

Fellow Redeemed Sinners in Whom the Holy Spirit Lives and Works,

What would life be like without electric power? Sometimes we get glimpses of that during an ice storm or thunderstorm. The use of electric power is not all that old. In 1879 California Electric Light Company in San Francisco became the world's first central power plant that sold electricity to private customers. That same year Thomas Edison invented his incandescent light bulb. Three years later, a year before Jenera was founded, Edison opened an electric power plant in New York City. Today the US uses trillions of kilowatt hours of electric power each year. Electricity has become a very important source of power in our lives.

On this Pentecost Sunday God's Word reminds us about another source of power, much more power than that from electricity. That source of power that the apostles tapped into that first Pentecost Day and we tap into today is God the Holy Spirit whose great outpouring 50 days after Easter we celebrate today. God's Word invites us to: **PLUG INTO POWER!**

I. Power to Live and Die.

A. You can just about see the spiritual sparks flying and the power surging through the Apostle Peter. Not only did it happen that "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting," but also "they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." And "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." As the Bible later explains, this "speaking in tongues" was not the kind of babble that some religions practice today, but it was foreign languages that the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled these unschooled mostly fishermen suddenly to speak. What is also awesome is that the Holy Spirit gave Peter and the other apostles the power to live boldly for God. It was less than two months earlier that Peter showed himself to be the triple denier and deserter of Jesus. Now, by the Holy Spirit's power Peter stands up and accuses the Jews in Jerusalem of killing Jesus.

B. What power the Holy Spirit gave Peter and the other apostles! And it wasn't just on this Pentecost Day, 50 days after Easter. Peter found spiritual power through the Holy Spirit to live his whole life for God and overcome the evil forces of the world and its peer pressure and temptation and his own sinful nature's weakness. In his first epistle Peter writes of that Spirit-given power that the believer has to live for the Lord. "He does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God." (1 Peter 4:2) Battling the devil and the sinful pressures of the world on our own, it would be impossible for sinners like Peter and us to live for God. But by the power and working of the Holy Spirit Peter and we find power to live for God and the power to face death itself. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. Yet when he was near death Peter confidently spoke of his departure and was unselfishly concerned about his fellow believers continuing to live for the Lord and follow His truth. Reminding them of the truths of God's Word, Peter wrote in his second epistle: "I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things." (2 Peter 1:13-15)

C. Some that day thought that Peter's power to do what he did that first Pentecost Day was from drinking too much wine. The misuse of alcohol, legal and illegal drugs, and other mind-numbing crutches are the faulty "power source" that many use to face life's challenges and the specter of death. Such crutches only mask people's real problems and make them worse; they're a sin against God's 5th Commandment that harm the body and life God gave them. And they're not the answer to live and die successfully and victoriously. Neither are human wisdom and self-help books. As the Bible points out, it is foolish to turn to human wisdom which is tainted by sin and imperfection, rather than turn for answers to the Holy Spirit, true God, who inspired the Bible to give us true wisdom and who is the Author of life.

D. A Buddhist monk in Ceylon who was also acquainted with Christianity was once asked what he thought was the great difference between the two religions. He replied, "What seems to me to be the greatest difference is that you Christians know what is right and have power to do it, while we Buddhists know what is right but have not any such power." How true! The Holy Spirit, working through the Gospel, gives sinners spiritual life and power, like the valley of dry bones in the Old Testament reading from Ezekiel. Where did Joseph get the power to ward off the advances of Potiphar's wife when she repeatedly asked him to "Come to be with me!"? (Genesis 39:12) Where did Moses get the strength to stand up against probably the most powerful man on earth, the pharaoh of Egypt, and tell him to "Let my people go"? (Exodus 5:1) Where did Lot find the strength to stand up against the homosexuals who came to his door demanding him to send Lot's two visitors so they could misuse them? The same place that Peter and you and I find spiritual strength: the Holy Spirit.

E. We celebrated Mother's Day last Sunday. Father's Day is in a few weeks. College and high school graduates are celebrating the completion of a step in their education, some ready to join the workforce. Yesterday was the big royal wedding and there will be more weddings to attend locally. Where do Christians in these crucially important positions and steps in their lives find the strength to do their important jobs and remain faithful to their God and His Word? Where do they find wisdom and guidance for all the questions and challenges? Where do we all find the courage and boldness to live as Christians in the face of the wicked world that bullies those who believe? And where will we find the strength to face death – our own or the death of someone we love? From the same Holy Spirit who strengthened, counseled and guided Peter and the apostles. Plug into power! In the Holy Spirit we sinners find power to live and to die for God.

II. Power to Tell Others Why.

A. Peter not only found the power for himself to live and die from the Holy Spirit, he also found the power to tell others why. It took great strength for Peter to stand up and speak before the crowd gathered in Jerusalem that first Pentecost Day. There were people from all over the Mediterranean Sea area. And there must have been lots of them because we are told that 3,000 of them believed and were baptized that day. Yet Peter, this uneducated fisherman, found the strength to stand up among thousands of people, point out their sin, and point out their Savior Jesus Christ. That power for Peter to tell others came through the Holy Spirit who worked in Peter's heart through the Gospel. Peter knew well he was a sinner who broke God's commands and deserved to spend eternity in hell's punishment and to be banished from heaven forever. But Peter knew and believed in the Gospel message of God's grace that led Him to send His own Son Jesus Christ. Jesus obeyed every commandment for Peter and all sinners and died on the cross for the punishment and penalty that Peter and all sinners deserve. Jesus rose triumphantly on Easter Day to assure Peter and all sinners of eternal life in heaven through faith in Him. That's why Peter urged his fellow Christians to read their Bible and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel too. He told them: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18)

B. A man was traveling along a dark road on a stormy night and met a man coming from the opposite direction who said to him, "I think maybe the bridge is out ahead. At least I heard something to that effect." The traveler didn't take it to heart and kept going. A little later a man came rushing out of the dark and said, "Stop! Don't go any farther. The bridge is out! I've seen it. You must go this way!" This time the traveler took it to heart and turned around. The second man's powerful message and conviction and concern caused the traveler to turn back and saved his life. That's the powerful message, conviction, and concern that Peter displayed that Pentecost Day. He had been led by the Holy Spirit to believe the Gospel message and very much wanted to share it with others who were still walking in the darkness of unbelief toward the destruction of hell like he had been. This telling others resulted from the Holy Spirit's outpouring on Pentecost that the Prophet Joel predicted hundreds of years before and Peter quoted in his sermon: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people...Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." The word "prophesy" simply means to preach or proclaim. The courage and strength to tell others about Jesus came from the Holy Spirit who works in believers' hearts through the Gospel, for Peter, the apostles, and for you and me.

C. A man named John Broadus was 16 when he became a believer in Jesus his Savior. John started to tell others about his new Friend, Jesus. One was a school friend who came to believe in Jesus too through John's talking with him. The two men grew up and lived most of their lives in the same city, John a university professor and his friend a truck driver. Whenever that friend met John over the years, he tipped his hat and said, "Thank you, John. Thank you." John Broadus told someone: "I know just what he will say when I meet him coming down the golden streets of heaven..." "Thank you, John. Thank you." Is there a friend who needs you to be a John Broadus to him or her? You can do the same as John Broadus by the power of the Holy Spirit. By the Gospel the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith, enlightened you with His gifts, convinced you that your sins are all forgiven in the blood of Jesus and life everlasting is yours. The Holy Spirit also works concern in your heart for the souls of others. He will strengthen and give you courage to prophesy to others about their Friend and Savior Jesus. Pentecost reminds you that you are plugged into power, the power of God the Holy Spirit. He gives power to live and die for Jesus. He give you the power to tell others why they can too. Amen.