

REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David” (2 Timothy 2:8). That is one of no less than 32 encouraging commands that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy in this relatively brief (second) letter of only 83 verses. Paul was reasonably certain that his earthly life would soon come to an end by state execution. In his last days on earth, under such circumstances, what did Paul focus on? He focused on encouraging his fellow believers and coworkers in their faith and gospel ministries.

“Remember Jesus Christ” stands out as a gospel encouragement for believers of all times and circumstances. Jesus, with his gospel message, is the source of spiritual strength, comfort, guidance, correction, encouragement, and life for us regardless of our age, place in life, or circumstances. God’s saving love for you in Christ is always sure and certain. And his Word is always true and trustworthy.

This volume’s devotions are based on the Sunday Second (Epistle) Lessons of the Year A Supplemental Lectionary from *Christian Worship: Supplement*. The Scripture references on the bottom of each page offer a one-year Bible reading schedule.

May God richly bless you as you use *Meditations Daily Devotional*.

Curtis A. Jahn
Editor, Volume 63

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Remember Jesus Christ

Daily devotions from
PENTECOST SUNDAY
through the Saturday after
THE TWELVETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Christ Gathers His Church	3-9
Christian Relationships	10-16
Prophecy: It's God's Word	17-23
Chief of Sinners Though I Be	24-30
Find Encouragement in God's Grace	31-37
Living Under Christ's "Second" Kingdom	38-44
Do Not Love the World	45-51
Rest—Promised to Us, Enjoyed by Us	52-58
Planting the Seed With Paul	59-65
Remember, Jesus Christ Is Coming Soon	66-72
How Wealthy and Wise Are We?	73-79
God's Creation Is Good	80-86
Trials Produce Perseverance	87-93
Daily Prayers	94-95
Seasonal and Special Prayers	96-97

The following pastors (listed alphabetically) wrote the devotions and prayers contained in this booklet: David Brandt, M. John Derme, Seth Georgson, Brian Hackmann, Paul Kuehn, Michael Kuschel, Matthew Langebartels, Lyle Luchterhand, Benjamin Radtke, Matthew Sprunger, Jesse Stern, Steven Tews, Martin Wildauer, and Ronald Zindler.

When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. (Acts 2:1 CSB)

TOGETHER

Nothing brings family together quite like a celebration.

Fifty days after Passover, Pentecost was an annual chance for God's people to come together for a celebration and thank him for all that he had provided. Thankful for deliverance, for daily care, and for the harvest, people gathered from all around to give thanks to God. Included in this celebration was a group of disciples who were thankful that they had survived the incredible tumult that was the last fifty days. Little did the disciples know that this gathering of theirs was about to celebrate the birth of the New Testament church as we know it today; oh, what a day it would be!

But for now, the disciples were simply gathered in one place. They were together. The group that scattered at Jesus' death had been brought back together through the news of Jesus' resurrection and through his time personally spent among them. They were a group who had become a family in Christ. This group had shared pain and doubt, and now they shared in joy and confidence as Jesus had come back to explain all these things to them. Christ had strengthened their bond,

and before he ascended back to heaven, he had given them a terrific task and a monumental promise. They would be his witnesses; he would send his Spirit. Jesus had promised he would send the Holy Spirit who would help them remember what he had said and done and help them spread the gospel that gives eternal life. Through this small band of disciples, Christ would gather his church on earth. Filled with both excitement and nervousness, they waited together for the gift of the Spirit. As the day of Pentecost came, they were together in one place.

On a typical Sunday, many Christians gather together with brothers and sisters in the faith and celebrate the good things that God has done for us. Here we confess our sins before a holy God, and we are forgiven in Christ. We come together to hear God's promises, to remember Jesus Christ, and to be blessed by the Spirit. As we work through the events of Pentecost this week, we give thanks that he has gathered us together in this special way. Happy Birthday, Christian church! Let us not give up coming together as we celebrate what God has given us!

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for your gracious plan in bringing sinners like us together into your family of believers. Bring us together regularly in public worship as we celebrate your goodness and grace. Amen.

Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:2-4 CSB)

SOMETHING SPECIAL IS HAPPENING HERE!

Balloons set out on the corner. Great big banners and signs printed and hung for all to see. Whether such attention grabbers accompany a grand opening celebration or a birthday party, their purpose is to announce and declare the same message: “Something special is happening here!”

Thus it happened that when Christ Jesus sent his promised Spirit and the New Testament church was born, this special event came with some attention-grabbing signs that clearly announced: “Something special is happening here!” This event would be marked with signs that were uniquely remarkable, unmistakably distinct, and entirely unforgettable. These are the wondrous details for which the day of Pentecost is still well known.

It was not a typical wind that was swept up from some direction, but suddenly there was the sound like that of a violent wind. Such an odd phenomenon was a sign that this had come from the dwelling place of God. Something that looked like flames of fire separated and then rested on each of the disciples. This was another unmistakable sign from God. Words struggle to describe what exactly was going

on. However, these strange and miraculous signs all made it quite clear: something special was happening here!

Jesus had promised his disciples that he would send them the gift of Holy Spirit (John 14:26). Jesus did not tell them exactly when or where or how this would happen. As they were waiting together in Jerusalem for that promised gift of the Spirit, all these signs announced that Jesus had indeed fulfilled his promise—and with authority! Make no mistake about it, the Spirit of God had come! The Spirit of God was with his people; the church was being gathered to God himself; a new day had dawned! The gospel would go out from this place into the world. Boldly, confidently, and in so many different languages, the disciples would triumphantly declare that it is through Jesus alone that sinners are reconciled with the almighty God! Oh yes, something special was happening here!

Each year as we celebrate the birthday of the Christian church at Pentecost, let those unforgettable signs continue to announce with clarity, “Something special is still happening here!”

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your Holy Spirit! Amen.

They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven. When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (Acts 2:3-6 CSB)

GIVING HIS GIFTS TO EACH, TO ALL!

While taking my young children to birthday parties, I have been introduced to an area of birthday party etiquette that I don't think existed when I was young. The partygoers were not only treated to the same games, food, and cake, which the whole group enjoyed, but the host *also* sent each child home with an individual gift bag. A gift bag for each, a party treat that brought joy to all.

What a special event Pentecost was for the entire group and for each individual as the Holy Spirit was given just as Christ had promised. Together the disciples experienced the power of God as that sound of the rushing wind filled the whole house where they were staying. We are told specifically that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Notice too the individual blessing that is recognized in this wondrous account. We are told that the disciples "saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them." Each

one was suddenly blessed with the assurance that the Spirit rested upon them individually. Each one was individually enabled by the Spirit to speak in a different language. There was blessing for each and all on that day of Pentecost.

There is wonderful unity that believers possess within Christ's church. People from all over the world are joined together in one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, one Baptism. Jesus died for us all. We are all God's blood-bought children! What undeserved and blessed unity we have, but there is also great joy in knowing that within Christ's church I am individually blessed and assured of God's love for me. The same is true for you. You are precious to your God. He who poured out his Spirit on each of his disciples on Pentecost poured out his Spirit on each one of us personally in Baptism. Praise be to our God who pours out the gift of his Spirit on all his people—to each, to all!

Lord God, give me joy in knowing that I am blessed to be a member of your family and that I am also individually blessed and known by you. Amen.

When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” (Acts 2:6,7 CSB)

BY MEANS OF AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE

There’s usually one in the bunch. A gift wrapped up in newspaper or an old paper bag. But it’s not the wrapping the counts. The best gift could be hiding in such humble wrapping.

On Pentecost, the wondrous gift of the gospel was wrapped up in the humble appearance of disciples from Galilee. That day there were people gathered in Jerusalem from far off and exotic locations who were astounded when they heard these disciples speaking in their own native tongues. Something about these men—perhaps their dress or their appearance—set them apart as being from the backwater region of Galilee. Galilee was not known as a place of educated linguists, so their sudden ability to communicate was incredible. How could this be?

Only by the grace of God did this miracle come about. The disciples weren’t all secretly intellectuals with a curiosity in linguistic studies. They weren’t drunk babblers either. No, this was the will of the Lord that the good news of salvation would be set free into the world. God had chosen simple vessels to carry this all-important message

of eternal salvation to the entire world. Through the simple means of the spoken word, delivered by common folk and backed by his powerful Spirit, the message of salvation would go out to the world that day.

That same mission continues, and God, in his wisdom, continues to use the same humble yet powerful means. He continues also to use ordinary people communicating in common language to share his extraordinary message of salvation. Later, the apostle Paul would say it this way: “We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV).

You may not be some skilled linguist from some town of great importance, but the Lord has given you his powerful Word. He has given you the ability to speak a language through which his Word can be proclaimed to people who are precious to him. He has given you his Spirit and a faith that rejoices in the wonders of God and the good news of Jesus. Remember that the all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. Speak the Word, and be astonished by what God can do!

Lord you have given to me your precious, saving Word! Enable me to declare the wonders of God with the tongue you have given me. Amen.

“Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” (Acts 2:9-11 CSB)

FROM ALL NATIONS

Consider the gaze of God as he looked down on this group that included souls from nations around the world. “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5 NIV). Like a young boy circling points on a map and longing to go here or there when he is older, consider the happy gaze of God as he looked down on Jerusalem on that Pentecost morning.

There were precious souls gathered that day in Jerusalem from three continents, precious souls from large landmasses and small islands, Jew and Gentile alike. They would return home from this place and would certainly speak of the things that they had seen and heard on that day. And what was it that they had heard? “We hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” The disciples who were suddenly blessed with the gift of languages were not just making small talk. They were speaking of the magnificent acts of God, and what could be more magnificent than Christ’s saving work?! A loving God sent his only Son as a sacrificial lamb

to pay for the sins of the world. A perfect Savior gave his righteous life over to death and took it up again so that sinners may be at peace with a holy God forever. A risen and ascended Lord promised to come again to take all those who believe in him to an unending home in glory.

These are the magnificent things of which the church still speaks. What grace God has shown in breaking down barriers to bring this amazing message to the world. Thanks be to God for missionaries who, still today, go out equipped with languages that we cannot speak and to places that we cannot go. We give thanks that the entire Bible has been translated into 670 languages and the New Testament has been translated into 1,521 languages—including English, Spanish, and so many more.

Remember that it was no small feat, and it is no insignificant thing, that we who are so far removed from the language and the place of origin of the Bible have God’s Word daily at our fingertips and in our own native tongue.

Gracious God, thank you for spreading your gospel to so many different nations and tongues, including mine. Amen.

Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them: “Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let me explain this to you and pay attention to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it’s only nine in the morning. On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel. (Acts 2:14-16 CSB)

JUST AS HE PROMISED

John the Baptist had predicted, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). Jesus had promised, “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days” (Acts 1:5). Peter pages back even further for a promise given by God through the prophet Joel: “It will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17,18).

Even though it was the gift that had been promised and a gift that they had been expecting, it certainly had not spoiled the surprise. What a morning! The incredible sights and sounds of that Pentecost were all so much to take in. Some in the crowd assumed that this was a fluke; some even joked that these men were drunk. Peter stood up with the Eleven, and, raising his voice, he stilled the crowd as he distilled

the events of the morning into a potent explanation.

This is what God promised in the book of Joel. The Spirit of God would come. A new era would dawn for God’s people, and in these last days God’s Word would go out and be proclaimed in various ways.

This Pentecost was surprising because so many incredible things happened, but all happened just as God had promised and that should not surprise us. This is just how the Lord operates. He makes promises, and he keeps them. He told his people that he would send a Savior to deliver them. He told his people that the Messiah would suffer, die, and rise again; and God delivered. God promised a special outpouring of his Spirit, and it came to be. He promised that men and women would have and speak the Word of God, and the Lord held true to his Word.

As fantastic as the day of Pentecost was, it reminds us once again of this simple truth: God keeps his promises.

Holy Spirit, give me faith always to believe and trust your promises, for you are ever faithful. Amen.

I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Acts 2:19-21 CSB)

BEFORE HE COMES AGAIN

Birthdays and anniversaries are sometimes declared spoiled by a few drops of rain. Blood and fire and a cloud of smoke doesn't quite sound like an appealing forecast for a day of great significance and joy. Yet as the church of Christ was celebrating a significant milestone event, Peter saw fit to point those present to the culmination of the church's existence. If Pentecost was the birthday of the New Testament church on earth, Peter pointed ahead to the day that the church triumphant would dawn.

Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, who was speaking to those who had rejected the Lord and he foretold of a great and dreadful day with a forecast fitting of judgment: "Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes" (Joel 2:30,31). Joel calls the day "terrible." Peter calls that same day the "glorious day of the Lord," for when the end of this world comes, Christ will have gathered all of his church to

himself. A day when this dreadful forecast is realized around them will also be the day that all believers will be delivered once and for all from this world of sin. Nothing will be able to separate them from that final victory, not even the sun being turned to darkness and the moon to blood, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This triumphant hope would go out from Jerusalem to the world. Peter and the rest would spread the saving name of Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. A world full of sinners lost and condemned to a dreadful end would be given life and eternal joy instead, through faith in Jesus.

As bad as things appear in these last days, this will always remain the believers' triumphant view. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord in faith will be saved. When the signs of these last days trouble you, remember Jesus Christ, who will gather his church before he comes again.

Lord, as troubling signs appear in these last days, surround me with your promises and grant me a steadfast faith and a living hope in Jesus Christ. Amen.