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Can you recall a time in your life when you acted kinda bratty? Mine were a few bratty preteen years. Not proud of it; but, I once I got so mad at my little brother, I grabbed an ear of corn and hit him over the head. Got grounded for weeks for that! Our bratty years sure challenge our parents' and teachers' rules and morals. How about the 1960's? An entire decade of a bratty spirit of rebellion in our culture. People rebelled against society's rules and morals. Lots of long hair, interesting fashions, psychedelic, mood-altering drug use and radically different attitude and music. Remember Woodstock? Woodstock's 50th anniversary's coming up in August. A time of "flower power", peace, love and NO war! A time of anti-institution, anti-government, actually "anti" almost everything. That generation had a "spirit of anti." But, don't the 60's seem pretty tame compared to today? Still, for those who experienced it, coming off of the mild mannered 50's made the spirit of the 60s seem radical. The beginning of a significant cultural shift. Otherwise known as change. That "spirit of rebellion" was the "spirit of the 60's." Ever notice? Spirit's always accompanied by the little word "of" o-f "of." "Spirit" is talked about in the Bible 700 times. Spirit's usually followed by that little word "of." The spirit OF the Lord ... the spirit OF power ...the spirit OF life... the spirit OF trutha spirit OF holiness ... the spirit OF peace, humility and wisdom. We even sang Spirit, Spirit OF gentleness.

You get the point but, I raise this issue because there are 3 little "of's" in just 4 short verses of our Roman's scripture. Romans talks about the "Spirit OF God," the fact that we're "children OF God, and heirs OF God. We skip over that little word "of" because it's tiny. Only functions to connect two more important nouns. But I suggest to you today "OF" is a really important tiny little word. Because, by itself the word "spirit" doesn't tell us much. Mention "spirit" and we think of a ghost or the bottled beverage we imbibe in, spirits. Others may think of the spirit they have for their favorite sport's team.

Paul has the Romans just like he has us thinking about the Spirit that brings us into relationship with God and each other. The very important Spirit OF God! The Spirit OF God makes us children OF God, even heirs OF God. That's today and its Pentecost. At Pentecost the Spirit OF God came to all people. The Spirit OF God came and birthed the church! We're not just celebrating any, ole' spirit, we're celebrating the Spirit OF God. Luke doesn't mention it in our Acts scripture; but, it's important to know the Spirit of God came at Pentecost while the Jews celebrated the beginning of the wheat harvest. That's why the Holy City, Jerusalem was full of faithful Jews speaking all different languages from all different places; but, the Spirit OF God came and they "were all together in one place." Luke's not saying they're all present and accounted for. Luke's saying they're physically and spiritually together, together, on the same page. No easy job for the different factions of Jewish followers of the Jesus way. But, the Spirit of God made God's presence known! The Spirit of God's so powerful in that first Jewish-Christian community the walls of their home's dissolve and the community finds itself outdoors together in God's presence. The Spirit of God united the Old Testament witness of God's people Israel, the Jews and the New Testament, Christian witness and way who is Jesus and all his disciples. The Spirit of God was powerfully uniting and energizing. They come together and were driven to go speak God's Good News to all the nations. The Spirit of God sends them on a Good news mission to "the ends of the earth!" And, 3000 people came to a saving relationship

with Jesus Christ. Wow! Don't we want the same Spirit of God to show up here? In us? In Ottawa?

But, that was then and this is now! Can we know this amazing Pentecostal Spirit of God? Wonder what would happen in this church if we all came together in one place; if we surrendered our idea of the Jesus way and just let the Spirit of God move in us? Could the Spirit of God bring true unity in our nation, our denomination and this church? What kind of a spirit do you have? What follows the "of" in your life? Do we have a spirit of fear, or a spirit of faith? A spirit of hate or a spirit of love? A spirit of dislike or a spirit of acceptance? A spirit of stubbornness or a spirit of helpfulness? A spirit of greed or a spirit of generosity? A spirit of heartlessness or a spirit of gentleness? What follows the little word "of" in your life? I ask because it makes all the difference.

The Spirit of God came and empowered people to go speak the Good News of Jesus Christ in the universal language was love. Can the Spirit of God come and empower us to speak and be God's love for all people? If the Spirit of God can bring Jewish Old and Christian New Testaments together; couldn't the Spirit of God bring us together: right and left, conservative and progressive and everyone inbetween? The issue I see with Pentecost is: are we open to this mysterious, vulnerable, risk-taking, step out of our comfort zone, Spirit of God? It's a fantastic, spiritual phenomena this Spirit of God, an energy that's God powered. So, how will we know if we're open to the Spirit OF God? In our personal lives and in the life of the church? When the Spirit of God fell upon the disciples at Pentecost it was limitless power, the power OF love—even love for our enemies. That power is NOTHING we do or the denominational label we wear. That power is the Spirit of God living to love like Jesus in us. Speaking the universal language of love, grace, and forgiveness. Remember the "Peanuts" cartoons. Lucy looks longingly at Schroeder and screams, "Guess what? If you don't tell me that you love me, I'm going to hold my breath until I pass out!" Schroeder casually looks up from his piano and quietly tells Lucy, "Breath-holding in children is an interesting phenomenon. It could indicate a metabolic disorder. Forty milligrams of vitamin B6 twice a day might be helpful. I think that's it. You need vitamin B6. You might consider eating more bananas, avocados, and beef liver, too." As Schroeder finishes his thought, he returns to his piano. He doesn't miss a beat. And, the last frame shows Lucy sighing and saying: "I ask for love, and all I get is beef liver! There really is NO substitute for love.

The Spirit of God is genuine, unconditional, sacrificial love that attracts people to it with an energy that exists despite our best efforts to resist it. It's so simple it's hard. Don't we all know love when we see it and when we don't? Love's so universal there's no Native American, no Hindu, no Buddhist, no Jewish, Islamic, or Christian way of loving. There's no Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian or Episcopal way of feeding the hungry. There's no gay or straight way of being faithful, no Black, Asian or Caucasian way of hoping. We know LOVE when we see and feel it; just like we know resistance and coldness. We feel that, too. Ever feel cold resistance? The Spirit of God is a love that moves us out of our self-centeredness. It's an energy that moves us beyond any small-minded uniformity, beyond our egos. The Spirit OF God begs us to give up our desires, our divisions, our superiority, our desire to control. The Spirit of God loves with no borders and no exclusions. Love doesn't see color, creed, sex, race

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or class. Think of how much we suffer by refusing to cross the "borders" we erect to keep away others who believe differently. Think of how our differences paralyze us. Keeping our differences zaps our Spirit of God energy! The Spirit of God waits to free and empower us to come together all in one place to do our part in carrying out the mission of God. It's the Spirit of God, of love in you. Love's not something you do! Love's something you are. Love's your truest self. The image in which you were created. Love's where you came from. Love's where you're going. Can't buy love: can't manufacture love! Love's the Spirit OF God living in you. You also can't make God love you more than God already loves you right now. Nor can you make God love you or anyone else any less. Do the most terrible thing; God wouldn't love you less. You also can't change God's mind about you! The Spirit of God 100% constantly, totally, and unconditionally loves you always. There's nothing we can do to diminish God's love. But, what we *can* do is learn how to believe it, receive it, trust it, allow it, celebrate it, and accept it. The Spirit of God brings us together into the deepest possible communion with God and each other. That's the Spirit of Pentecost! No bratty anti anything. No rebelling! Only and always the Spirit of God living to love in us. The only thing interfering with that living, loving Spirit is fear or any form of division or hatred. What would happen in your life—right now—if you fully accepted the fully inclusive community the Spirit of God waits to create?

What would happen in this church if in the Spirit of Pentecost we came together all in one place and lived to love like Jesus? Remember the very special energy in this place at every baptism? That's the Spirit of God adopting all the baptized as children OF God. Our baptism celebrates that beautiful Spirit of God. We're children of God; heirs of God in a forever relationship. My friends, it's today's Good News! The spirit of God is alive in US, we ARE children OF GOD! We've already inherited everything we'll ever need to live in peace, love and unity; even though we face the spiritual forces of wickedness and evil in this world on a daily basis. The question confronting us this Pentecost 2019 is this: are we willing to be led by the Spirit of God? My friends, when we're "led by the Spirit of God" everyone knows love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." That's the evidence the Spirit of God lives in us. As your Pastor, I want to tell you how I see the spirit of God living in us here at Ottawa First! The very first time I experienced the Spirit of God was that day in August of 2015 shortly after I arrived when 45 of us came together all in one place to clean the church. Talk about a Spirit of God! We had God-powered energy! You showed me just how much we love this place. We filled 6 dumpsters and set stuff out on the curb to be given away. The loving energy in this place that day was palpable and memorable. The Spirit of God moved in us and we came together all in one place with a spirit of generosity! Praise God, we're out of deficit spending and we've stayed out. We came together all in one place and the Spirit of God moved us to give money and energy to tornado relief and clean up. We sure felt the Spirit of God move in us that day.

The youth group came together all in one place and the Spirit of God moved us to serve at Feed My Starving Children. The Spirit of God energized our fall and spring yard clean ups, too! We come together all in one place and the Spirit of God leads us to feed the hungry every 4th Sunday. Lori Kline told me that while she was serving 4th Sunday lunch guests came to her and told her how nice and friendly we are and how our meal is always a good one. That's the

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Spirit of God living to love in us. That same Spirit OF God motivated us to give an Easter offering of \$500 to PADS to help the homeless and another \$500 to Second Helpings to feed hungry children this summer. The Spirit of God pushed 13 of us to help the homeless by volunteering at Lily Pads too Resale Boutique. I wonder how many hours the Spirit of God has motivated us to give to that great effort? The Spirit of God is moving us to get ready for the children to experience VBS Athens. At WalMart I ran into one of the children who comes to VBS. Her name is Bella. Because her mom had another baby and she's busy working, Bella's had to miss VBS the last couple years. Bella looked at me with her very sad, big brown eyes and said: Pastor Cheri, I miss you and I miss the church. Bella know's the Spirit of God's LOVE and she misses it.

My friends, the Spirit of God lives in us. We just can't let ANYTHING separate us. So, let's just keep coming together all in one place to worship and serve in the spirit of our baptism; in the love of our Creator God; in the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ with the inspiration of the Spirit of God. So, when today's final blessing is spoken. The Spirit of God will go out with us to face a new week and whatever that week holds for us, we can be confident in this. The Spirit of God will strengthen, empower and equip us to do what we can't even ask or imagine possible in our work, our homes and in this community. Wherever we go! Let the Spirit of God open your heart to be God's love in action in Ottawa.