

THE REVIVAL AT PENTECOST

Acts 2

After the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the frightened disciples obeyed the orders of Christ to tarry, claiming His promise of power; and so there was a holy assurance in their hearts of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be their comforter, guide, and power.

Nevertheless, the number and the enormity of the problems this little group of one hundred and twenty frightened people faced is overwhelming and supremely discouraging.

One of these problems was opposition, and it came from every quarter -- political, governmental, military, industrial, social, etc. Their enemies were set against Christ and His followers. Another problem was inexperience. These were untrained and untried people who had come from the lowly places. In the main they were fishermen with very limited horizons. There were no others in the world like them. They were the only church members in the world. Poverty was another of their problems. They were poor in money, knowledge, and equipment. They did not have a church building, any publications, or any schools; only a bold effrontery and faith in God. They did not have any rich clientele to fall back on or to encourage them. Their treasury was empty and their treasurer had committed suicide.

They had a pressing commission to go into all the world, but there were barriers on every side. Transportation facilities were the poorest. Their leadership was untried. They were uneducated, inexperienced men, without any prestige. They did not have any effective contacts, and the simplicity of their lives made their program seem presumptuous.

There are many interesting things about the ten day prayer meeting which preceded Pentecost. One is that it was obedient praying which they did. They were obeying the orders of their Lord in their praying. They interpreted His command to "tarry" by a persistent, unbroken prayer meeting until the power came. Moreover their praying was characterized by some holy unities. There was unity of place -- the one hundred and twenty disciples were in one place, the upper room in Jerusalem. There was unity of fellowship -- they did not have any unbrotherly distractions. There was unity of love -- they were bound with indissoluble bonds to the one central figure of their affections. Christ reigned supreme in their hearts. There was also unity of purpose -- they "were of one accord." Their souls symphonized in seeking the will of their Lord. There was a unity of membership -- all of the one hundred and twenty members were present. Each was there to bear his responsibility, to perform his task, and to pray his prayer. There was a unity of passion -- they had a loyal devotion to Christ, their Saviour, and to lost souls for whose salvation they were praying. There was a unity of task -- they were not distracted by varied purposes and diverting demands. In their praying, they sought one common aim; each sought enduement for himself, and each sought enduement for the other. They longed and prayed for the same power.

It was a persistent prayer meeting. None of them permitted any other business to interfere with their prayer meeting. They tarried in unwearied supplication until they closed in with God on His promised power. It was an immortal prayer meeting. More than nineteen centuries have since gone into the tomb of time, and it is still the most far-famed prayer meeting ever held. It has been talked about more than any

other prayer meeting. Their love for Christ and their devotion to Him never wavered. They prayed with an unstagging faith. They prayed until the power came in floods upon each of them. The results that issued from that meeting are unique in history.

When God's appointed time for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit arrived in fulfillment of His promise, the Holy Spirit descended upon those assembled believers. He took possession of them and controlled them to such an extent that they throbbed with His sympathies, spoke His thoughts, and conformed to His will. Being filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit constitute the glorious privilege and the personal duty of every Christian.

Anointed and energized by the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to proclaim "the wonderful works of God" in the various languages of those who had come from the different nations. Among these splendid and magnificent works of God were those which Christ did, and, of course, the greatest of them all was His resurrection from the dead.

The greatest gift which any believer in Christ may desire and receive is the ability to proclaim the gospel of Christ and the message of God to others in an intelligent manner which can be understood by the hearers.

Peter's sermon at Pentecost was truly a masterpiece. And the fact that it was a reclaimed backslider who preached it is abundant proof that God can take a wayward man and use him mightily, provided that man will yield himself completely to Him. Peter's sermon was scriptural, logical, practical, pointed, personal, convincing, persuasive, and effective.

Peter emphasized the manhood, Messiahship, miracles and manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter reminded his hearers that Jesus of Nazareth had been "approved of God" among them. This approval was evident in the "miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him," in their very midst. Peter proclaimed Christ as the redeeming, risen, and reigning Messiah.

Peter made much of the crucifixion of Christ. He knew that if the crucifixion were left out, with its stupendous message of the innocent suffering the punishment which the guilty deserved, then the sermon would not bear the credentials of Christianity. Peter told the Jews that they were guilty of two things -- rejecting Christ and nailing Him to the cross. He said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." They had done everything within their power to prevent the resurrection of Christ, but "it was not possible that he should be holden of death."

The Holy Spirit used Peter's memorable sermon to make those who heard it deeply conscious of their terrible guilt. They realized that their sin was against God, that their self-righteousness had killed the righteous Son of God, and that they were under the just condemnation of God. Filled with fear of the wrath of God and in despair, they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer to their cry was forthcoming, as he gave the Christian answer to despair: "Repent, and

be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Repent" meant to change their minds about Christ, to change their attitude toward Him, and to change the whole direction of their lives. When those who love sin and hate righteousness truly repent, they will love righteousness and hate sin. Instead of rebelling against God and serving Satan, they will renounce Satan and serve God. True repentance means that you sever your allegiance to Satan and avow your loyalty to God. In your life you will crown Jesus as "both Lord and Christ." In repentance you transfer your loyalty and trust from Satan to God. This you do as you receive Christ Jesus into your heart as your Saviour and make Him the Lord of your life.

Having been forgiven of and cleansed from their sins, on the basis of or because of their repentance and faith, they were commanded to express that cleansing symbolically by being baptized. This same preposition, "eis" — translated "for", is used in Matthew 12:41: "The men of Nineveh ... repented at the preaching of Jonas." The Ninevites did not repent in order that Jonah might preach, but because of, or as the result of, his preaching. When we say that a man "was executed for murder," we do not mean that he was executed in order that he might murder but because he had already murdered. You are to be baptized not in order that your sins might be remitted, but because they have already been remitted. After Christ had saved those who repented and believed on Him at Pentecost, they gladly submitted to baptism as an evidence of their trust in Him and as an act of loving obedience to Him.

Those who repented of their sins and trusted in the death and resurrection of Christ for their salvation on the day of Pentecost were happily and gloriously saved. They were then baptized, not into the kingdom of God, but into the membership of the church in Jerusalem. Not only were their souls saved from sin, but their Christian lives were saved from failure as they became faithful witnesses to a lost world regarding the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. Their spirit and conduct commanded the respect of the people around them. People were added to the church daily, as a result of their Christian influence, plus the exertion of the divine power. The Lord did not add them to the church until He had saved them.

To you who are not saved, I make the earnest plea that you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation right now. Then present yourself on the basis of that experience as a candidate for baptism into the membership of the church. In beautiful baptism symbolize that which Christ did for your salvation, and which is involved in your Christian experience. Then yield yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit as a living testimony to what Christ is able to do for anyone who will call upon Him in simple faith and trust.