

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The Holy Spirit is the Presence of God in your soul. The Holy Spirit living inside of you is God's guarantee that you have received the gift of eternal life and you will never die (John 11:26). The Holy Spirit living inside of you gives to you a foretaste of the feast to come, a foretaste of heaven. The Holy Spirit living inside of you granted you a new birth, conceived and birthed a living faith inside of you. Jesus says, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). As a pastor my deepest desire is to see everyone who worships at St. Mark be born again. It is a work I cannot do; it is completely a work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit living inside of you has made your body a temple in which God's Spirit resides permanently. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20(NIV)** ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.

There are so many of you who have had a sense of God's Presence in your life from your earliest of memories. You do not remember a time in your life that you did not believe in the Lord Jesus. This is true because the Presence of the Holy Spirit begins working in your soul even before you are born, while you are still in your mother's womb (Luke 1:41; Psalm 139:13-16;). God's will is for you to be saved for all eternity (1 Timothy 2:3; 2 Peter 3:9). The Holy Spirit brings God's grace to you (Ephesians 2:8-9). When you hear the Words of the Gospel, when you hear the Good News of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit takes those words, those seeds of the faith, and plants them in the soil of your soul (Romans 10:17). How this works is a mystery, but I have seen God take those seeds, plant them in a person's soul, and those seeds bear good fruit for the rest of their lives. God works faith into the person and that person lives by faith in God for the rest of their lives, through tough times as well as good times. In times of sorrow and in times of joy. In times of want and in times of plenty. The Holy Spirit living inside of you is why you know God personally and why you stay faithful to God

for a lifetime. The Holy Spirit is at work within you right now. The evidence of that is you believe in Jesus Christ and you have given your life over to God.

Matthew 13:3(NLT) ³“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn’t have deep roots, they died. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.” ¹²To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. ¹⁸“Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: ¹⁹The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. ²⁰The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. ²²The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. ²³The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

I see the words that Jesus spoke, that were just read, as an explanation to a current trend today amongst church leaders. I read every day from a post called Christianpost.com.

In the last several months several church leaders have posted articles stating why they no longer believe in Jesus Christ and no longer call themselves Christian. Not only are they posting articles, but they are also writing books explaining their path to atheism. I referred to this in a recent devotion titled "believe always." 1 Peter was written to encourage Christians to remain faithful to God regardless of the pain of their human suffering. Peter did not want any to fall away from the faith. That is why he wrote his two letters and gave to Mark the words that we read in the Gospel of Mark. Mark had a very close relationship with Peter, and it was through Peter that he gained the material we read in Mark.

These personal testimonies of turning away from the Christian faith are startling to me. I want to make sure there is not anything that I do in my ministry or life that would turn people off in such a way. It is sad indeed to see these people walk away from Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The parable explains why some fall away from the perspective of Jesus who knows far more than any of us. 1. The enemy is able to steal the truth of the Gospel away after it is planted in a person's soul. Jesus says, "Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts." We know the bible says Satan's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). 2. Others fall away because their belief is so shallow that it is easily dried up and dies due to the heat of this world's way of thinking. Jesus says, "They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word." 3. "22The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced." So, these forsake the faith due to the painful experiences and suffering of living in this fallen world and they turn to money and materialism as their new god. 4. 23The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" These are those who hear God's

Word, understand God's word, and apply God's Word into their core of being, their very soul. In my own words, those with this type of soil in their hearts accept the Holy Spirit's work in their lives and allow the Holy Spirit to do a great work in their lives.

Here is my point and please hear this. It is possible to resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts, our souls, can become hardened and that hardness of heart quenches the fire of the Holy Spirit within. Our own personal wills can work against the Holy Spirit, arresting our growth in grace. All of this grieves God's Holy Spirit. In order to keep growing and maturing in the Christian faith, it takes an openness and full surrender every day to the work of the Holy Spirit or we stop moving forward and begin to backslide.

So, what am I saying on this Pentecost Sunday? I have a few points to make and they each start with an "R". 1. Yes, we can resist the work of the Holy Spirit and we do this because of our sinful human natures that are naturally in rebellion against God. We become a reprobate. 2. On the other hand if we surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives by repentance of sin, this frees the Holy Spirit to do a great work and often a work that is hidden until it is revealed. When we stop resisting the Holy Spirit and truly repent by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is able to use us to reproduce God's work in other people's lives, bearing good fruit even for generations to come. This can only occur as we listen to the Word of God. The Holy Spirit takes that Word and personally applies it to our lives. We listen and read with understanding for the Holy Spirit brings to new life those seeds of truth planted as we study and read the Bible. The Holy Spirit gives us ears to hear and eyes to see. The Holy Spirit keeps that soil in us soft so that we can always take in more and produce more for God.

A warning to everyone. None of us are immune to falling away. The stories that I read of those forsaking Christ are very real and are people who have accomplished great things for God. Jesus Himself says "when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?" None of us are immune. If by chance you speak to such a person that no longer believes, please show

genuine Christian love. You will not be able to argue you them out of their unbelief. By the help of God's Holy Spirit, you may be able to love them back as you show consistent love.

May we all quit **resisting** the Holy Spirit. May we all surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit by **repenting** of our sinful ways, **receive** God's forgiveness and **remain** in the Holy Spirit, always **renouncing** the lies of the enemy, and be Spirit-filled abiding-in-Christ Christians until Jesus **returns**. Amen and Amen.