, as present-day Christians perhaps stand convicted of what Paul the Apostle calls “...**quenching of the Spirit...**” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We therefore need to redeem ourselves and place the Pentecost festival back at the centre of the life of the Christian Church where it belongs. To this end, this series of meditations should therefore be seen a humble attempt by the Bishops of our Church and members of our Church to right the wrong of the Holy Spirit being marginalised in the life of the very Church she gave rise to.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PENTECOST

By way of providing the historical background to the Day of Pentecost, as Students of the Bible we all know that it was a Jewish feast held fifty (50) days after Passover. It celebrated the first fruits of the wheat harvest. In the Jewish rituals of that time, the first sheaf reaped from the barley harvest was presented to God at Passover. But at Pentecost, the first fruits of the wheat harvest were presented to God which is why Pentecost is called *the day of the first fruits* (Numbers 28:26).

Hughes remarks that “*It was the best-attended of the great feasts because traveling conditions were at their best. There was never a more cosmopolitan gathering in Jerusalem than this one.*” Furthermore, Leviticus 23:15-22 gives the original instructions for the celebration of Pentecost. It says that two loaves of *leavened* bread were to be waved before the Lord by the priest as part of the celebration. “

In the New Testament, Pentecost took place ten (10) days after the time Jesus ascended to heaven according to Acts 1:3, and since Jesus commanded them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, one of the striking qualities and features of the Holy Spirit that Luke in the Book of Acts, Chapter 2 brings to the fore is that she **enables**, **activates** and **galvanises** ordinary people into extra ordinary actions which transcend human limitations. This ten-day series of meditations therefore explores how the Holy Spirit was the means and an agent by which ordinary men and women were **enabled** to do extra ordinary things. Amen



Sithembiso N.N. Ngqakayi (Bishop)
On behalf of the Bishops Fellowship

PRAYER: *God of history, thank you for the Pentecost festival which is a reminder to all of us of your trustworthiness after you promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which promise you fulfilled. Help us Lord to emulate your example by being trustworthy in our dealings with you and our fellow human beings, in Jesus' name.*
Amen

.....

DAY ONE: Enabled By the Holy Spirit To Use Cultural Events for God's Cause.... Acts 2: 1-16

As a point of departure, perhaps we need to unpack what **culture** is and what **religion** is. Leading anthropologists view **culture** as the collection of values, beliefs, practices and norms that shape a group or society. It is what makes us unique as individuals and groups. In terms of religion, culture plays a significant role in shaping our beliefs and practices. Anthropologists argue that just as our families and friends can influence our religious beliefs, so too can our culture.

As for religion, experts define it as a set beliefs and practices concerning the sacred, moral and spiritual aspects of life. It is the way we connect with the divine or transcendent. Just as our culture can shape our religious beliefs, so too can our religion shape our culture. Simply put, religion is often a major force in shaping values, norms and practices of a particular group of people or even individuals for that matter.

As already indicated in the introductory part of this series of meditations, the Pentecost festival has its roots in pure Jewish cultural setting of a feast held to mark the first fruits of the wheat harvest. This cultural festival would be held fifty (50) days after the famous Jewish Passover, a religious festival which would last for seven days to mark the deliverance of the Jewish people from the Egyptian bondage. Here we clearly see seamless merging of both culture and religion into one as if to say God is God of both culture and religion equally.

Regrettably, the natural connectedness of religion and culture was second guessed by Western missionaries when they landed in Africa, in our context. In binging the Gospel of Jesus to the indigenous people of Africa, for them that meant people had to denounce their cultural ways of life, wrongly so.

It is remarkable in our text of choice that God chose to use the annual cultural gathering of the Jewish people to mark the first fruits of the wheat harvest, which had little to do with religion to bless them in this unique way by pouring out his Holy Spirit on them in an unprecedented way. The lesson in all of this, I think, is that God is not against our cultural practices and therefore we have no reason to be ashamed of our cultural identities even if we are followers of Christ. If anything we can use them for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ the same way God did on the day of Pentecost and thereafter. Amen

PRAYER: *God of culture, thank you for affirming the cultural practices of the time for the Jewish people by honouring their annual feast with your presence in the form of the Third Person of your triune being. Help us to rediscover our cultural identities while remaining your followers in the true sense of the word. Amen*

DAY TWO: Enabled by the Spirit to exercise patience for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised.) Acts 1: 4
Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3–10; Psalm 40

Dear Brothers and Sisters, dear Children: Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave his followers clear instructions. The first instruction was an order for his followers to “wait.” *Wait before you go!* The Early Church was not yet prepared for the mission of God to carry the gospel of Jesus to the world. They had been with Jesus; they knew what they were to do, but they were lacking one necessity—the power promised to them! And Jesus says to them: “*Wait!*” God is going to use the Early Church in a mighty way to spread the Gospel beyond Jerusalem, to the ends of the earth! Jesus does not send his followers into the world on a mission unprepared or unprovided for. He is sending them **help**. He is sending them **power**. But power will not come as they go—**power** will come as they **wait!** The power of God is available to those who **wait** on the Lord.

In Psalm 40, we read of David’s waiting. David doesn’t tell us in the Psalm how long he waited. But he said that he waited patiently. That implies that he was waiting for a while, and his waiting was difficult, but we do know that eventually God heard his cry. (*Psalm 40:1*). Whatever it was that David was waiting for, he experienced the LORD’s faithfulness to deliver him from his trouble. But that was not the end of his trouble. It was simply the end of one of his troubles. As David continued in Psalm 40, we find him waiting again. (Read Psalm 40:12-13.) At the end of the Psalm, in the very last verse, David writes, ‘*You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!*’!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, much of life is waiting, and waiting is often difficult. And yet, God always calls us to be patient in our wait. Waiting on the Lord may be one of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life. It requires patient trust; it means that we give God the benefit of the doubt, knowing that He knows what he is doing. Waiting is God’s way of seeing if we will trust Him before we move forward; it reminds us that God is in control; and his timing is best. You know, God often waits

until what seems like the last moment to act - until it seems there is no hope left! But for those who persevere in waiting and trusting in God, they will see the power of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters, those who wait on God will never be put to shame. One of the fruits of God's Spirit at work within us is the fruit of patience and steadfastness in difficult circumstances. Yes, patience is hard and stretching, but it is good and holy. It comes from a position of power. As the Spirit produces patience in us, He is making us more Christlike. When we are patient, we leave room for God to work in our hearts; we lay down our schedule and trust in God's. We let God be God. When our impatience gets the better of us, we tend to ask questions like, "Lord, why are you taking so long to answer the prayer the way that I want?", or "God, I am supposed to be going this direction; why are you taking me this way instead"? We react as if it were a life-or-death situation. Remember, when God asks us to wait and to be patient, it is for reasons like refining us more into His image, building character and steadfastness in our lives, becoming testimonies to others, and growing our faith in Him regardless of our circumstances. On days when our patience is running low, may we have the strength to persevere and the boldness to cry out to God and ask Him to provide us with this fruit of the Spirit called patience. Those who wait on the Lord gain new strength. Amen

PRAYER: *Father God, I acknowledge that patience is a virtue I need to cultivate in my life. Help me to trust in Your perfect timing and surrender my need for control. Teach me to wait with a heart of peace and contentment, knowing that you are at work behind the scenes, in Jesus name. Amen*

DAY THREE: Enabled by the Spirit to Preach Freely and Fearlessly... Acts 2: 14-36

Dear Brother, Sister, Youth, for many people the function of Preaching in the Church is one of the most difficult fields of service. Firstly, many do not like standing up and facing a crowd of people, while stepping forward is a very important step in faith for every Christian. For some it is a truly natural function while others struggle to overcome the nerves, etc. We may remind ourselves that you are not doing it alone because God in his mercy gave his Spirit to support his people and to lead us. Let us remind ourselves: preaching is not about us in the first place but it is about God therefore knowing God and having a personal relationship with him is a priority to every preacher. God in his love and mercy and in his power leads the process and steps forward Himself when one wants to talk about Him to his people. It has been and should thus at all times be God who says and not me! Cf. v.17.25.

A further step in this direction is seen in the preaching of Peter where he quotes from other known older texts. His sermon is built on what is known, what has already been spoken and what already made an impact. God has been speaking in the past through other people and just continues as He is using us to bring his Word today! I should know that I do not stand alone! It is well worth knowing and using the support given by former preachers, teachers, leaders. Jesus used this method when He spoke the words that we know today as The Sermon on the Mount. He teaches us that words of today have already been given in the Old Testament and served his people over many centuries. This is why we hear Him saying: You have heard... but I say...As much as we know the Father, He speaks to us today through his Son, Jesus Christ. The divine power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead to be in heaven with the Father is still there to support those speaking about Him. This may be the reason why we love the expression: **In the Name of Jesus!** Every call

we make in the Name of Jesus is a call on Jesus Himself to do what is asked. Therefore healing, salvation, forgiveness, restoration is possible when we call upon and it is proclaimed in the Name of Jesus. We have no power of our own. Powerful sermons are not based on who you are or how you are speaking or when you do it or something like that. They find their strength in the source of it all: the Lord our God. If they are in the will of God, He blesses them. God can use even the simplest of sermons if they are in his honour and to his glory. To this we may add that sermon spoken fearlessly has God's blessing in the circumstances they are given. The Gospel spread its roots and wings under the most difficult circumstances of persecution and rejection. Despite these conditions the Disciples were endowed with the courage to speak from their minds and hearts because they knew that what they wanted to preach was the Gospel truth and served the people. They chose to remain faithful to their calling and commission or command to go and speak to the people to the ends of the earth. Amen

PRAYER: *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers, and enable us to speak freely and fearlessly about you mighty works through the ages. Amen*

DAY FOUR: ENABLED by the Holy Spirit to Respond Radically....Acts 2: 37-47

The account follows directly on the story of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit had been experienced powerfully not only by the gathered followers of Jesus, but also by many others in Jerusalem. Peter had given the first Christian evangelistic sermon. The response to the sermon was tremendous: Three thousand people repented, were baptized, and joined the Jerusalem Christian community. Our passage describes what the life of the resulting community looked like. Most of the activities described as characterizing the community's life have often characterized Christian congregational life throughout history.

This is especially so with the description in verse 42. Teaching, fellowship, eating together, and prayer have been common Christian practices for ages. Fellowship and eating together, ordinary as they seem, are not activities we just happen to do but are essential acts of Christian life. Teaching and prayer are more obvious Christian activities, but many believers and congregations will nevertheless be helped by a reminder of their importance.

The content of **the Apostles' teaching** was the Gospel, and has been preserved in the New Testament Scriptures, so that we have their instruction. *One can hardly over-emphasize the importance of sound, biblical teaching. The Word of God is the foundation and starting point for every aspect of the Christian life.*

As to the third and fourth activities: "the breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper and generally to shared regular meals. Often "**the breaking of bread**" does refer to observing Communion, but it is not always a reference to the observance of Communion. The expression may simply refer to the eating of a meal.

The fourth item "the prayers," probably refers to the set prayers occurring at the temple. Luke is telling us that in its very early days the saints in Jerusalem diligently persisted in the observance of the stipulated times of Jewish prayer at the temple.

A New Testament Church is a church in which God is present through His Spirit, and in which He is powerfully at work to glorify Himself by manifestations of His power and grace. A New Testament Church is a church where the fruits of the Spirit are as evident as the manifestations of His power. A healthy church is one that is founded upon the person and work of Jesus Christ and His infallible Word, the Bible. May we be characterized by the devotion, awe, generosity, and joy that we find in the early church, to the glory of God.

The picture that emerges in Acts 2: 37-47 is indeed one that indicates that those who received the Holy Spirit were **enabled** to **respond radically**. Equipped by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were emboldened and with new fire and vigour they proclaimed the Gospel. Amen

PRAYER: *Thank you, Lord for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Enable us to respond and embrace the teaching of Your Word, fellowship, and prayer. We thank you, Lord, for the warmth of your Spirit, and for your power and your grace among us, and we ask you to strengthen us with it, in Jesus' name. Amen*

DAY FIVE: All filled with the Holy Spirit... (Ephesians 5:17-21; Acts 2:1-4)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Spirit is always a very intriguing subject of spiritual meditation, inspiration and spiritual transformation for all believers. The day of Pentecost fell fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. In the Greek language, Pentecost means "fiftieth." According to the Old Testament, the day of Pentecost came on the fiftieth day following the Sunday after the Jewish Passover festival (Lev.23:15), which for Christians is the fiftieth day after Easter.

Luke begins with the first great event in the spreading of the gospel: the Day of Pentecost (Chapter 2). In the entire history of mankind there have been three events that have been more important than any other: the birth of Jesus, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Spirit in full power on that first day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection. In these verses Luke gives us a description of the third of these three events.

The Holy Spirit came on the disciples, who were gathered in one place, most likely the temple courts, at about 9 o'clock for their morning prayers. They were joined by other people in the celebrations of Pentecost. Then suddenly, they heard a sound like the blowing of a violent wind (*John 3:9*) and they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire. John the Baptist had said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (*Matthew 3:11*). Fire is a sign of God's presence. When believers today experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, they often say that it's like a burning fire in their hearts. May that fire never go out!

Whatever the disciples heard and saw, the important thing is this: **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.** From that day on their lives were changed. Their fears and doubts were gone. From that day on when they spoke, they spoke with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. When they healed, they healed through the power of the Holy Spirit. From that day on their lives remained fully dependent upon the Holy Spirit and under Her control. It is important to note that the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them indiscriminately on every disciple: **All of them were filled with**

the Holy Spirit and all began to speak in tongues as the Holy Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4). Some 3000 people responded in repentance and baptism and were added to the Church.

Let us remember that today too we all, as believers, can receive that power. That power was not just for those first disciples; it is for ALL BELIEVERS. Let it be our constant prayer for ourselves and for each other that we may all remain filled with the Holy Spirit and that His fire will continue to burn brightly in our hearts. Amen

PRAYER: *Lord, we pray that the Holy Spirit renew our lives constantly and take control thereof. Fill our lives with the ever-present Holy Spirit in a very special way. We pray that the fruits of the Holy Spirit may fill our lives so that we can go and make disciples of all nations. Amen*

DAY SIX:Enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak with other tongues. Acts 2:4-14

In Acts 2:1-4 the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was marked by three symbolic incidents. First there was the sound of a violent rushing wind that filled the house. Then there were the visible signs of tongues of fire resting on each person. Finally they were filled with the Holy Spirit and there was the miraculous speaking in other tongues. The sound of the wind was the invisible power of God, the tongues of fire symbolized God's presence and the speaking of tongues was the unique gift of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak a language which they never learnt but the mother tongue speakers could understand. The Jews from all nations heard the disciples" *declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues*" (2.11).

According to the Apostle Paul in *1 Cor.12* and in agreement with *Acts 2*, speaking in tongues is valuable to the one hearing God's message in his or her own tongue but it is useless if it is not interpreted. In *1 Cor.12:30* mention is made of the gift of interpreting tongues in order to communicate the message of the tongues so all could understand the message. The ability to speak in tongues is one of the many spiritual gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor.12:4-11*). Every believer is given one or more spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues, like any other spiritual gift, is not guaranteed to any believer nor is it necessary for salvation. The ability to interpret tongues, which is also a spiritual gift, is equally important. (*1 Cor.12:10*). The spiritual gift of speaking in tongues is largely debated by believers yet the Apostle Paul encouraged the early church in Corinth to continue the practice of speaking in tongues in their worship of God and in their prayer lives as a means of spiritual edification (*1 Cor. 14:4*). God can definitely give a person the gift of speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit has the power to disperse spiritual gifts. (*1 Cor.12:11*) The gift of tongues would be immensely useful in furthering God's Kingdom if used in agreement with Scripture. God has given us this wonderful spiritual gift to bless us, edify us and spiritually refresh us throughout our lives on this earth. This meditation calls us to reflect on the spiritual value of the gift of speaking in tongues as a personal and communal strengthening of our faith. It calls us to fervent prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the enabling thereof in our lives.

Amen

PRAYER: *We thank you Lord for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We earnestly pray that you fill us with the gift of tongues and the interpretation thereof to strengthen our faith and witness for you in the church and in the world. Amen*

DAY SEVEN: Enabled By The Holy Spirit To Give To God. Leviticus 23: 15 - 22

As we meditate on the above Scripture reading, we journey through the celebration of the seven Feast, the appointed days which God had commanded Israel to remember, God's provision and what He had done for them in all the seasons of their individual lives. Today, in the same way, this week we remember God's promise of sending the Holy Spirit to revive us again. On the Feast of Weeks (which is called Pentecost (*Acts 2:11*) in the New Testament), God's order and structure for the whole Church from Generation to Generation was confirmed. The Feast of weeks is also called the Feast of Harvest (*Exodus 23:16*) , and the day of the First Fruits. (*Numbers 28 : 26*) Which says: " *you shall make a proclamation as well ; you are to have a holy convocation* (which means "rehearsal" or time set apart).

Today we may not necessarily be tied to strict *Dos* and *Don'ts*, but if God wanted the Israelites to be pure when they come before Him, surely He expects the same from us. In this celebration we recognize the Lord as the Provider of the Harvest who deserves the best of our first fruits. In *Leviticus.23:16-17* the instruction is given : "*present an offering of new grain to the Lord*" . The animals with no defect and burnt offerings to the Lord were other forms of giving to God.

The question that comes to mind: What are we doing with our First Fruits? Do we set our first fruits apart and allow the Holy Spirit to show us, or give us discernment to GIVE. Are we enabled by the Holy Spirit to exercise discernment? To whom should we give: the Poor and the Stranger? Indeed, we are called to give not only to the poor in the Church, but also to the one on my doorstep, at the shopping mall in the neighbourhood, etc . Enabled by the Holy Spirit is to be enlightened in our thinking patterns, thoughts processes and reasoning. This is one important aspect in God's word: How obedient are we in giving our Tithes and Offerings? Prophet Malachi 3:10 is even more direct about giving to God when he proclaims " *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Host, if I will not open the windows of Heaven, and pour out a blessing.....*" . The word is talking about the crops, herds and flocks. "So that there will be meat in my house" The food was for the Levites who were on duty in the Temple. Is the Church the storehouse for Tithing? And do we trust God with our money? Another question to ponder on: . Why is it that some of us don't pay tithes and Offerings . To give to God is a basic Principle of Stewardship. The Holy spirit enables us to give not only our Tithes, Offerings, but also our Energy, Time, our Devotedness. Giving is an expression of Obedience to God, yes, but also gratitude and Trust in God. The Hymn writer : "*Teach us to know our calling, and make that calling sure; endow us with the guerdon of those whose hearts are pure* **Hymn 817 v 3** says it all. The Holy Spirit has the ability to teach, guide and instruct us. Amen

PRAYER: *My prayer and desire as we meditate on the Feast of Pentecost and its fulfillment, are that we will be encouraged with this historic event of the outpouring of the Holy spirit in our own personal lives anew. Aflame with purpose and Calling to move forward in faith. Amen*

DAY EIGHT: Enabled by the Holy Spirit not to quench the Spirit....
1 Thessalonians 5:19

Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the world championship in 1971 admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right). Even though Roger considered coach Landry to have a 'genius mind' when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger later said, "*I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment and victory*". This story captures the essence of the text, encouraging us not to quench the working of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to quench the Spirit? Quenching the Spirit carries the idea of dampening the flame of the Holy Spirit Fire, which is poured out to purify, enlighten, warm, melt and consume. When we smother the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is unable to move, direct, guide and sanctify us. The fruits of the Spirit cannot be visible where the Spirit is suppressed. When we are filled with earthly plans and desires there is no room for the Spirit to work and bring transformation in our lives. We need to be emptied of ourselves, our pride, our sins, our desires, our plans which lead to destruction. When Saul and his soldiers were disobedient to God and wanted to rectify their offense with sacrificial offerings, Samuel responded, '*Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?* To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams', (1 Sam 15:22). We learn an important lesson from this account of Saul and his disobedient soldiers.

Our outward behaviour should reflect our inner attitude. To be obedient to the Spirit on the surface is useless if our attitude is questionable. Those who are obedient to the Spirit, walk on the path of life. In this Pentecost period we are called upon to allow the Holy Spirit to move in our lives, to fill us, to break us, to renew us, to restore us and to lead us to submission. It is only when we truly give over, give up and surrender to the Spirit's power and authority that we can experience harmony, fulfillment and victory. Amen

PRAYER: *Dear Father, may the fire of your Spirit always burn bright in our hearts, leading us to confession, repentance and restoration. May Your Spirit always be stronger than our desires, breaking strongholds and keeping us on the path of righteousness? Amen*

DAY NINE: ENABLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT NOT TO GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT (Ephesians 4: 30-320

Dear Sisters and Brothers and Children! If you are a parent, you would understand the difference between being angry at your children and being grieved by them. It is one thing when they make you mad, it is quite another when they break your heart. When you are angry, most of the time the problem can be corrected fairly quickly. But when they grieve you, it can create a wound that heal slowly- taking weeks, months or even years to heal. The same is true of partners in a loving relationship.

The word grieve is a *love word*. You can only grieve someone who loves you. We talk a lot about the love of God and sing “*Jesus loves me this I know.*” God the Holy Spirit loves you and wants the best for you. The Holy Spirit is your Advocate and your best cheerleader in your relationship with God.. He is your connection to Christ.

Our text for today cautions us as believers and as Church, to grieve not the Holy Spirit. In order not to grieve Him, note what causes Him to grieve. If we are to know what it is that grieves God, we must first have knowledge of Him; it follows that we must spend time with him to know what things in our lives grieve the Holy Spirit of God: Paul mentions: *living like unbelievers* (4:17–19); *lying* (4:25); *anger* (4:26); *giving place to the devil* (4:27); *stealing* (4:28); *evil speaking* (4:29, 31); *sexual perversions* (5:3–5)

When we grieve the Spirit we break Her heart. In practical terms: If you break your parent’s or partner’s heart, it does not mean you lose being with them, but the intimacy and confidence is broken. In the same way, though partaking in activities in our gatherings in church, we lose the closeness and joy of the Holy Spirit in our lives. David, the psalmist, prayed in Psalm 51v. 12: “*Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation.*”

Graciously Paul gives some remedies of such ills in our lives: *learn the truth in Jesus* (4:20-21); *speak truth with each other* (4:25); *repent* (4:26); *give no place to the devil* (4:22-24); *work hard* (4:28); *edify* (4:29, 31); *be thankful* (5:2,4). Paul calls on believers to live and work as the living body of Christ. Notice how in our communication (speaking) with each other we may hurt or heal one another. The Scriptures declare that “*the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity*” and “*that it corrupts the whole body*” (Jms. 3:6a, b). “*Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. ...this should not be* (v.10). Not in our homes; not in the congregations and our communities, not even in our thoughts. Many a congregant has been grieved because of hurtful words spoken behind their back. Proverbs instructs us: “*keep corrupt talk far from your lips.*” (4:23). In our home, and I believe in many others’ too, a portrait text on the wall reminds me that Christ is everywhere. He is the Head of this house, the ‘*silent Listener to every conversation*’.

Christ promised the power of Holy Spirit (*Acts 1: 8*). The Lord is not out to destroy us. He chastises us, yes, but in love. He strengthens us not to cause harm and destruction resulting in sorrow and pain to our fellow Sisters and Brothers and young persons through our actions, but to participate in upliftment and to fight the forces of evil in our townships, our country and the world. He enabled us to interact with one another in love and kindness, with patience honesty and truth. (see Ex. 32: 7-14). He has enabled us to interact with one another in love and kindness, with honesty and truth. He will teach us and remind us of his Words (*John 14:20*). We please God when we commune in prayer with Him and meditate on his Word, daily. This is an ongoing process. Remember, when we fall, do not be discouraged and don’t know what to pray for. The Spirit intercedes for us. (**Rom. 8:26**). Begin your day saying: I am a child of God (sealed). The Holy Spirit lives within me. The Holy Spirit is here to guide, convict and empower us. Seek His face and forgiveness. 1 John 1: 9 reads: “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*” Amen

PRAYER: *Holy Spirit, please help us in our daily lives and service to steer away from the things that grieve you. Enable us in your power to follow, obey and honour Jesus today in our thoughts, words and deeds. Forgive us in Jesus' Name. Amen*

DAY TEN: Pentecost and Holy Communion..... Leviticus 23:15-22

The festival of Pentecost commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples (*Acts 2:1–47*) while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks. In our prescribed reading, this Feast of Weeks is listed under several feasts that God had instructed the children of Israel to celebrate as “*appointed festivals of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies*” (*Lev. 23:2*). The prescribed reading highlights a number of aspects that are worth noting, including the specific date of the festival, the specification regarding the offering, how the offering should be made, and what purpose the offering serves: “*an aroma pleasing to God*” (*Lev. 23:18*). To this end, our attention is drawn to verse 19, “*Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering.*” *Mk. 14:22-26*, *Luk. 22:14–23*, and *1 Cor. 11:23-25*, are traditionally used as words of institution of the elements of the Holy Communion, the bread and the wine, all this to be done in remembrance of our Lord Jesus. For in Holy Communion we celebrate in the example of Christ at the Passover meal, Him being our ‘*once and for all times*’ sin offering who makes fellowship with God possible. In celebrating Pentecost, we celebrate the birth of the church through the Holy Spirit who “**enables, activates and galvanizes**” us into a community of God’s chosen people. The children of Israel are, however, called to set time aside for the Lord, to celebrate in community with those redeemed through miraculous acts of God.

It is sad that so many of us have been overcome by the busyness of life and all its commitments that we fail to make time for celebrating not only Pentecost but also Holy Communion services. We emphasize and place Holy Communion services during Easter, 13th August and Eternity Sunday on a “*more-important-than-others*” scale. But every invitation to Holy Communion is an invitation to “*an appointed festival of the Lord,*” a proclamation of a sacred assembly. During communion we are recounting the ‘*once-and- for-all-times*’ miraculous and grace-filled acts of God through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Every communion service is a place where we encounter our Lord Jesus Christ in the elements of bread and wine, transformed by the Holy Spirit to be psychical and spiritual nourishment so that we are enabled, activated, and galvanised to share the Good News of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection with a world needing hope and reassurance. Every Holy Communion service is an opportunity to gather with the redeemed of the Lord, being edified, and built into a Holy Priesthood. We are invited this Pentecost again to make time for our Lord’s appointed festival, for a nourishing and edifying fellowship, and for the enabling and activation of gifts, time, and talents to build the Body Christ. Will we accept the invitation? Amen

PRAYER: *Lord, we thank you for the **enabling, activating, and galvanizing** power of your Holy Spirit. Enable us with a steadfast heart to commit to your appointed festival and the celebration of your continued presence with us. Activate your gifts within us so that we will serve all those to whom we are called. Inspire and galvanise*

us with your redeeming love for the action that will build the Church and to preach your Good News to the ends of the earth. Amen

BLESSED PENTECOST

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.....

JOEL 2:28