



2014 Reflections from Lent to Pentecost

(Part III - Refreshment)

7 weekly devotionals for Eastertide

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From the Desk of Elaine Everett Atchison



Come to the Waters. From Ash Wednesday to Holy Week we contemplated Jesus' challenges and "overcoming promises" (Part I-Preparation). During Holy Week we looked more closely at our Savior, Jesus Christ (Part II-Restoration). The third leg of our journey is from Easter to Pentecost, setting aside time for seven weekly reflections about the coming of the promised Holy Spirit (Part III-Refreshment).

The Bible first mentions the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:2: "***The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.***"

The last mention of the Holy Spirit is in Revelation 22:17, "***The Spirit and the Bride [all believers from all ages] say "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.***" From the first to the last chapter of God's written Word, from Creation to Re-Creation, God's Spirit is hovering, speaking, creating and inhabiting the earth and his people.

After Pentecost Sunday there will be 24 Sundays until Advent begins. "The Acts of the Apostles" contains 28 chapters if you have never traced the movements of the earliest Christians (*Christianos* means "follower of the anointed one.") Acts 11:26 reports that "*Barnabus went to Tarsus to look for Saul [renamed Paul], and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch [Christ followers] were first called Christians.*" Where and when did you first identify yourself with Christ?

In His joy,

Elaine E. Atchison

2014 Calendar of Reflections: Lent to Pentecost



Part I: Preparation [separate pdf]

- ✿ March 9 First Sunday
- ✿ March 16 Second Sunday
- ✿ March 23 Thirds Sunday
- ✿ March 30 Fourth Sunday
- ✿ April 6 Fifth Sunday
- ✿ April 13 Palm Sunday
- ✿ April 14 Holy Week Monday

Part II: Restoration [separate pdf]

- ✿ April 15 Holy Week Tuesday
- ✿ April 16 Holy Week Wednesday
- ✿ April 17 Maundy Thursday
- ✿ April 18 Good Friday
- ✿ April 19 Holy Saturday
- ✿ April 20 Easter Sunday
- ✿ April 21 Easter Monday

Part III: Refreshment

- ✿ April 27 First Sunday
- ✿ May 4 Second Sunday
- ✿ May 11 Third Sunday
- ✿ May 18 Fourth Sunday
- ✿ May 25 Fifth Sunday
- ✿ June 1 Sixth Sunday
- ✿ June 8 Pentecost Sunday

First Sunday of Eastertide

"The Brightest Light"

Genesis 1:1-4; 2:7; Exodus 3:1-6; John 14



"In the beginning, God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God [Ruach Elohim] was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good." Genesis 1:1-4

Little Linguistics Lesson. Those who believe in a Supreme Being, but not God as revealed in the Bible, use many names to describe a power greater than themselves: "HP" (higher power), "The Man Upstairs", "Providence" "The Force", "The Divine", "Higher Consciousness."

The Bible begins with a startling statement: *"In the beginning, God . . ."* a name derived from Gothic-Germanic roots. The original Hebrew word **Elohim** referred to the Creator and Judge of the universe. Genesis 2:7 uses **YHVH**, ("TO BE") as God's unspoken personal name, and **Yahweh** is his most frequent designation (>6800 times). **Spirit of God** comes from *ruach* meaning "wind breath mind spirit." The New Testament contains over 90 references to the Greek word *pneuma* which we translate **Holy Spirit**. ["Holy Ghost" came from the Old English word, *gast*, which means spirit, not an apparition of a dead person.]

Stop right there. God WAS before anything in existence was created. Mind blowing, huh? In whatever terms you try to describe God, you must concede that he is different than anything within our vast Universe. He is also outside of time and space as we know them. He WAS when there was only darkness and deep, when the earth was formless and empty. And he was active, for the Spirit of God was "cherishing the confused mass."

Beetlejuice. The tenth brightest star that can be seen from Earth is a huge, red supergiant named Betelgeuse (pronounced Bay-tel-jews). It is over 1000 times larger and 13,000 times brighter than our Sun. The brightest light on the Earth is the man-made Texas Petawatt Laser in a lab at the University of Texas. In an instant, it shines brighter than the light on the surface of the Sun and can only be fired in a "clean room" because it will blow up any dust, hair or fiber that enters its beam. No

wonder that we are unable to see God. We would be annihilated by his glorious Light.

As Fire! God has appeared to humans in many forms: as an angel, as a cloud, as a whirlwind. He appeared to Moses *"in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. [Moses] looked, and behold the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.'* When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, *'Moses, Moses!'* And he said, *'Here, I am.'* Then [God] said, *'Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'* And [God] said, *'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'* And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (Exodus 3:1-6)

Turn aside. God looked upon Moses with favor when he saw that he stopped to take a closer look. God didn't call out to Moses with plans to destroy him. He wanted Moses to know him. He wanted Moses to deliver his people from slavery. He wanted Moses to receive and communicate his commandments and promises.

Take off your sandals. Like the Petawatt Laser disintegrates even a fleck of dust, Moses needed to cast away his dusty sandals before the burning bush--and it was only a shadow of God's glory! How could a human ever bear the sight of God's full glory? God had a plan for that. *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as Sons."* (Galatians 4:4-5)

As a man. For a time, God lived among us in the form of a man. Isaiah was said the sign that it was God would be that *"the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel, Hebrew for GOD WITH US"* (Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7). Centuries later, an angel came to Joseph, who was engaged to a young virgin named Mary. He said, *"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet Isaiah . . ."* (Matthew 1:20-25)

As a Helper. When Jesus was comforting his disciples about his departure, he made many incredible promises found in John's gospel, chapters 14-17. God would no longer remain with mankind in a human form, but he promised that he would not leave them as orphans, and would send **the Helper** to be with them forever (14:16), *"the Holy Spirit", "the Spirit of Truth . . . you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you."* (14:17, 26)

Dearest God, You have many names and many shapes but you have always hovered over us, cherished us, and created a way for us to approach you. You say you have come to dwell within us for this part of your eternal history. Help us as we turn aside to look closer at your Spirit's work. Direct us to cast away anything that is not fitting for your glorious presence. Amen.

Second Eastertide Sunday

"Taking a Closer Look"

Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19; John 21:25



"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:16-20

I am not exercised in the contemplation of invisible things, but I have studied and doodled and attempted to understand the distinctions between the three Persons of our **triune** God. Every analogy in Creation falls short, but an Irish clover once made an important connection. When my grandson asked its name, I said "clover." He didn't go on to ask, "What is that first leaf? What is that second leaf? What is that third leaf?" He simply observed that clover is (generally) a three-leafed plant.

We should only search after God in his sacred Word. From the foundations of the world, Scripture sparingly teaches the unity of **one divine essence (or substance) ordered in three persons**. "Trinity" is not in the Bible, but has become a simple word for an incomprehensible concept. Augustine lamented the poverty of human language in so high a matter. John Calvin carefully outlined the concept of **Persons** so the names of Deity don't "merely flutter in our brain without any genuine knowledge."¹ On the other end of the spectrum, God's immensity should deter our feeble minds from trying to measure him. His substance is inseparable yet there is in God a certain arrangement, which makes no change in his unity. Each Person is perfect God. They carry an order with them, but not a hierarchy. Each Person is related to the other two in a distinct way. Each Person is also distinguished by its own special mark and work.

¹ Another oldie but goodie: Calvin, John. Institutes of the Christian Religion. Book First, Chapter 13, 1536.

To **the Father** is attributed the beginning of action, the fountain and source of all things; To **the Son**, emerging from the Father is wisdom, counsel and action; To **the Spirit**, emerging from the Father and Son, is energy and effective ability.

When one Person is compared with another, the Father is regarded as the beginning of the Godhead in respect of order, not in importance or power. Speaking of the Person of Mediator, Christ Jesus (the Word) holds a middle place between God and Man. Christ descended to us for the very purpose of raising us to the Father, and at the same time, raising us to himself since he is one with the Father. Sometimes we downgrade the Spirit into a third place status, but this is incorrect thinking, for he transfers life and vigor into all things; he is the author of regeneration and future immortality. This is why we will spend seven weeks focusing on the distinct work that **God the Spirit** has come to do.

Seven primary works. John Owen wrote another fabulous and practical book called Communion with God. In it he unpacks seven general works of the Holy Spirit in believers:

1. He brings to mind the words and promises of Christ.
2. He glorifies Christ.
3. He pours the love of God into our hearts.
4. He bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.
5. He seals us, assuring us of being kept safe as God's possessions.
6. He is an earnest (guarantee or deposit), a promise of the inheritance to come.
7. He anoints us with his conviction, illumination, sanctification* and comfort. [*process of making us beautiful before God]

We will take a closer look at each of these in our next devotions.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy holy! Though the darkness hide thee, though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see. Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy holy! Merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity. Amen.

Third Eastertide Sunday
"God's Glorious Sanctuary"
Isaiah 6:1-7; Psalm 27; Ezekiel 10



Sanctuary. From the beginning, God wanted to live among his creations, so he walked and talked with Adam and Eve until they became more interested in the fruit than their Creator. Later God designated Mt. Sinai as his earthly sanctuary. He revealed his glory to Moses. He showed his people how to build a transportable tabernacle and promised to settle in their midst, until they became more interested in forging a golden calf than worshipping someone invisible to them. Even later, God led Solomon to build a temple in Jerusalem and provided a way for worshippers to serve him there, until most became more interested in the rituals than a relationship with him.

Some exceptions. David is a well-known Bible character, more beloved because he was a beautiful but flawed person like us. Once his heart prayed *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the **refuge** of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple."* (Psalm 27:1, 4)

Isaiah also beheld God's presence in the temple. *"I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple"* (Isaiah 6:1) He was undone by that sight but an angel flew to him, touched his mouth with a coal from the altar and claimed *"your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."* (Isaiah 6:1, 6-7)

Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord leave the temple and when he looked up *"on the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like sapphire, in appearance like a throne."* (Ezekiel 10:1) That magnificent vision was a preview of the sanctuary to come, a place not built by human hands. Solomon's temple would be destroyed and

God's rebellious people were scattered in exile, yet God continued to come to them. ***"Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet have I been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone."*** (Ezekiel 11:16) What new message was this? Can a person literally enter into God? Can God literally enter into people?

A new temple. After four hundred years of silence, God came to dwell among humans again. Every day Jesus went to the Temple to teach about the kingdom of God. He promised that *"something greater than the temple is here."* (Matthew 12:6) Statements like that led religious leaders to plan to kill him, but Jesus proclaimed, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He was speaking about the temple of his body"*. (John 2:18-20). Sure enough, Jesus died and was raised three days later. Forty days later, he ascended back to Heaven after appearing to and instructing hundreds of eyewitnesses. As he promised, he wouldn't leave them alone. He had the perfect sanctuary in mind.

Spoiler alert. I am going to jump ahead and tell you part of the Pentecost story. Weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, thousands of people began to understand the fact that now *"the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man."* (Acts 17:23-25). Paul had formerly been a prominent religious leader who hunted down Christ followers until he was directly confronted by Christ's glory (Acts 9). Now he confirmed the new and living way to relate to God: *"You are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you . . . [yes!] God's temple is holy and **you are that temple.**"* (1 Corinthians 3:16-19)

Soon after I was introduced to Jesus Christ, I serendipitously came upon ***My Heart: Christ's Home*** by Robert B. Munger.²

"One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance he made! I was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. Something happened at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness and turned on the light. He built a fire on the hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been silence. He filled the emptiness with his own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ and I never will. In the joy of this new relationship I said to Jesus Christ, 'Lord, I want this heart of mine to be yours. I want to have you settle down here and **be perfectly at home**. Everything I have belongs to you. Let me show you around.'"

Father God, you have provided a place for me to inquire of you and behold your glory. Wherever I find myself I am with you. I have become your sanctuary, your home. What kind of temple am I for the one whose glory is inhabiting my soul? I want to feel at home with you. Amen.

² Download a PDF of "My Heart Christ's Home" free at <http://ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/0>

Fourth Eastertide Sunday

"Welcoming the Spirit"

John 14:15-17; Luke 11:1-13; Romans 8:1-11



"That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

Fellowship. John Owen defined it as, "The mutual sharing of those good things which delight all those in the fellowship of love; the mutual giving and receiving between and God and the saints as they walk together in holy and spiritual peace."³ Through Christ, by the Spirit, we can enjoy true fellowship with the Father. Jesus purchased **a removal** of the cause of hostility with God (sin and guilt) and **a reckoning** to us of what was necessary to restore our relationship with him (righteousness). Each Person of God gives grace to us jointly and each Person of God communicates grace to us distinctly.

Fullness. Now Christ's work is to bring us to full enjoyment of God. The Father is the fountain of all authority and life giving power. Christ Jesus draws from the **endless and everlasting treasury** he purchased for us: "life-giving, Spirit-breathing, light shining, eye-opening, heart-softening instruction." The Spirit applies whatever is pleasant, beneficial and healing for our souls. Our part is to receive and welcome his re-creating work in our lives. The supplies of Christ do not fail; but our faith often fails in receiving the privileges, holiness, comfort and strength God intends us to have. We can try to resist and quench his work, but why on earth would we do such a grievous thing to ourselves?

Preparation. Restoration. Refreshment. The Father's authoritative work raised Jesus to life. The Son's mediatory work will raise our bodies from death. The Spirit's direct work is preparing us for life with Christ and the Father. Jesus walked with his disciples for only three years. His Spirit will live within every believer until we depart Earth to dwell with him forever.

³ Owen, John. Communion with God (Abridged and made easy to read), Puritan Paperbacks, Banner of Truth, 1991.

How do we receive him? Recognizing and welcoming the Holy Spirit is both active and passive. Luke wrote, *"What father among you, if his son **asks** for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he **asks** for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who **ask him!**"* (Luke 11:11-13)



The Holy Spirit comes to us freely and willingly the moment we place our trust in Christ as our Savior. Faith receives the Spirit as he is promised in the covenant of grace. Faith receives the Spirit by prayer. Faith receives the Spirit by being alert to him and his secret work in our hearts. For some he arrives like a mighty wind. For others he arrives like a gentle breeze filling a sail.



I am the dead bones. He is wind of life. His life animates my dead soul.



I am the cup. He is the water. Living water fills the empty cup.

"If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." (Romans 8:10-11)

Fifth Sunday of Eastertide

"Power, Choice and Freedom"

Romans 8:12-17; John 1:9-13; Colossians 1:9-14



"So then [brothers and sisters] we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as [sons and daughters], by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:12-17)

Illuminates Christ's Words. Before he was betrayed and crucified, Jesus said many things to his disciples *"to keep [them] from falling away."* (John 16:1-7) Immediately after the Holy Spirit arrived (Acts 2) he began reminding the disciples of all that Jesus said and guided them to record what we find in the New Testament. He enabled their minds for remembrance, for teaching, for comfort and for peace. He broke through all of their grief and fears with power. He prepared them for whatever would come . . . and Jesus never promised that the road would be trouble-free. John Owen praised the Spirit *"that enables Christians to sit in dungeons, rejoice in flames and glory in troubles."*

Glorifies Christ. The Spirit adds to our joy by leading us to deeper understanding and fellowship with Christ. He opens our eyes day by day to grasp more fully all the beauty and grace of our Savior and Lord, and all that he has purchased for us by his intervention on our behalf.

Pours the Love of God into Our Hearts. Do you sometimes question whether God's purpose is to do you good, or doubt his acceptance and approval? The Holy Spirit works to persuade us of the Father's inexpressible love and

mercy toward us and makes us rejoice in the Father, who loves us and rejoices that he sent us his Holy Spirit.

Testifies that we are God's Children. Though Satan's power over us has been broken, he aims to shipwreck our faith and keep us in a prison cell whose door has already been opened. Often he will present doubts and temptations about God's goodness or speak messages of shame to our minds. With all his might he opposes our adoption into God's household, but God is prepared to overcome that voice. His Spirit will do battle for us!



"Adoption is the authoritative transfer of a believer, by Jesus Christ, from the family of the world and Satan, into the family of God, being admitted into all the privileges and advantages of that family." God declares this to angels. He declares this to Satan. And he declares this to our conscience:

*"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But **to all who did receive him**, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:9-13)

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:9-14)

My Father you are a daddy to me. You qualified me, you delivered me, you transferred me and now you have filled me with your Spirit of adoption. I want to walk in a way that is worthy of all that you have done for me. I want to please the one who has loved me like no other. Amen.

Sixth Eastertide Sunday
"Fresh Springs of Grace"

Ephesians 2:1-21; 2 Peter 1:1-15; Romans 8:18-30



"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn . . . on that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1)

The Holy Spirit is making us holy. The love of God was already poured out on us through Christ's sacrifice. Jesus also asked the Father to send his Spirit to complete all things for us and in us which only he can do. We should not try to "spin out a web of holiness" from our own fleshly efforts. We have a need for actual assistance to enable us to do the good works God has planned for us to do. We shouldn't be surprised that *"his divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence. For by these he has granted to us his precious and magnificent promises, so that by them [we] may be made partakes of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."* (2 Peter 1:3-4)

The Holy Spirit is teaching us to pray rightly. The Spirit helps us realize our need and call out to God. He works on our mind, our affections and our intentions. He raises our heads to look at God in worship, praise and thanksgiving. *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God . . . "* (Romans 8:26-27)

The Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens us. Sometimes the Spirit is called the Comforter, because he brings help and encouragement for

believing hearts. He is like an **oasis**, but sometimes we overlook it or even refuse to be comforted. He speaks but we may not hear or believe his voice. Thankfully he has the power to conquer our unbelief! In due time he will overcome it and restore our sense of comfort and strength.

The Holy Spirit brings us Peace. At one time all of us were "separated from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world." But Christ Jesus brought us near to God for he himself is our peace and our access to God. We can remain at rest when the world is raging around us knowing "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God . . . and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as [sons and daughters], the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:21, 23)

The Holy Spirit brings us Joy. The Spirit produces joy and injects it directly into us, carrying us through every kind of tribulation. Even in terrible circumstances his joy is a **well of water** springing up in my soul, filling, preserving and refreshing me. C.S. Lewis believed that "all Joy reminds. It is never a possession, always a desire for something longer ago or further away or still 'about to be.'"

The Holy Spirit brings us Hope. The Spirit is always reminding us of what is about to be, in order to keep us steadfast in faith. Right after a particularly harrowing time, Paul would strengthen the souls of the disciples, encouraging them that "it is necessary for us to pass through many struggles on our way into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

Hope whispers, "Remember, we are on our way home." Paul told his friends at Rome the same thing: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us . . . For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes in what he sees? But if we hope in what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Romans 8:18-25)

Receive it all. What afflictions and trials do you share in common with the early Christians? What are your particular burdens and unsolved problems today? Believers often despise afflictions and sink into despair under trials. Jesus knew that the Spirit's fountain of grace is fully sufficient to refresh us and help us bear our burdens in this world.

"How infinite your love for us, your willingness to help us. You knew what we were. You knew what we would do and how we would deal with you, grieve you, provoke you, quench your fire . . . yet you continue to do us good!" I meditate on this love today. I ask for and anticipate the holiness, comfort, strength, peace, joy and hope that you have prepared for me. Amen.

Pentecost Sunday
"Glances Through Lattice"
Acts 2:1-47



"So when the disciples had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for your to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing up into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white robes, and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven.'"

(Acts 1:6-11)

Once again they were alone. They would no longer see their Master face to face. Once again they were told to wait for another Helper. They were still trying to process when and how Christ's kingdom would finally come. His parting promise was that they would receive power, not to overcome the Roman domination, but to make disciples of Christ all across the earth. This time they waited in prepared anticipation for the promise to arrive.



"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other [languages] as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in his own language? . . . we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.'" (Acts 2:1-11)

Feast of Pentecost. Paul said in Colossians 2:16-17 that the Jewish feasts and celebrations were a shadow of the things to come through Jesus Christ. Shavuot was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, to give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of the harvest. It also signified the time after Moses went up to Mt. Sinai and received the Word of God. When the Jews accepted the Torah they became servants of God. Similarly, after Jesus went up to heaven, the Holy Spirit was given. When the disciples received the gift, they became witnesses for Christ. Jews celebrated a joyous harvest on Shavuot, and the Church celebrated a harvest of newborn souls at Pentecost.⁴ The Holy Spirit began to speak through them so that all of the God-fearing multitudes visiting from other nations could understand the good news about the Cross and Resurrection! Once again, God had come to humankind, but this time he made sure that **all the peoples** would know they are invited to be citizens of Christ's kingdom.



When will I see God? Here we walk by faith; there we will walk by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). "Now we see *through a glass darkly*," wrote Paul to his friends in Corinth. In ancient times a mirror was not an exact reflection like we experience today. The ancients could connect with the idea of a

⁴ <http://christianity.about.com/od/biblefeastsandholidays/p/pentecostfeast.htm>

likeness that is more of a shadow. John Owen used the analogy of an optic glass (telescope) in his teaching. For now, he said, "we remotely perceive just the dimensions of his glory." Talk of mirrors and telescopes is not very satisfying to me, but Owens additional reference to **glances through lattice** helped. "Sometimes he is pleased to stand in windows that we may love him and admire him and long for him to come to us again." That's what happens as I study the Bible, asking the Holy Spirit to show me more. In a moment, I get another glimpse of what I will see clearly and fully at the appointed time the Father has chosen.

I am not yet fit to bear a full view of Christ Jesus' glory. Seeing it would not build up or console me yet. In the past, more than a glimpse caused humans to fall on their face in a dead faint. In the time we remain on earth, we have his written word as a taste of what is coming so we will hunger to see our Redeemer in person.

Set free to see. Do you dream of the day when your mind will be set free, your scars will be healed, your body glorified and all obstructions removed? When glimpses and glances will become face to face exchanges? After our resurrection, at our physical death or his return to earth, our minds be freed from darkness, unsteadiness and all incapacities. The remainders of sin will be removed and we will be enabled to live to God. One pure act of spiritual sight in discerning the glory of Christ will not destroy but **perfect us** and perfectly transform the soul into the image and likeness of Christ. We have no idea what power and spirituality there will be in the acts of our glorified bodies. This makes me more willing to "be dissolved and depart" as Owen described his deathbed. Meanwhile let us **invite** the Holy Spirit to exercise my spiritual eyes and transform my mind, emotions and will until they overflow with fruits of love, joy, peace, patience goodness, kindness faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

Elderly John had been exiled to Patmos Island west of Turkey in the Aegean Sea, but God gave him more than a glimpse of our ultimate home with him:

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God . . . and I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations . . . they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads . . ." (Revelation 21-22)