

Pentecost

June 8, 2025

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Acts 2:1-12

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound, the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of

each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

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REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Have you ever had a surprising spiritual experience in a group setting like those in Acts 2?
3. The story of Pentecost in Acts 2 becomes an inflection point for the early church: learning to live as God's new creation from the same Spirit that energized Jesus.
 - a. How do you understand the Holy Spirit?
 - b. How does the Holy Spirit break down barriers and boundaries that often divide and antagonize people?
4. Romans 8 is one way of answering the question found at the end of the Acts passage, "What does this mean?" How does the Romans 8 passage clarify and deepen the meaning and work of the Holy Spirit?
5. What do you think it means to "suffer with Christ" as Paul writes in Romans 8:17?
6. It was not uncommon for leaders, like Caesar, to adopt a child as a son and confer wealth, family rituals, and even rulership to him, especially if that leader had no eligible birth-child to pass on an inheritance. How do you think Paul using the term "adoption" resonated with Gentiles who were seen as "outside the family" of Israel by birth?
7. One way to free enslaved persons was to adopt them. This happened especially when a man had no birth-children to pass on an inheritance to. How might this language of "adoption" and being freed from "a spirit of slavery" resonate with Jewish people who knew the oppression and slavery of the Roman Empire?
8. What experience do you have with adopted people? What insights about the gifts and challenges of adoption might be helpful in understanding our relationship to God, "adopted" through Christ?
9. How does our ongoing connection to God through the Spirit free us from fear? What are some things in today's world that we might shrink from because of fear, but we need the Spirit's courage to face?
10. What does the Spirit free people of faith *for* (ie, to do what)?