

A Pentecost Principle

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While it is a fact that a mature grasp of the Truth requires some digging beyond what lies at the surface, nevertheless there are very obvious things that escape our attention because of this or that religious lens distorting our vision. Those very obvious things can provide us with an opening into more sublime levels of understanding once we are granted the grace to see what has always been there.

So it is with Pentecost. We've studied and studied, scrutinized, analyzed and dissected that foundational spiritual phenomenon that launched a firstfruits community of believers into spiritual Reality, but, for the most part, we've missed something very glaringly obvious causing us to insert into the subject a flesh-glorifying element.

Over the years of being exposed to a myriad of ideas of what is required of us to be filled with the Spirit initially and continually, I've come away convinced that quite especially our Babylon-style religious thinking has been singularly exposed by inferences we have drawn that have no basis in fact.

When we compare the actual biblical account of what transpired before the historic crisis that brought 120 followers of Christ to the experience of being infused with divine life with what we have generally held to be true, one wonders how there could be such a disparity between recorded fact and our religious conclusions--- amazingly claiming to be founded on the record.

The theories run the gamut of requiring a sufficient "tarrying" at a church altar while maintaining the necessary tension of "holding on" and "letting go"---this view favored by old-time classic Pentecostals--- to the view, favored by the non-Pentecostals, that a careful, self-disciplined cultivation of "the consecrated life" must precede the moment of infilling, that is if it is believed that such an experience following our regeneration is required at all.

We are rarely reminded that, in conjunction with that first new covenant out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, our mental picture of the whole scenario ought to have this general coloring about it, namely,

that those who "received the Holy Spirit" that day were just fifty days removed from a time when they, rather than being ones who were diligently qualifying themselves for heavenly enduement, rather than being ones who were getting all their spiritual ducks in a row, they were. in fact, singularly representative of all that one might call spiritual failure.

Following the Lord's death, what was quite remarkable was their spiritual blindness, their fear, their confusion and their inability to remember and apply the words of Jesus to them to the crisis that they faced at His crucifixion. If you protest and insist that they got their act together at some point in preparation for Pentecost, I will ask you to read the record again and note that, in general, it required the utmost patience, appearance and reappearances of the Lord in a way to overwhelm all their ineptness. It might be said with all accuracy, that they made it to the pentecostal experience in spite of themselves.

Whatever has been a favorable condition in the heart of any believer in preparation for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that favorable condition came about totally by divine favor. This is going to trouble some of my readers, but my testimony is true when I tell you that I was filled with the Spirit while in a state of giving up on God in my life.

Ask me what I did to get filled with the Holy Ghost and I'll tell you that I did what any bumbling jackass does, he bumbles. Man, can I identify with those first disciples. Just like them, in my own unique situation, just before being given that gracious gift, I had spiritually fallen apart. I have NOTHING to boast of, nothing, nothing, nothing in my relationship with God.

What does your religious imagination conjur up when you think of the 120 gathered together in expectation of the promise of the Father? Do you imagine that they were in the throes of reaching down into themselves for some heroic consecration to God that would call forth the Spirit out of heaven?

Do you imagine them as prostrate on their faces before God? Do you imagine them to be in a state of some kind of spiritual fervor that God could not ignore and thus give them what they sought? If so, I'm afraid you're projecting all kind of religious notions into the scene.

Please note, with all the marvelous implications involved, that at the moment of the great out-pouring, the record tells us specifically that they were sitting.

Yes, they were all in one accord in one place, but they'd been brought there by being overwhelming captivated by the reality of Christ being truly risen from the dead. He sovereignly came to them and overwhelmed them out of their pathetic condition. Their reception of the Holy Spirit was no more based on them "getting it right" than the Lord's reconciling death and regenerating resurrection was predicated upon them making it happen by their faithfulness and prayers.

This spiritual principle was once and for all established at Pentecost: Salvation is of the Lord. PERIOD. God did it all. Man contributed and contributes nothing. All contribution on the part of man to the eternal purpose of God is what constitutes the wood, hay and stubble that has no place in building the temple of God. Oh how we love to reserve some credit, some glory for ourselves.

Nonsensical notions such as, "you've got to be willing to be made willing." "You must let God...." "God can't do it unless you...." "You tie God's hands when you...." (that one's a doozie) prevail among believers who subscribe to the idea--propogated in many versions--that God cannot do what He wants to do without your co-operation. "The Christian Life" is reduced to a mutual collaboration between God and man.

Listen! God collaborates with no man. He is counseled by His own will alone, and all agreement on the part of man, all co-operation is completely the end result of the operation of the Spirit of God in our lives. It is a common misperception, for instance, that revivals have been "prayed down." The truth is that certain men, having been granted a degree of spiritual sensitivity to what is happening in the heavenly sphere are brought to expectant prayer consistent with what God is about to do in sovereign grace.

Prayer may become fervent, not because God is dependent on our fervency, but because on earth He is expressing in us His own fire and fervency.

The more men begin to fancy that they've had a part, in the sense of contributing something to the spiritual equation, the more it becomes evident that the Wind of God is already on its way out.

Jesus is Lord because Jesus is Lord, not because we make Him Lord.

Christ becomes all in all to us, not because we make Him so, but because it becomes so to us experientially as a result of the applied pressure of the reality that He IS all in all. "The knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill all the earth as the waters cover the sea" because "The whole earth IS filled with His glory."

First comes the fact, and then the realization. You don't make anything so. God makes it so and then, in due time, lets you in on it, lets you know, and by that revelation knowledge brings you into participation in the Reality. This aspect of the revelation of Jesus Christ must be prophetically heralded without qualification in this hour.

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