

THE REVIVAL AT PENTECOST

Christ said, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Acts 1:8 says, "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 Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

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 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 famed prayer meeting ever held. It has been talked about more than any other prayer meeting in history. It was a successful prayer meeting. Their love for Christ and their devotion to Him never wavered. They prayed with an unstaggering 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. There were various evidences of His presence. There was an audible sign -- "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." That verse does not say that there came a wind from heaven, but only a sound which resembled a violent wind being borne along, somewhat like a tornado. There was also a visible sign -- there appeared unto the disciples divided tongues which resembled fire, and one sat upon the head of each present.

This was the visible evidence that each of them had received the Holy Spirit. No difference was made between them, but the reception of the Holy Spirit was not just a group experience, rather, it was a personal one. The Holy Spirit also "filled" them. This simply means that He possessed and controlled them. He took possession of them to such an extent 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 yieldedness.

Another supernatural manifestation on that day was the speaking in foreign languages. Immediately after the Spirit filled the believers, 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 preached in every language of the world. The preaching of His gospel is always much more effective when people hear it in their own native language. 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, about which these Jewish enthusiasts spoke, were those which Christ did, and, of course, the greatest of them all was His resurrection from the dead. The assembled multitudes, who heard and understood the disciples when they spoke in languages which they had not known previously, were amazed at them because they knew that most of them were Galileans.

There is no similarity whatever between the early disciples speaking intelligently in languages with which they were not previously familiar, as the Holy Spirit miraculously empowered them, and which were understood by their listeners, and the modern effort on the part of some to speak in "unknown tongues." Since there is no need for anyone speaking

in an "unknown tongue" today, and because no benefit can be derived from it by those who might listen to it, the Holy Spirit is not a party to such a performance. Any jabberings which are unintelligible to both those producing them and those hearing them are useless and without value.

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 in a language which can be understood by the hearers. That which is spoken in terms that are not known and understood by the speaker or the hearers certainly cannot be of any value or benefit to either.

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.

In his sermon Peter emphasized the manhood, Messiahship, miracles and manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. To prove to the people that Jesus of Nazareth was in reality the promised Messiah, Peter reminded his hearers that he 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.

The fact that the cross was in the eternal plan of God did not justify those who slew Christ. They acted as free moral agents fully responsible for their wicked deeds. Peter was careful to make it clear to the Jews that they were guilty of two things -- they rejected Christ and they nailed Him to the cross.

Moreover, God had shown His approval of Christ in that He had raised Him from among the dead. Men had done everything within their power to prevent His resurrection. They had rolled a big stone in front of the door of the tomb, put a Roman seal on the stone, and then placed a guard of soldiers around the tomb as a final precaution. But, as Peter said, "It was not possible that He should be holden of death."

When Peter preached his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit used it to make those who heard it deeply conscious of their terrible guilt. His hearers were convinced of the truth of his message, convicted of their guilt, and so filled with fear of the wrath of God that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter commanded them to repent and to be baptized in the name of Christ. To his hearers repentance meant to change their minds about Christ, to admit their guilt in rejecting Him and to believe on Him as their personal Saviour.

Having been cleansed from their sins, on account of their repentance and faith, they were to express that cleansing symbolically by being baptized. After Christ had saved them, they gladly submitted to baptism as an evidence of their faith in Him and as an act of loving obedience to Him.