

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-13

Pentecost should not be lightly valued by God's people. It is one of the epochal events in the progress of the human family.

1. Pentecost was promised.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." Joel 2:28-29.

"And, behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:49.

"But ye shall receive power upon the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

So this great day was according to the will and the promise of the Father. These frightened disciples after the death and resurrection of Jesus 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 comfort, guide and power. It was a guaranteed victory.

2. Problems they faced at that time.

The number and enormity of the problems this little group of one hundred and twenty frightened men and women faced is overwhelming and supremely discouraging. Look at some of these problems.

(1) Opposition.

It came from every quarter--political, governmental, military, industrial, social, ecclesiastical--and every other expression of human opposition. It was all entrenched and entrenched and backed by customs and traditions and racial and religious hatred. Their enemies were set against the Christ.

(2) Inexperience.

These were all untrained, untried men and women. They had come from the lowly places. In the main they were fishermen with very limited horizons.

(3) Traditional embarrassments.

In this new movement there were no traditions on their side. Everywhere they turned they met an ancient custom, a fixed, entrenched habit, and to violate a tradition was downright irreligion. Long years had put them in religious ruts, and to break over was treason.

(4) Aloneness.

There were no others in the world like them. They had no fellows and fellowships in neighboring towns or in neighboring nations. They were the only church members in the world.

(5) Poverty.

In money, knowledge and equipment. They had no church building, no religious equipment, no publications, no schools, nothing but a bold affrontery and faith

in God. They had no rich clientele to fall back on or to encourage them. Their treasury was empty and their treasurer was a suicide.

(6) Barriers.

They had a pressing commission to go into all the world. What an embarrassment in the light of that divine order! Transportation facilities were the poorest --no highways, no railroads, no telegraphs, no telephones, no radios, no automobiles, no airplanes, no printing press, no government to carry the mail--only donkeys and poor roads--barriers on every side.

(7) Embarrassment.

In the immediate past there had been Judas' betrayal and suicide, Peter's denial and bad conduct, and the shameful crucifixion of their leader and founder-- Jesus Christ--a triple tragedy, a triumvirate of shame.

(8) Disposition of Jesus.

What to do with Him and His teachings and His program. His teachings were germinal, universal in their scope, uncompromising in their orders, compulsory in their demands, and what must they do?

(9) Untried leadership.

They were uneducated, inexperienced men, without prestige. They had no effective contacts and the simplicity of their lives made their program seem presumptuous. An untried, inexperienced leadership was charged with the biggest task ever given to men.

3. Praying Before Pentecost.

There are many interesting things about this ten day prayer meeting which preceded Pentecost.

(1) 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 power came.

(2) It was characterized by some holy unities.

a. Unity of place.

The disciples were close together.

b. Unity of fellowship.

They did not have any unbrotherly distractions.

c. Unity of love.

They were bound with indissoluble bonds to the one central figure of their affection. Christ Jesus reigned supremely in their hearts.

d. Unity of purpose.

They "were of one accord." Their souls symphonized in seeking the will of their Lord.

e. Unity of membership.

The one hundred and twenty were present. Each was there to bear his responsibility, to perform his task, and to pray his prayer.

f. Unity of passion.

They had a loyal devotion to Christ, their Saviour, and to lost souls for whose salvation they were praying.

g. Unity of task.

They were not distracted by varied purposes and diverting demands. In their praying, they sought one common aim, each enduement for himself, and each enduement for the other. They longed and prayed for the same power.

- (3) It was a persistent prayer meeting.
None of them permitted any other business to interfere with their praying. They tarried in unwearied supplication until they closed in with God on His promised power.
- (4) It was an immortal prayer meeting.
Nineteen centuries have since gone into the tomb of time, and still it is the most far-famed prayer meeting ever held. It has been talked about more than any other prayer meeting in history.
- (5) It was a successful prayer meeting.
Their love for Christ and their devotion to Him never wavered. They prayed with an unstaggering faith. They supplicated until the power came, until power came in floods upon each one of them. The results that issued from that meeting are unique in history.

I. The Coming Of The Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-4.

On the fiftieth day after Christ's resurrection the one hundred and twenty disciples were in one place, and with a wonderful spirit of unanimity. According to promise the Holy Spirit descended upon these assembled believers. There were various evidences of His presence. There was an audible sign--"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." There was a visible sign--there appeared unto the disciples divided tongues which resembled fire, and one sat upon the head of each person present. This was the visible evidence that each of them had received the Holy Spirit. No difference was made between them. The Holy Spirit also filled them. This simply means that He possessed them and controlled them. He so took possession of them that they throbbed with His sympathies, spoke His thoughts, and conformed to His will. To be "filled with the Holy Spirit" is for Him to have all there is of us by entire and perfect yieldedness.

Another supernatural manifestation on that day was the speaking in foreign languages. Immediately after the Spirit filled them, took complete possession of their faculties, and gave them the right thoughts and emotions, they "began to speak with other tongues," and those present understood what they said. The long-promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place. This miraculous gift indicated the fact that our Lord wanted His gospel to be preached in every language in the world. Being filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit constituted the glorious privilege and the personal duty of every believer.

II. The Effect Of His Presence. Acts 2:5-13.

In a miraculous way the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to speak in languages other than the ones which they had learned and used previously. Anointed and energized by the Spirit, they began to proclaim "the wonderful works of God" in the various languages of those who had come from the different nations. And the assembled multitudes understood them as the disciples spoke the languages they had never known. Thus, these hearers from many nations were enabled to carry God's message back to their native lands.

There is no similarity whatever between the early disciples speaking intelligently in languages they had not known, as the Holy Spirit miraculously empowered them, and the modern effort on the part of some to speak in "unknown tongues." With the latter the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with it because there is no need for it today and no benefit from it. Any jabberings which are unintelligible to those producing them and those hearing them are senseless, useless, and sinful.

There was a threefold effect of this miraculous gift of tongues, namely, amazement, perplexity, and criticism.