

The Gospel for Our Age



J. W. Goodwin

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The Gospel for Our Age

By

J. W. Goodwin, D.D.

Author of

*Living Signs and Wonders, The Secret Place
of Prayer, etc.*



NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE
2923 Troost Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

Fould

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2025.4

366

FOREWORD

I am putting forth this little volume of discourses with a very deep feeling of humility. I have not tried to conform to the technique of the established rules of homiletics. I have been governed largely by a desire to reach the essential facts in experience, and impress such truths as may be gathered from the records. I have made no attempt to be critical in the use of the Scripture. However, I have tried to gather the truth from the first chapters of the Acts which relate to Christian experience. This seems to be the effort of the writer of the Acts, namely, (1) to emphasize what took place in the personal lives of the early believers, (2) then to relate the events which happened to them because of their message. Much time, therefore, has been given in the following discourses to emphasize the experience of believers in relation to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It seemed very important to the writer of the Acts to give details in his brief history of the very dawn of the New Age. The experience and establishment of believers in the gospel which they had received from the lips of their Lord was, indeed, most vital.

The initial eight chapters of the Acts contain the first division of the record of Apostolic history. In this section we have: (1) The foundation of their hope as an experience related to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and revealed in the promise of the Father. (2) The preparation and reception of the Holy Spirit. (3) The reception of the Apostles in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. (4) The victory of the early Spirit-filled church in the midst of persecution.

The second portion beginning with the ninth chapter and continuing to the end has largely to do with the conversion of the Gentiles and the missionary message to the uttermost parts

of the earth. The discourses contained in this volume are gathered from the first eight chapters.

The writer of the book of the Acts connects the record of the earthly ministry of our Lord with His larger life and ministry through His exaltation and glory. It is one continual life story. However, the writer in speaking of the exaltation opens to our view a new age or Dispensation in the relationship of Christ and believers. This closer relationship is obtained and maintained through the ministry of the Holy Spirit operating in the personal experiences of believers in the dawn of the New Age. It is this blessed ministry which we shall study in these discourses.

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The Gospel for Our Age

CHAPTER I

THE LIVING CHRIST IN THE ACTS

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1-3).

The book of Acts, which is the source of our theme, has been of vital interest. It contains all that we know of the early years which mark the beginning of the New Age or Dispensation following the earthly life of our Lord. It will not be necessary for us to enter into an extensive discussion of the authorship of the book of the Acts, or make an effort to sustain its authority as one of the inspired books of the New Testament. This has been settled by leading scholars who have carefully examined the records. We shall accept the judgment of the leading critics such as Dr. Ramsey and others who are regarded as scholars in the field of research. They are a unit in ascribing the authorship of the Acts to Luke, who is the author of the third Gospel.

In taking up the present work, “The Acts,” Luke begins by a brief mention of the former “treatise” which he had made to this same Theophilus. It will be interesting to note his statement in the opening of his former “treatise,” or his Gos-

pel: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:1-3).

Others, who had been eyewitnesses, had taken in hand to write, for they were faithful ministers of the word. Thus, we have the four Gospels recording the earthly life of our Lord. Matthew seems to see Him as King, fulfilling the picture of the long-expected Messiah. Mark, more especially, is led to emphasize the servant life of our Lord, filling the picture of the servant of Jehovah as a servant of man. Luke, who had a perfect understanding of all things from the beginning, gives the vision of a perfect man who was Master of every situation. John, in his Gospel, brings forth in glowing portrait the "Divine Logos," the Son of God, manifested in the flesh.

The "former treatise" had taken up questions related to "doings and teachings." It covered in a very brief way some of His mighty acts, His miracles to bless others, His clear and forceful teachings which astonished the multitudes, and concluded with His sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. All this, then, was only a beginning, which clearly sets forth important facts to confirm the faith of the excellent Theophilus. And all of this, in order that there might be a beautiful harmony in the things wherein this believer had been instructed.

After reading the present text with Luke 1:3, we cannot seriously question the fact that the Acts was written by Luke. Hence, it is a continuation of the former treatise. There is one word used in the Acts which will also settle its writer as the author of the Gospel, namely, the Greek word for grace. This Greek word does not occur at all in the first two Gospels and

only three times in the Gospel of John. But it occurs eight times in Luke's Gospel and seventeen times in the Acts. In the Epistles of Paul it may be found more than one hundred times.

It is evident that the writer was a physician of a well trained school. It is said by Greek students that he used the common words of the medical profession in describing disease, such as "blindness" and what he calls the "bloody flux."

It seems very evident also that the writer was a companion of the Apostle Paul. We know the beloved physician became associated with Paul while he was in Galatia and attended him in his sickness there. He was doubtless with him when he went to Jerusalem where he was arrested and put in prison at Cæsarea. This gave him opportunity to get in touch with the apostles and learn about Pentecost. It also gave him access to the records and from these he copied the speech of Peter at Pentecost and the one of Stephen, obtained the facts of Ananias and Sapphira, and the many other things not under his direct notice. This accounts for the different expressions which are found in these records. Luke was doubtless what is known today as a "shorthand reporter." Such writers were not unknown even in those days. Pliny had some such writer with him, and the sainted Origen had many similar writers working with him. Some noted archeologists have come to the conclusion that Luke was a shorthand writer.

THE NAME

The book has taken the name of "THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES." The record takes up something of the life of Peter, mentions James and Barnabas, and deals largely with the movements of the Apostle Paul, but very incomplete even of his life. There is a purpose and a plan throughout the book. The history moves along in harmony with the declara-

tion of the Lord in carrying forward the work. They are to be witnesses in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and then the uttermost parts of the earth. Thus, it is a record of the apostles in relation to the spreading of the gospel.

It has been called by some the "ACTS OF THE HOLY GHOST." From the frequent mention of the Holy Ghost it might be thus termed. A few references to the Holy Ghost are as follows: Christ "through the Holy Ghost" gave His commandments, and He promised that they should "receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come." In the choice of a new apostle, Peter quoted David as having "spoken through the Holy Ghost." Then we come to Pentecost where the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the church in flaming fire, and the disciples were "all filled with the Holy Ghost." This was that which had been spoken, "I will pour out of my Spirit." The people were exhorted to repent and then "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," for the promise was to them. When before the rulers, "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them." Again, when let go they came to their own company and prayed and the place was shaken, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was "a lie to the Holy Ghost." "We are witnesses," declared the apostle, "so also is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given." The seven deacons must be "filled with the Holy Ghost." Stephen was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Philip, "a man filled with the Holy Ghost," went to Samaria. A Holy Ghost revival followed, then Peter and John came "that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Simon's mistake was that he thought the gift of God, the Holy Ghost, could be purchased. Paul, after his conversion, had the hands of a holy man laid upon him that he might "receive the Holy Ghost." After this the church "walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Cornelius sent for Peter that he might get the full gospel, and while

Peter was speaking "the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." Barnabas was a good man "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

When missionaries were called, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." When Paul "filled with the Holy Ghost," met the wicked sorcerer, he fixed his eyes on him. Then in the midst of trial and being rejected, "they were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." When the church at Jerusalem would give instruction to the Gentiles, they watched for the mind of the Lord, and said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no heavy burdens."

The Holy Ghost guided Paul in his missionary undertakings, and when he would go to certain places "the Holy Ghost suffered him not." When he met the converts at Ephesus, his first question was "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" It was the Holy Ghost who witnessed that in every city he should have trouble. In closing the book almost the very last words is a quotation where the "Holy Ghost had spokn by Esaias the prophet." Is it any wonder that many have called this book the "Acts of the Holy Ghost"? There can be no question concerning the Holy Ghost as the acting agent in all the movements of the apostles, nor could we hardly overestimate the importance of the church waiting for the direction of the spirit. Especially in these days, when so many act as though there were no Holy Ghost at all. Through this study, we hope to place such emphasis on the Holy Spirit that His ministry may occupy the place it did in the thought of the early church.

In reality, this book may be called "THE ACTS OF JESUS CHRIST." Our text surely hints at least that the record of this book is a continuation of the acts and teachings of our Lord. "Of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Back

of the apostles we may find the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Back of the curtain in the unseen holies, we discover the Lord Jesus who is giving the Holy Ghost and the one who is leading the church on to victory. Jesus Christ is the arch on which rests the past and future of the two great spans of the bridge which crosses the river of human destiny. To cross the river safely from earth to heaven's joys, one must pass over, through, and by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. He is the one "Over All," and "Through All," and "In All." In the Acts, Luke begins by implication that this record was to be a continuation of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." We may, therefore, expect to see this Jesus of Nazareth in the book of the Acts after His resurrection and His exaltation at the Father's right hand, manifesting His greater and more glorious ministry through His church as the Savior of men.

CHRIST THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF ALL HISTORY

There have been great characters of history, who, in their day, have burst forth as bright lights in the world, conquered empires, accomplished great undertakings, wrought in the field of history and art, established great principles and laws, and swayed vast throngs with their eloquence and personal power. But they were like the meteors which blaze out in the atmosphere for a short time and soon become lost in the beyond of oblivion, leaving behind them only the memory of a life and a few deeds recorded on the pages of history. How different with Christ. He came into our world as a fixed star, the Bright and the Morning Star, who soon became the sun and center of the spiritual world, whose light has reached the darkest places and still shines with increasing power and glory.

He did not claim to be a theologian, a philosopher, a poet, or a prophet. He was only a teacher going about doing good, gathering around him an humble class of devoted men and

women. His only claim was, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." He could not be silenced or destroyed for he was life in Himself. As one so well said, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught."

Divinity in human form, the God-man, was in this world for a few days only. But He was the Word made flesh, God manifest in the flesh, in him was "Life, and the life was the Light of men." In Jesus Christ we have the beginning of a new Creation. He is that "seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head." He is the seed to whom the promise was made through Abraham. He is the theme of history, the song of the poets, and the vision of the prophets. He is the fulfillment of types and shadows, and the glorification of the faithful promises of God. What an infinite wealth of prophetic promise hung upon the brittle thread of a child's life in Bethlehem's manger. No wonder the angels sang with such gladness that shepherds heard their heavenly music. In the fulness of times, when human hands were allowed to take his life, the earthly wonder exclaimed, "Who shall declare his generation for His life was taken from the earth?" But He shall have a generation, a new born race, who through the travail of His soul shall become a new creation, a holy people a kingly nation. This holy people is to be a temple for His own indwelling, yea, and more, His one united body, "the fullness of him who filleth all in all."

We have no tombstone to mark the resting place of our great leader because our Lord is alive and alive forever more. In Christianity we worship at the feet of a living, glorified Lord and Master. He is still doing and teaching. We see Him as King exalted at God's right hand, having access to a throne. We see Him living in men who serve as bond slaves, but giving them a larger freedom. We see Him lifting men and women

into the image of his own pure manhood, and then filling them with his divine life and energy.

In the Acts we can see this unique character, Christ, carrying forward His work through the church in the midst of trial. This was the larger vision of the Christ. "I have a baptism to be baptized with and now am I straitened till it be accomplished." How our Lord wanted to break the bonds of human limitation and burst forth into fuller freedom of His divine power.

John had foretold the spiritual method of Christ, when he said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Christ himself, had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away. If I go not away the Comforter will not come. When he is come, he will guide, teach, glorify me, and strengthen you." If the Comforter had not come, we should have been straitened and limited indeed. But the Acts assures us that the Comforter did come and that Christ has entered His larger life of redemptive activities, thus, He is the unique character of all history.

HIS DOINGS

HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD. He did not paint across the heavens "Behold the great I AM," but he wrote His life's story deeply in the heart of those whom He helped. Divinity never worries about proving itself. God acts and then allows the heavens to declare His glory, and the firmament to show forth His handiwork; while day and night speak eloquently in all places of His Dominion. "Art thou the Christ?" was the question which came from John. "Tell him," said the Christ, "what things ye see and hear." What and how He was doing things were the evidences of our Lord's divinity.

Man could sow and reap and make bread, but it took God to feed 5,000 people with five barley loaves and two small

fishes in an hour. Man could make boats and sail upon the water, but it took God and His power to walk on the troubled waves without sinking. Man can sometimes endure the storms, but it took God to speak and calm the rolling waves and make them lie in placid stillness at His feet. Man can comfort the mourners with sympathy, but it took God to raise the dead and present them alive to sorrowing hearts. Man could die for his friends and loved ones, but it took the loving heart of God to give His Son and provide a sacrifice for those who have nothing but hatred for Him.

Calvary was His great work. We have heard much about the finished work of Calvary. His resurrection placed the divine seal upon the atonement. Yes, the offering was complete and sufficient, and the atonement perfect, but the work of Calvary will not be complete until every saint has been safely landed on the eternal shore of the Glory World.

Jesus only made a beginning in his doings. When he healed the sick, cleansed the leper, opened blind eyes, and raised the dead, it was only a beginning of his most wonderful work on earth. The garden, the cross, and **THE RESURRECTION** were only the beginnings of his mighty acts among men. Not until he ascended to the throne of His Father did he come into full possession of his possibilities. When he had thrown off the mantle of his earthly limitations and reached the fullness of His glory, when from the throne of His Father He burst forth, in the full-orbed glory of His Divine Sonship, pouring his life into thousands of other lives, moving the multitudes by their simple words, lifting the lowly to higher ideals, breaking slavery's chains of darkness, it was then our Lord stepped into the arena of the world's history a mighty conqueror.

HIS TEACHING

Never man spake like this man, was the judgment of His enemies. What was peculiar to His teaching? It was said of Him that He spake with authority, not as the scribes.

He never argued or debated. He never gave expression to doubt. He did not attempt logic. He never used syllogisms. He seldom used the word "therefore." He never used profound language, or high sounding words, or complicated sentences, or uttered mystified expressions. He states simple truth from the heart with great feeling. His principles are adapted for all people in all the world throughout all time. His teaching had much to do with the matters of every day life. He talked much about the eternal verities with a marked degree of certainty.

How different is all this from others. Men who have thought profoundly have been careful to preserve their ideas in books, and if it had been possible, they would have laid them with an iron pen upon the rocks forever. The world has been filled with the books of men from time immemorial, and yet the old sayings of the great men of earth have almost passed and are nearly forgotten. But here is a man who never wrote a word on stone or penned a word on paper. The only writing He ever did was in the sand with His own finger, and yet He fearlessly exclaimed, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away." His words were so burned into the very hearts of the people who loved Him that they could not be forgotten. He gave germ thought, which, when after reflection, even the "world itself could not contain the books which might be written."

He gave directions, laid down principles, and uttered commandments which should become the very gateway to heaven itself. "If ye continue in my words, then are ye my disciples indeed." "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make

you free." Think of the founders of other schools and all their writings, yet this man spake with assurance and His words are still with us. His words were fire, and burned their way into other lives.

WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP

That tells the story. When He ascended, He led captivity captive, He was above principalities and powers, and He was given a name above every other name. And though He had been known after the flesh, yet "henceforth, know we him no more after the flesh."

His enemies thought, "Yes, his work is finished. His efforts are all in the past." But NO! a thousand times NO! After His ascension He is more active than ever, and His work more indestructible. He was working and walking among the candlesticks by day and by night. Jerusalem was filled with the word of life, Samaria was shaken to the foundations, Judea thrilled with His presence, and Rome felt the shock of His mighty tread. He captured the great centers of learning. Alexandria lay at His feet. He turned the rivers of history out of their courses and swung great empires on their hinges. And like as He stilled blue Galilee by the majesty of His voice until she lay a placid calm at His holy feet, so He found a way of driving from the ocean's wild waves the destroyed pirate, in order that Christian missionaries could sail in safety. Just as He cast out the demon from the man of Gadarea, so He has gone to the cannibal islands of our great seas and changed their people into the devoted Christians, and today they are clothed and in their right minds are becoming civilized.

We used to sing, "When He called little children and placed His hands on their heads," also, "How I should have liked to have been with Him then." O no! no! no! We have

a Christ a thousand times greater than Jerusalem saw. A Christ a thousand times more potent than any Messiah of which Judea dreamed. A Christ a thousand times nearer than when the beloved John pillowed his head upon His breast. A Christ more compassionate than when He wept over the multitudes. A Christ a thousand times more luminous than when the disciples saw Him depart in the shining cloud. He is a living, reigning, glorious reality. Living in a million lives, throbbing in a million hearts, bursting forth in new beauty and glory every day in the lives of men.

THE EVER PRESENT CHRIST

“Lo, I am with you always.” When He left the Mount of Olives and took up His abode at the right hand of the Father, He did not plan to absent Himself from His people, but purposed to be present in the deeper, more realistic and spiritualized presence of His Divine Sonship. The ascended, glorified, and triumphant Christ, leading captivity captive, now entering upon His ministry in the fullest sense as Prophet, Priest and King in His church. At the right hand of the Father he began His ministry by baptizing believers with the Holy Ghost, purifying their hearts through faith with His own fiery presence. According to the words of Peter, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost came directly from the presence of our ascended Lord. “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”

Paul thought of Christ as ever present with His people, in the heavenlies, and His Church enrapt in His glorious presence: “We are raised up together with Christ and made to sit together with him in the heavenly places.” Throughout the record of the Acts, we are impressed with the all-crowning

fact, that the glorified Lord was ever present and working with His followers. The disciples were conscious of His personal presence, He was with them, leading them on in their ministry, working signs and wonders, AND imparting gifts of healing, manifesting Himself by baptizing the people with His own baptism, as the Holy Ghost fell upon the people.

The question, "Where is thy God?" has its answer. Christ is present where His gospel of full salvation is preached, even unto the end of this Age. Wherever hearts will receive His ministry, He still baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit. Truly this is a carnal age and the church seems to have lost the deep sense of His mighty presence and is somewhat left to her carnal desires, nevertheless, Christ is behind the curtain anxious to pull aside the veil of spiritual darkness and reveal Himself as the mighty Baptizer with the Holy Ghost as in the days of old. The brethren may rage, a worldly church may doubt, but He is still strong in those whose hearts are perfect, and they know their God and they do exploits.

CHRIST'S METHODS OF TEACHING AND DOING

(1) Christ combined teaching and doing. They cannot be separated. Teaching is fundamental, doctrine is essential. Saving faith is not the outgrowth of service, and salvation is not a by-product. How shall they believe in whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher to teach? Salvation is by faith, and faith comes through hearing proper teaching. We have not taught too much, there should be more and better teaching, but more stress must be placed upon the demonstration of the life of Christ within. We are not saved by works, but we are to work out this salvation and demonstrate it to others. Someone has said, "Your actions speak so loud I cannot hear what you say." The doings of the Christ emphasized His teachings. There was harmony between the

two. Christ taught mercy, love and compassion, and then wept over His enemies because of His passionate desire for fellowship and companionship with them. His acts of kindness and deeds of mercy called attention to the truths which He taught. Let us unveil the Christ in this world of suffering. We may do this by better and more deeds of mercy and love at home and in foreign lands. We may also do this by feeding the hungry, caring for the orphans, visiting the sick, relieving human suffering, and lifting the unfortunate until the world shall have a clear vision of saving grace through our service.

(2) Notice how beautifully His teachings were illustrated by His doings. His gentle forgiveness was as quick as His teaching. His compassion for His enemies was as tender as His preaching. His touch of love was as pure as His words. The moral character of our deeds illustrates our profession. Shady dealings with our fellowmen cast a shadow over the beautiful Christ who would manifest Himself through us to others.

(3) His earthly ministry was the beginning of His teaching and doing, but now His ONLY method of continuing His teaching and doing is through His Spirit-filled people. The church then is His only medium in reaching the world; His only conductor of spiritual life currents; His body to serve in a world of need; His right arm to relieve suffering; His mouth to voice the message of saving grace. What a grave responsibility rests upon all, that Christ be not hindered in carrying forward His plans in a world of human need. What great opportunities for the manifestation of His divine personality in and through the church for the salvation of men. The history of the Acts of the Apostles is the unveiling of the divine Lord in His "doings" and "teachings" through the early church. This gives us a picture of His earnest desire for greater manifestations of His own presence in the unwritten history of today.

CHAPTER II

THE FATHER'S GOOD PROMISE

But wait for the promise of the Father . . . ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4, 5).

THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS

The appearances of Jesus to His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection were most important, because they established and strengthened the faith of the disciples. They were given unmistakable evidences of His Divinity and Sonship. The most fearing and doubting followers were fully convinced. His own brothers, who had believed Him to be a good and great man yet could not fully accept Him as the divine Messiah, now completely broke down and became His strong supporters.

AFTER HIS PASSION

What a wealth of meaning is wrapped up in that expression. The appropriate anointing with the ointment by Mary with all its tender memories comes freshly to our mind. The gracious words spoken at the last supper and all the sacred memories which cluster around that impressive scene come with such vividness as the company leave the room and go out into the dark. Out through the Temple Courts, then across the Kedron Valley to the Garden where alone he prayed through the evening and midnight hours. "After His Passion." The depths of this passion, with its sweat-drops of blood, who can measure the holy passion which was bursting through His pure being? Here the Son of God put His lips to the bitter cup, and willingly tasted death for every man. Here the battle was fought and the victory gained for a lost and dying world. From the garden He went to the cross without a murmur. The physical suffering with all it means for the redemption of the world was nothing in comparison

with the agony of His pure soul as He suffered "the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." Thank God the price was paid, the offering was made, and our sins were nailed to the cross when He gave Himself for us. "After His passion." This opened up for us the fountain of full salvation and redemption, with all the riches of His grace and glory. Death could not hold Him and He came from the tomb a conqueror over death, hell and the grave. He showed Himself alive by many evident proofs, so convincing that no one among His followers ever doubted His resurrection. He was not a "spirit," a phantom, it was not a vision merely, He showed His hands and His wounded feet, and the opening in His side. He talked and ate with them, and best of all gave them again His words of wisdom and instruction. What wonderful days, what precious hours spent with their risen Lord during the forty days.

Forty day periods have been significant in the Bible. It rained upon the earth in the time of the flood forty days. Moses was in the Mount of God to receive the law forty days. The children of Israel explored the promised land through their spies forty days. When God fed Elijah in the wilderness, he went on the strength of this meal for forty days and nights. Jonah cried, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." After forty days our Lord was presented in the temple; He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of the devil; and before He would return to heaven, He remained with His disciples forty days in which He was confirming their faith.

It is a very significant fact that in about forty years from the crucifixion the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and that before the destruction, the Jews were given forty days in which to repent by Titus, the Roman general. It is also interesting to note that three is said to be the divine number and four the human. Joseph, who was a type of Christ, was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh. Christ was about

thirty years old when He was offered up for the sins of the world, having been sold for thirty pieces of silver. Thirty and forty make seventy, the time set upon the city and its people.

These forty days must have been rich in the unfolding of the sacred Scriptures. The great scheme was the kingdom of God. Christ was ever trying to illustrate truth concerning it. Many of His parables were spoken to illustrate some truth about this great subject. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, is like leaven in three measures of meal, is like a new drag of the net in the sea which gathers of every kind.

There has been much misunderstanding about the kingdom of God, but if we think of it as the reign of God much of the mist will clear away. God's great purpose and plan to raise up a holy people was greatly hindered in ancient Israel. God would have been to them a great King, but they wanted to be like other people and chose Saul. Samuel was disappointed. But God said, "They have not rejected you, they have rejected my rule over them." God wanted a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The people wanted the earthly pomp and show of spectacular royalty. David was more after God's own heart, and cared more for the will and plans of God than other things. David's "greater son" came to reveal the Divine will and bring men into harmony with the will and plans of the Father.

God's kingdom is present and also has a glorious future. His reign begins now in the hearts and lives of those who will accept His rule over them. The kingdom is given to those who will bring forth the fruits of the kingdom. It is proper for us to pray, "Thy kingdom come," for this prayer is being answered in the sanctification of believers and will be fully completed when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord in the glorious triumph of His second coming.

Thus, we may see how all truth must cluster around this

common center, the kingdom of God. The kingdom is both spiritual and realistic, and will become fully established by the reign of Jesus Christ, for He shall reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

In our vision, we may gather with this company of earnest believers around their risen Lord. He is the same great personality. They all know Him now. He was humiliated in death, but He is alive again, and alive forever more. He now unfolds to them mysteries of the kingdom. How eagerly they watch and catch every word that falls from His lips. Peter is there, having been restored in sacred fellowship. John, the beloved disciple, is all aglow with expectancy. Thomas no longer doubts, and his brothers are in full sympathy. James, Andrew, and the rest are all eager to hear His words. His last message they will never forget.

The command was not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait. This doubtless seemed hard to do. Jerusalem, the place they most feared, was the very city they had urged the Lord not to enter just a few weeks before. How they remembered the persecution and trial of those days, and it was right here where they all had so many enemies. It was here where they all had failed, and one of their number had smote a servant of the high priest, and then denied his Lord. Here they must meet the chief priests and elders of the people. Why could they not have gone to some more secluded place, like Galilee, and tested out this blessing before facing such great difficulties? Must they be called again to face Christ's haters? The fact is that God calls us to face the hardest things. He very often calls us to face the very hardest things in the home, in business, in society and in the humdrum of life. We must feel,

*“Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;*

*Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee."*

The disciples had much to tell. Think what they had seen of His life, His miracles, and His discourses. They had been near during the trial, crucifixion, and burial. They had visited and seen the empty grave. They had also talked with Him face to face after His resurrection. O how they could have talked about all these great things. But no! They must wait, tarry—until. To wait is often the hardest part of all, and yet the most important. God never teases His children as the cat does a mouse, but there is a reason for it all. He wants to develop great faith, courage, and strength in His people. He would strengthen desire until it becomes determination, and intensify determination until it becomes an all-consuming passion which will never be satisfied without the complete realization of its objective.

THE FATHER'S PROMISE

This was nothing new. They must have known about it. Because it was the long cherished hope of Israel that the Messiah would come and bless them with a new spirit, and that refreshings would fall upon them like the gentle dews. This hope was found by the writers of the Old Testament who revealed the promise of the Father. "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you" (Prov. 1:23). "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest" (Isa. 32:15). "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Isa. 44:3). "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land" (Ezek. 36:25, 26, 27). What a promise. "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, and 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). In this connection we shall see how that God promised great things for His people. He asked them to rejoice, for He will give them the former and latter rain in abundance, and restore the years that the canker worm hath wasted, causing them to eat with satisfaction.

God's Spirit has been the great potent force since the beginning of human history. By His Spirit He garnished the heavens. The Spirit brooded over the waters and from chaos brought order, beauty, and glorious harmony. It was the Spirit who was striving with the hearts of men in the days of Noah while the ark was made ready. The Spirit of God possessed the men who built the temple in the wilderness.

The Spirit was put upon the elders by Moses. In some way two did not get among the crowd and the Spirit fell upon them in the camp and they began to preach. Some wanted Moses to stop them, but he seemed to like the idea and said he only wished the whole camp would get the same thing and become prophets. Elisha wanted the double-portion of the Spirit. David prayed, "Uphold me with thy free spirit and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." The Spirit gave Daniel an excellent spirit; (the little girl said, "an excellent spine," the great requirement of all the ages, and when a man has the Spirit he gets an excellent spine). The prophet remarked, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the

Lord." The Holy Ghost moved upon the writers as they wrote the Scripture.

The Father's promise was the very same thing as had been sent forth to them by the Lord, "Which," said He, "ye have heard of me." His teaching is clearly stated in John 14 and 15, in the promise of another Comforter.

The promise was spiritual, not material. John's water baptism is contrasted with Christ's baptism: "John truly, really, baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The promise was clearly associated with the Pentecost. They were assured that the promise would be fulfilled "not many days hence." And there could be no misunderstanding at this point for the word, "THE" made it very plain and explicit. It was not merely "A" promise. Some one has said that there are 40,000 promises, and this may be true, but THIS promise is THE promise of the Father. It overshadows all others and largely includes them, and also opens the way to enjoy them all in their fullness.

This is the peculiar New Testament blessing. The atonement laid the foundation and purchased our redemption, but the Holy Spirit is and has been the active agent and efficient cause in the work of redemption.

This promise of the Father is the very foundation of the success of the New Testament or Covenant in Jesus Christ. The covenant which God made with Abraham included our being "delivered out of the hand of our enemies unto service toward him in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life" (Luke 1:73-75). The Abrahamic covenant foreshadowed the new covenant in Jesus Christ. Paul represents the Old Testament or Covenant under Moses, as that of bondage; but the new covenant in Christ as one of freedom. The old covenant was faulty for it was based on the promise of the people to be a holy nation. This promise was broken when they worshiped the golden calf, hence, the covenant was broken.

This made it consistent for Moses to break the two tables of stone. Again, the old covenant was faulty because it did not carry power with it to enable its worshipers to be true and keep the law. Therefore, the new covenant in Christ is based on a new line of promises, THE PROMISE of the Father. The more excellent ministry of Christ is, therefore, established upon better promises. "By how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6).

The old covenant was established on the people's promise, but the new covenant was established on better promises, namely, the Father's promise to give His Spirit to enable anxious hearts to keep His laws. "I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to keep my statutes and judgments." Christ had explained this to them in the promised Comforter, by stating that the Holy Spirit would guide and teach them in the way. Hence, there should be no fear on the part of any one that they cannot live wholly unto God, for the Holy Spirit has been given to impart ability. This new covenant or testament is now in force. The promise of the Father becomes the inheritance of His believing children. Claim your inheritance, my friend.

THE FULFILLING OF THE PROMISE ASSURED

The importance of the fulfillment of this promise in the gift of the Holy Spirit cannot be over-estimated. His presence is like the mariner's compass to guide the believer over stormy seas. His presence is like the oil in the lamp to give light and inspiration in the midst of human darkness. His presence is like the gentle rain to give fresh life and beauty. His presence is like the strengthening life to the body making the church an active force to carry forward the work. His presence is like the shock of the electric current over the wire making the believer a living carrier of holy zeal. His presence is like the blazing flame which changes elements, enabling the man of

faith to conquer other forces and use them as means of power for larger endeavors.

Christ had told them that it was imperative that they should receive the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. For his presence was needful in conviction for sin, and to make possible the new birth. The deeper work of cleansing was also to be wrought through this message of the promised Spirit, according to John 15:3. The unction of a holy life depends upon his coming to abide. No wonder the disciples depended upon the Spirit's presence in prayer and making decisions.

That there should be no mistake, our Lord clearly associated the promise with the previous declaration of John. Some of those disciples, if not all, had heard the words of John the Baptist. "I indeed baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." Now our Lord would seemingly say, "You have not been deceived at all. I know John made this promise to you. John's baptism was all right; it was a true baptism unto repentance. And His promise to you of a baptism with the Holy Spirit will be fulfilled in a few days. Wait, tarry, do not leave Jerusalem. The promised blessing will come in due time."

Remember, our Lord did not say how long, but "until." For us this, "until," must cover the length of time necessary for us to be assured that the Spirit has come. Since the promise was fulfilled for these believers, we may expect no delay when all the conditions are met. And this word "until" may not be a very long time, but rather hasten the precious moment of his presence.

This word "wait" may have a perplexing sound in our age of hurry, and yet it CARRIES a meaning of deep interest. Waiting should develop right attitudes. The word "tarry" must surely be associated with the meaning so often given to it in the life of our Lord. He tarried on the mountain side and

continued all night in prayer. He commanded His disciples in the garden to watch and pray, and as He left them to go farther on His night of passion, He said, "Tarry ye here and watch." Surely His idea of those days of waiting for the promised Comforter were not to be idle days of careless curiosity, but rather filled with prayer and worship.

Thus, the risen Lord gave courage to their faith. He must have opened their understanding and enabled them to grasp the spiritual mysteries which had surrounded His earthly life. Now they have a better understanding of their Scriptures, and they are able to make proper applications of the prophecies. Now they understand why He must go to the Father. How they must have clung to that "promise" of the Father. In confidence they will wait. This gracious promise was not only for those immediate disciples, but is made to all believers. The Father's promise was the same as His baptism promised by John. But His baptism with the Holy Spirit was what Christ pointed to when He said, "I will send the promise of my Father unto you." This expression "the Father's promise" gave comfort and assurance.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) The believer has a just claim on heaven. "God had promised." He cannot lie. The world swings on that word "promise." Nearly all business is done on "I promise to pay." Society hangs together by great laws which govern our general promise to stand each for the all and all for each other. The home is bound together by the word "promise." God will not lie, and He invites us to prove Him (Heb. 6:18).

(2) The promise brings satisfaction. There is a bond between God and His believer which cannot be broken on earth or in heaven. If it is not fulfilled, we must bear the responsibility ourselves, for we have neglected to use the inheritance which is rightfully ours. To illustrate: There was a dear old lady

who was living in great poverty. A sister from the church was sent to investigate the situation. On questioning this elderly lady, she was able to find out that there was one son whom she had not seen in years. The good sister asked, "Does your son ever send you anything?" The old lady said, "No, he never sends anything only a few nice pictures every year." These she had very carefully kept in the old family Bible. On investigation, lo and behold, they were all good sized bank notes. Rich and did not know it. Here we are rich in heavenly promises of life, liberty, and power. Let us not live in poverty but heed the Master's instructions.

(3) The promise is all overflowing. God says, "I will pour my Spirit upon you." There is a sufficient supply. What would it mean to have the windows of heaven open? If the windows in heaven are in proportion to the size of the windows in our home, it would not take many to supply our needs, and demonstrate that we could not find room to receive it. It is the overflow so greatly needed today. Let us not be satisfied with just a little blessing, but rather tarry for the fullness.

(4) The promise is all-inclusive. All believers are included. The Spirit is promised unto "son and daughter," and unto all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call. It is suited to all walks of life. The business man, the farmer, the banker, the toiler, and the street-sweeper may be helped. How beautifully it fits into home life, and makes the heart glad in the humdrum and drudgery of the commonplace things in every day occurrences.

How blessed that our Lord did not go back to His Father until He had again urged upon his followers the need of the Spirit's presence in all their gospel efforts. The good news, the gospel of another Comforter, opens up a New Age for the church. Happy the believer who tarries for his coming and receives the promised power.

CHAPTER III

THE PROMISE OF POWER FROM ON HIGH

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

This statement was a reply to a question asked by the disciples, “Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” This seemed to have been much in their minds at this time. Christ was about to leave them and the question was a very natural one for them under the circumstances.

It seems to me that this question has been much misunderstood and the disciples have been wrongly judged by their friends. There is nothing said about a carnal kingdom or a material kingdom such as they had under the good reign of David or Solomon. The kingdom of God is “the reign of God,” and is always spiritual for God is a spirit and must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. Christ had been talking to them for three years about the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God, and had devoted much time and effort during the forty days after His resurrection to this subject. To have the disciples still misunderstanding the teaching of our Lord is simply to misunderstand these men. Evidently, there had been nothing said in the teaching of Christ which would seem to indicate that the old prophecies were not to be fulfilled concerning Israel, or that they should have some allegorical interpretation. God’s Israel will have a kingdom and all prophecy will have a fulfillment, not one jot or tittle shall ever fail.

The statement, “at this time,” would imply also that some encouragement had been given, and Israel would see the light, and at some future time God’s reign would be manifest to Israel.

We must not forget that the disciples of Jesus represented the spiritual element among the Jewish people. They were a deeply devoted people who waited for the consolation of Israel. These looked for the fulfillment of the covenant made to Abraham, with the accompanying promises which embraced a deliverance from the hand of the enemy, and would also enable them to serve God in the beauty of holiness all the days of their lives. They were looking for a reign of righteousness. Will there ever be a reign of righteousness in this world? Will iniquity always be in the ascendancy? Will the reign of righteousness begin with the fulfillment of the Father's promise? When will God's reign be established over all? How wise the answer, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own hand." If the time should have been mentioned, it would have proven destructive to the spirit of evangelism which must fill this new Age. The church does not need knowledge of time and seasons. What she does need is power to carry forward the message of salvation; she needs the power of holy passion to win a lost world to God.

The reply of Christ, "Not for you to know the times and the seasons," would also imply a partial approval that at some time their question would be appropriate and the promises and the prophecies would have a fulfillment. However, the blessing of power must come in the immediate future, and this was the important question just then.

The statement of the angels concerning the real, visible, and personal return of this same Jesus confirmed their expectancy that Christ was a divine King. This announcement also gave them the assurance that Christ would take the throne of David, and reign over the house of Jacob according to the promise made to Mary at Christ's birth.

They could not have been very greatly disappointed for they immediately "returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

They never lost that expectancy. They wrote about it, sang about it, shouted over it in the midst of their persecution and trial, and declared that God had special rewards for all who would love Christ's most glorious appearing.

They saw clearly that the most important thing until that most blessed day was to tarry in Jerusalem until they should receive the mighty Holy Ghost upon them. As soon as the first tremor of Christ's departure had subsided, they made great haste to the upper room where they were to wait until they had received power from on high.

They made great haste returning to Jerusalem that nothing should stand between them and the manifestation of this power. Christ had gone from them, now they must have the fullness of the blessing. There was much to be done, and they would no longer gaze after Him, but with full purpose they would wait until the Father's promise was fulfilled.

Oh, if the Church would be thus anxious for power from on high what might be accomplished in these days. Had the church insisted that her ministry be thus endowed with power, what a difference in our modern church life.

THE PROMISED POWER

(1) What is this power so clearly mentioned in the text? There has always been in the heart of man an unbounded thirst for power. He planned the great tower of Babel in his attempt to ascend to heaven. He has built great political towers at enormous cost so that he might overlook all his inferiors. Man has not counted it a sacrifice to gain some position in society where he might possess unlimited power. Man's thirst for power has inspired his genius until he has blasted rocks unshaken by the ages, and found his way into the centers of the earth, to discover hidden treasures secreted there by the Almighty from creation's dawn. He has harnessed the forces

of nature that make for power, bridged the rivers, and tunnelled the mountains to make a way for his chariots of iron and steel that skirt our country like a spider's web. He has found a way to stretch wires on which he sends his electric messages from pole to pole, and has so annihilated distances that his voice can be distinctly heard in the ear of his familiar friend across the broad continent. He has so extracted electric juice from the atmosphere as to furnish energy for his chariots which he runs in the streets. From his genius now sparkles flames of fire which have almost transformed our night to day and made our cities beautiful in their dazzling splendor.

Force is not power. There may be great forces with only a gush. Power is force well directed. The great powers of nature have in themselves forces directed by laws which govern them.

What is power? Ask the sunbeam that flashes through the air and strikes the disease germ to its death and brightens human life on its errand of mercy; ask the dew drop that sparkles in the sunlight refreshing the withered leaf; ask the lightning that shoots across yonder sky and sends its death dealing arrow to our earth; ask the magnet in the iron works which grapples with great locomotives and lifts them from their foundations and swings them through the air like a toy; ask that great giant of all powers, steam, as it pushes the driving rod which turns the wheels of our industries; ask that strange mysterious element we call fire with its metamorphic powers changing the soft chalky limestone into our beautiful granite. But none of these mighty forces can give us the answer. It is not the cannon ball flying through the air with its death dealing blow, or the lion that stands king of beasts; not the raging sea that lifts great ocean liners on its angry bosom and throws them into its deep basin; not the wild tempest nor cyclone that sweeps everything in its mad rush

of destruction. These cannot answer the question. Even death with its cold hand that chills everything it touches and conquers the strong as well as the weak, can tell us of this mysterious thing called power. "Once hath God spoken, yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." The answer evolves when we recognize that back of every moving thing, back of all energy or force is the Almighty. Man after all is weak and soon falls to the ground helpless, but the promise comes from the lips of our Lord like gentle zephyrs to cool our anxious fear, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

(1) This is something more than physical power. They had seen great manifestations of physical power in the healing of the sick, in stilling the storms, in walking upon the rolling waves, in feeding the thousands. But the promise was that they should have power.

(2) This is something more than logic. Argument will not do the work, it may convince, but a man that can be argued into a thing can be argued out of it as well. It is like sheet lightning that flashes for a little but never does any executing or strikes to kill.

(3) This is something more than eloquence. Eloquence is mighty and burns its way into many a cold heart and prepares the way for truth, but it will not do the desired work. It is like the electric current placed to the man's feet in cold death. It will cause him to move and quiver but when taken away he falls back just as cold in death.

(4) It is something more than influence. We trust to our standing and position in society, and feel sure that we have power but nothing happens in our midst. The apostles had no standing in popular society, no influence in the upper circles of the Jews, not even enough money to pay their personal taxes or to keep them out of jail. But they moved the world and

swept on in spite of church councils and the judgments of chief priests and elders. The Irishman in Rome was looking through St. Peter's Cathedral and was told by one of the monks, "The Church could not say today 'Silver and gold have I none'." "No," said the Irish wit, "neither can she say, 'Rise and walk'."

WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY? WHAT IS THIS POWER?

"Ah," said one, "we are going to destroy the wall around this city." "And what with?" asked the other. Then he rolled along a great cannon ball and the latter remarked, "But that can lie there for ages and do no damage." "Ah, but look at this cannon." "Yes, but the bird sings in its mouth in perfect safety." "Notice this sack of powder." "But the birds pick it up with no trouble at all." "Wait, we will put this powder into the cannon, and then roll in the ball." "But yet everything was as still as death." Finally the fuse was touched with a little flash of FIRE and the story was only told by the result.

That indescribable, unexplainable, something which comes from heaven and touches the human spirit—power. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The abiding presence of the Holy Ghost is the power. When he arrives he brings the furniture of heaven with him. We must not forget that the baptism with the Holy Ghost is not merely for service but is an experience as well. The primary purpose in this power is for heart cleansing. The proof of this fact may be stated briefly:

(1) The symbol of fire is used in the promise and in its fulfillment. John the Baptist said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire," and when the promise came "cloven tongues of fire came also." Fire for cleansing.

(2) In Acts 15, Peter explains this baptism by saying that Cornelius had the very same blessing as God gave them on the day of Pentecost, "And put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith." Hence, heart purity was the real thing received when the Holy Ghost came with power.

(3) The post-Pentecostal experience of the apostles showed that they were purified after receiving this blessing. Their self-seeking changed to self-sacrificing. Peter's fear to courage. Their doubts were changed to mighty faith in God.

(4) The Old Testament promises indicate cleansing. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my ways." A purging, a cleansing, and a causing to walk in holy ways.

THIS IS POWER FOR HOLY LIVING

The Greek word for power is "dunamis" from which we get our word "dynamite." We know something about dynamite. It is explosive; it is mighty in force. It breaks up from beneath, it blows off the top, and it tears down the sides. It brings something to pass. It is positive and aggressive. Christ says, "Ye shall receive dynamite, the Holy Ghost having come upon you." This Greek word is said to have several meanings.

(1) It is used for strength. And so Paul put it this way, "Strengthened [dynamited] by his spirit in the inner man." "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." "My strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my weakness that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

If this heavenly dynamite is within us we have no weakness, we are all strength. Forget your weakness and make no provisions for the flesh to fulfill the lusts, but rather that the

power of Christ may rest upon you. We should be ashamed of our weakness with this provision of strength.

(2) It is used for ability. His enablement. Sometimes used for omnipotence, that is, God's power and ability. "He is able to make all grace abound unto you." Paul declared, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Also, "He is able to save us unto the uttermost." On our part, he will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, or dynamited. Paul said in 1 Cor. 3, that these people were carnal, and fed on milk for they were not able, and added "neither yet are ye able." They were not dynamited. It takes Holy Ghost dynamite to blow out the old man of sin and carnality. We are taught to put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to withstand the powers of darkness. The apostle declares that he is able or can do all things through Christ who gives him the strength. This holy or divine enablement is what is needed today.

(3) It is sometimes used for value, worth, or virtue. In Greek usage, for the side of a square. That is, the man who has this blessing is a right angle, four-square. He is not a hexagon (a hatingon); or an obtuse, (obtruing) angle; or an acute angle, but a regular right angle. On the square, given the sum total, the root can be found. This Greek word is also translated "virtue." For instance in Mark 5:30, the woman touched him and was healed; and in Luke 6:19 the throng pressed about him, (the same word is used for "virtue" went from him) and he healed them all. There was worth, value and real virtue within His very being. He promised this dynamite, this spiritual worth-value, to His people. "Ye shall be dynamited with the Holy Ghost." No counterfeit coin will ever pass in the spiritual realm. What is needed is inward worth, character, holy manhood.

(4) The strong word "endurance" seems to be implied. This Greek word is used for mighty, and mightily. But it denotes action present and continuous. It is not only dynamite but dynamo, that grace which starts a man going and keeps him going. It reminds us of the statement in the Psalms, "Thou hast established my goings." This is continuous or perpetual motion. "We are strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." That is endurance in completeness.

(5) This word is clearly used for authority. In Acts 8:27, where the Ethiopian nobleman, to whom Philip expounded the word, is said to be a man of great authority, the same root word is used. And in Tim. 6:15, it is used where our Lord is called the only Potentate, King of kings. It is this blessing which makes the church kings and priests unto God. With this holy dynamite from heaven one speaks with authority, and reigns over the baser elements of his nature as a king and potentate. This takes out the guess-so, and try-so, and think-so, and puts in the know-so.

(6) It is said that this same word is used in an army sense for a great force—a Host.

How shall one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight? We have the answer here in this text; dynamited, he becomes a host.

This is the power of a pure life. A life in holy triumph. A life overcoming trials. A life filled with heavenly sweetness and overflowing joy. A life so filled with God's dynamite that it becomes a mighty force in the world. A life blasting sin and evil, shaking the very foundations of the pit, tearing down the broad-sides of opposition and scattering the powers of darkness.

(7) Its manifestations may be summed up in one word—"WITNESS." "And ye shall be witnesses unto me." A witness

is one who has been and heard and felt things. "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Have we seen or heard anything? If we have not, how can we become a good witness?

The case of any man in court depends on his witnesses. Christ is on trial in this world. We are to witness unto Him. How do I testify unto Christ in the home, in business, and in society. Do my acts and words give strength to His case or do they weaken His possibilities of winning the points at issue? Does my life perjure and contradict my testimony in church? How do I represent Him in trial, in sorrow, and under great pressure? Am I patient, sweet, brave, and hopeful?

The power we need today is power to live a pure life in the midst of unhappy conditions. We need power to stand for righteousness and maintain Christlike sweetness of disposition. We need the power of a radiant sunshine of joy to carry into homes of sorrow filled with broken hearts. We need the power of patience and longsuffering in the trials and humdrum of life. We need the power of silence and a holy calm in the midst of criticism, rebuke, and disappointment. We need the power which courage and faith impart, that the church may move out into larger opportunities so often offered in these days of changing conditions.

While we would not discount power to heal the sick or raise the dead or speak in new languages, yet to bring the world to Christ in this day, the church must be dynamited with a spiritual power which is able to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. The church must be enabled with a holy passion of evangelism which cannot be conquered by cold forms of religious worship or turned from her task by modern tides of worldliness.

THERE ARE CONDITIONS TO MAINTAIN THIS POWER

We cannot go everywhere and go anywhere, do and say as we will. We know if we are to have the benefits of the electric current we must be very careful to observe the laws which govern in the realm of electricity. It is the same with this great blessing promised by our Lord.

To illustrate: Here is a man into whom they tell us great electric forces are to be poured. I notice as they place him in the chair they are very careful to place the legs on glass feet which completely isolate him from the earth. Then I notice they are careful to take all rubber clothing and insulate him or expose him to the current. Now they say the power is being poured in, but I can see nothing or hear nothing. But you put it to a test, and you are shocked. Yes, that is it. He looks about the same but when you touch him there is a great difference. So it is with the holy life. Come in touch with holy men and there is a great difference. But I am interested in two facts: (1) There must be isolation, separation from things earthly; and (2) there must be insulation, exposure to the divine currents. Neither one alone is enough, but taken together and simultaneously they bring the heavenly currents of holy power to human hearts. "The Holy Ghost having come upon him," they were insulated.

At Willets Point, N. Y., there is a huge magnet made of a great cannon, wound with ten miles of copper wire. When the electric current comes on, it becomes a huge magnet. A man placed in front of it draws everything to himself. Throw iron or steel and it flies to reach him. But it is not the man at all; it is the magnet behind him which works through him. So in spiritual life, the mighty Holy Ghost in us becomes the power and draws everything to Jesus Christ.

The fabled giant Antæus was a mighty man and could not be conquered. When he would fall to the earth, his native

habitation, he would revive and become as strong as ever. Hercules, it is said, discovered the secret of his strength and lifted him in midair and crushed him to death. Ah, that is what the enemy has been trying on so many people. Draw them away from the source of their power and then slay them at will. A soul with the dynamite of heaven within him becomes an invincible host always conquering, and never conquered. Separated from divine forces he becomes like other men. Let us then learn the holy secret of a holy life in God.

If we could only see and understand the laws which govern in the spiritual world, and knew how to press the button of power. Then, we could turn on the lights into the dark chasms of earth's disappointments, and through the darkest ravines of human discouragements, and into the gloomy caverns of iniquity. Then, we could take the water of human weakness and transmute it into holy steam which would send our young men and women with engine-like swiftness to the four corners of the earth proclaiming this glorious message. Then, we could transform the friction of our everyday life into electric sparks which would run the machinery of our churches, schools and missions. "*Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*"

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH MAKING READY

Wait for the promise of the Father. And they returned to Jerusalem. And continued with one accord in prayer and supplication (Acts 1:4, 12, and 14).

These days of waiting were days of preparation. Such waiting days could not be a period of idle curiosity. They may not have known the exact moment when the promise would be fulfilled, but there was surely a constant expectancy. Their departed Lord had given them an example of waiting, tarrying, for He had often continued in prayer all night. They could not and, thank God, they did not, misunderstand His meaning. They returned to Jerusalem with joyful expectancy, and continued in prayer.

Before taking up the direct question of preparatory conditions needful to receive the promised power, it will be well for us to note a few facts to which all should agree.

SELF-EVIDENT FACTS CONCERNING THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

(1) A full and sufficient atonement had been made for sin in the death of Christ and sealed in His resurrection. This was surely comprehended in the statement of Luke "after his passion," which was a complete expression covering His sufferings and death. The way was now opened for forgiveness and redemption, and all may come to God through Jesus Christ on the ground of simple faith. Here we also have full redemption from all sin, for in that he suffered, he suffered without the gate that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.

(2) Christ Jesus really ascended to heaven and has been

glorified at the right hand of the Father. He was not a myth while on earth, nor did He evaporate when He parted from the disciples. "He was taken up," but not out of the universe. He entered into the holiest of all with His own blood perfecting our redemption. He was received up into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There glorified at the right hand of God, He prayed that the other Comforter should be given to believers.

(3) That the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the promised baptism with the Holy Spirit, was the crowning New Testament experience and blessing. It was the coming of this "another Comforter," which made his departure through suffering and death so expedient and imperative. The distinguishing feature of the blessed ministry of our Lord so clearly made known by His forerunner, John the Baptist, who stated, "He that cometh after [the Christ] shall baptize you [believers] with the Holy Ghost."

(4) These were the last days. The promise said that, it should come to pass in the last days. Peter claimed that it was fulfilled, hence, these were the last days. "In these last days God hath spoken unto us by His Son." Therefore, the promise is unto us, we who are in the last days. We should have no fear of claiming the promise as ours.

(5) According to the promise, these days should be noted and marked with gracious manifestations of Divine presence. Because we have such promises as: "I will come and walk in them"; "I will manifest myself unto you"; "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." The early church counted on the presence of Christ, and were filled with the precious awareness that the Lord was present and working with them. The Lord Jesus was ever present through the Holy Spirit directing every battle.

(6) There should be a constant study among believers in the art of true spiritual manifestations. How can we best represent Christ? How can we make His power known among the people? As a holy nation and a royal priesthood, we should "show forth his praises." There are three steps, namely, believe, receive, and then demonstrate.

If all these facts are self-evident then the questions arise at once: Why not more frequent outpourings of the divine Spirit? Why not more and greater tides of revival fires in our midst? Why such spiritual deadness? Why such cold forms of worship? Why not more manifestations as on the day of Pentecost?

HINDRANCES TO THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

(1) We are in the midst of a mechanical and busy age. The rattle and roar of machinery seem to have deadened the sense of spiritual hearing. The world is full of rush and hurry to get there. Our attention is preoccupied with our own whims and, thus, many have not time to wait or tarry. Time is taken up with business meetings, the working out of human plans, committee work, lodges, societies, clubs, and what not, until God seems crowded out of church activities. We do not need less activities, but we do need empowered activities with a deep spiritual motive. If we can get still and quiet enough in the presence of our Lord, it will greatly help us in this troubled time of hurry and worry.

(2) Then we have a strange and subtle tide of worldliness. Worldly ideals and worldly pleasure both have a firm grip on the hearts of many. The prayer room has been deserted. Worldly topics instead of the simple gospel is more largely discussed in the pulpits. The very air seems loaded with the opiate of worldliness. Once the line of separation from the world was well defined, but now it is more difficult

to determine what the spirit of the world is. The radio has brought jazz, vaudeville, and foolish jokes into the parlors of our Christian homes, and these have a strong tendency to destroy a spiritual sense of eternal values. Thus, it is difficult to attract the attention of many to anything like serious questions of eternal matters. Worldly methods and ideals have so captured the church, that there are no well defined marks which indicate pride in dress, hence, we have much carelessness on the part of some who even profess better things. All this becomes a great hindrance in advanced spiritual understanding.

(3) There seems no real hunger and thirst after God on the part of many professed believers. Hunger and thirst after righteousness are given as one of the natural attitudes of believers in the Beatitudes. Yes, it is hard to awaken interest in soul needs today. This self-satisfied condition on the part of many is one of the signs of the times. Any marked urgency, on the part of the ministry, unto a deeper experience is often regarded as fault-finding. Nevertheless, every effort must be put forth to awaken the believer unto a better state of grace. Let the ministry of Christ do their best by the example of devotion and impassioned preaching of the Word, accompanied with unctuous praying. Amid tears and soul burden, let the ministry make clear the urgency of a holy life through the baptism with the Holy Ghost which cleanses the heart by sanctifying grace. We should not become discouraged even in these careless days. However, here is a great problem.

(4) There have been powers of deception, counterfeit manifestations, fads and fancies, and extreme emotionalism which have done much to draw the attention of the people away from the real issue. For instance, the baptism of fire, the third experience, a deeper death; physical demonstrations of various kinds, such as speaking in some unknown tongue, shakes and jerks, and things that never shake, have had their

part. Thus, many are wondering what will be next. We do not speak to criticize any manifestation of the Spirit, but physical manifestation must not be substituted for spiritual power. In this general mixture of voices and claims, we have a great hindrance in leading believers into the real experience of heart holiness. They seem fearful to make a complete consecration for fear that they may be called to do some strange thing. Here is the draw back, and failure to go on into the true experience.

(5) We are greatly hindered by much superficial work at the altar and by faulty evangelism. Workers are not properly instructed in the art of leading others into the experience. Many have been urged to profess before they strike the bed-rock of full consecration, and have, thus, been trying to hold on to the ragged end of nothing. Popular evangelism directed by the ideal of recording numbers, but with no burden for praying the seekers through to victory has also proven a hindrance. This superficial work only leads to discourage seekers, and causes a church to be filled with critics who have lost their desire for and faith in the blessing.

(6) I must not leave this list of hindrances without mentioning the increased desire for popularity. Naturally, to be well thought of in society is desirable. However, this desire can very easily move some to forget standards and cater to worldly ideals that result in a loss and hindrance of the work. We will do well to remember that Christ and His ideals were not popular, and holiness of heart will never be the popular ideal of the world.

We must get beyond the hindrances of whatever type they may be. We must meet the needful conditions and have the proper attitudes which open the way and lay foundations for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

PREPARATION FOR THE SPIRIT

After His departure from their sight, is it any wonder they stood looking in astonishment? It was altogether out of harmony with natural law. It was so supernatural that they must have wondered what next may happen. The word of the angel gave them comfort in these words, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner." Then with joy they returned from the Mount of Olives. It was about one week until Pentecost and the upper room offered the desired opportunity for the needed adjustment of a new beginning. Let us note a few of the statements in the record.

(1) They left the Mount of Olives. It was hard at first to do, but they had to leave this wonderful scene. "Why stand ye gazing?" It is often hard to get away from past experience, especially if they are marked with unusual favor. Some of our worship is still filled with gazing on past blessing and special favors. When the shepherds were told of the coming Savior, they wondered. When Christ spoke, the people wondered at the gracious words. When Christ was raised from the dead, the disciples wondered. But now they left the Mount with a new vision of greater and better things. The experiences of the past were not forgotten, but only used as stepping stones for something more glorious. They must make a new start for the new promised experience. So with everyone of us. If the soul is to have more, there can be no resting in the past experiences, but there must be a going on.

(2) There was a manifested confidence in their risen Lord and Master. This was manifested in their question, "Wilt thou . . . restore the kingdom of Israel?" His resurrection was now a fact. He was alive again, and was their divine Lord. They had been passing through a test of their faith. Now the dark clouds had vanished. They had been "begotten again" unto a lively hope, and now they knew that Israel would

be redeemed. They were sure that their risen Lord now had the power. The only question remaining was that related to the time. The power was His, but, "Wilt thou at *this time* restore the kingdom?" The time question must be left in the hands of the Father. We can never dictate the time regarding present or future favors, but perfect confidence in God is of great value in receiving the fullness of the promise.

(3) They returned to Jerusalem, and obeyed the command, "Tarry in Jerusalem." There may have been other good places for the waiting, but perfect obedience was most important. It might have been hard for them to face their critics and begin where the opposition was the most severe, but they were determined to obey the commandment, and follow directions. We recall how obedience was stamped upon their heart, and reflected in their own words, "He giveth the Holy Ghost to them that obey him." The heart must swing into obedience to all the will of God, if we are to enjoy the sweet presence of the Spirit's power.

I have prayed earnestly and long for a preacher friend who was seeking the promised fullness. How anxious he was that the mighty baptism should come while at the convention, before he should return to his church. But, no, the fullness did not come. In confidence and obedience he entered his pulpit Sunday morning, and opened the Scriptures to his people and told them his earnest expectation and hope. When suddenly, the heavens opened and before them all, he was filled with the Holy Ghost. This broke the spell and soon one-half of his congregation were on their faces before God in earnest prayer, seeking for the fullness of the Spirit. Obedience is much better than sacrifice. Humble obedience is vital in seeking or waiting for the promise.

(4) They returned to the upper room where abode the disciples. This may seem incidental but a love for the house

of God, and a desire to meet with those of like precious faith will count for something. A love for the prayermeeting is a fair test of our loyalty of Christ. Generally, the Holy Spirit is given to those who have prayed and are praying. Usually it is the prayermeeting crowd who first find the promised fullness of the Holy Ghost. Careless and indifferent seekers, and those who are at ease in Zion, never receive much blessing from heaven.

(5) They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There was a joyousness in their worship while seeking and waiting. The heart will find greater victory while praising God for the past favors, than in complaining to God. Prayer with thanksgiving is more effectual. They continued in prayer and supplication. That word "supplication" carries with it a deep and important meaning. It is the old English word used in presenting a petition properly signed before the king. In other words, they supplicated the throne. They gave reasons.

(6) They chose a disciple to take the place of Judas among the twelve. That there should be no hindrances in these waiting days, it seemed wise that some move should be made to fill up the age in the broken number of twelve. Judas had fallen. This was sad, but true. Their confidence remained unshaken. They would even here find comfort in the Scriptures and their fulfillment. However, steps were taken to meet the issue caused by the failure of one of their number. Some have thought they made a mistake in the choice of Matthias, and they may have been premature in making this selection. Yet it is a lesson to some to know that order can be no hindrance in seeking God. In fact, it would be well for some to properly make adjustment even in their order of business. The Holy Spirit seems to admire order and system, thus, we judge he would be pleased with sufficient organization to do his best work in the church.

(7) They were all of one accord in one place. Unity is the earthly law of this heavenly blessing. Here is where we break down. Oh, that we might discover this lost chord in the heavenly music. (1) Unity of prayer, purpose; unity of desires and plans. (2) Deep charity for one another; criticism all gone. (3) Absence of rivalry; no one was now seeking the best place. (4) Selfishness all crucified. Oh, for more ointment for the Master's head. (5) No spirit of retaliation; gone forever. Peter had the same place as before. (6) Sweetest of fellowship. They were with the women and his brethren who were now in line with believers. (7) This all means blessed harmony of spirit. Just like the well-tuned instrument. The flats and sharps all gone, and taken out of the natural keys and put in just where they belong. *Oh, this heavenly accord, how much it means.*

(8) There were three important attitudes in their "wait."
(1) Wait "until"; this bespoke determination. If the enemy can place a question mark in the attitude, or make one feel that if the blessing or fullness does not come at once it won't matter much, he has placed a stumbling stone in the way of victory. There must be a strong determination to tarry "until."
(2) The attitude of perfect submission was maintained. There can be no dictation of terms to God. There should be such perfect submission that even our choice is consumed in His sweet and perfect will. (3) There was a true faith and expectancy, stepping forth gladly on the promise of God. Walking out on His Word when sight or feeling fail; simple trust in God's provision, willingness, and ability to fill *now*. Here no collateral evidences are demanded, but a sweet relaxation of the heart in the fact that God is true. When the heart lays itself out on the altar of God, binds the sacrifices with the cords of love to the living Lord, as sure as God's Word is true, there is sure to be fulfillment of the promise. God hath promised; He

cannot lie. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:17-19).

With these blessed relationships and attitudes the disciples received the fulfillment of the promised Comforter. Here, also, may every believing trusting heart receive the promised fullness.

CHAPTER V

THE DAWN OF THE NEW AGE

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1 and 2).

The day of all the days of their waiting had arrived. Everything had been given proper attention, and everyone of the 120 was ready. Their hearts were like a well-tuned instrument, able to respond to the touch of the heavenly musician and to send forth beautiful chords of harmony. None were saying that they had lost confidence in any of the brethren, for they were all of one accord while in the one place. None were questioning the honesty of another, or judging another, for they were all of one accord. In fact, they were not looking after their brother's case at all, but were much concerned about their own. Peter had at one time questioned his Lord in this manner, “What shall this man do?” but now it was his own heart that must have the first attention. They were not insisting that everyone should have a manifestation similar to their own personal experience, but each was more anxious for himself. This attitude will help to bring one of accordness in the “fullness-of-the-blessing” seeking.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

At this popular feast the city of Jerusalem was crowded with worshippers. The Feast of Weeks of Pentecost was fifty days from Passover. They were to reckon seven Sabbaths or weeks on the morrow after the Sabbath of Passover, which must be the 15th of Abib. This would bring the end of

forty-nine days on a Sabbath and the fiftieth day on the first day of the week. Therefore, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost would cover a Sabbath of forty-eight hours. The fullness of Pentecost would come on the last or fiftieth day. Reckoning six days of labor to the next Sabbath would bring the correct day of worship on what had been during the seven weeks as the first day, but now from Pentecost the correct seventh day. Very naturally the Christian worshipers would make much of the First day and this soon became the accepted day of rest and worship.

At the Passover time the weather was not generally favorable for travel, but at Pentecost the warm spring breezes brought new life and the fields carpeted in green were made beautiful with the bursting flowers and lilies which adorned the valleys and foothills of Palestine. Travel now being made possible and more comfortable, large crowds planned to attend the joyous Feast of Weeks.

Passover, with its slain lamb, was a type of Christ; "The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." The lamb was eaten with bitter herbs which may well represent the suffering of Christ. The unleavened cakes bespoke of the holiness of Christ. As the bitter herbs also were to be eaten, this may well represent the true attitude of all who partake of Christ in sorrowful repentance; "A sorrow which leads to repentance not to be repented of." But Passover was not complete without the Pentecostal feast, hence by many it was known as the "concluding feast" or the "Feast of Weeks." How appropriate that our Lord should instruct His disciples to "tarry," wait for the promised blessing which should crown their experience. The day of Pentecost was, therefore, a very fitting time for the advent or coming of the other promised Comforter. The reasons are as follows:

(1) Because of its relation to Passover. During Passover the first two ripened sheaves of grain were waved in the presence of God as a pledge of the coming harvest. This was a type of Christ our Lord who was the "first fruits of them that slept." How glorious in type as Christ becomes our Passover. Then, on the morning of the first day of the week He came forth in victory over death, representing the first fruits and a sure pledge of the great coming harvest of believers. Following Passover, there was the "Feast of Weeks," or Pentecost. At this feast, harvest being ended, two loaves of bread made of fine flour mixed with leaven, well-baked with fire, were waved before the Lord. This properly represented the church in type, which should be gathered out of the great harvest field or the world. In these two loaves we have a picture of the believer who is ground into usefulness and the leaven of malice burned out by the fire of divine presence, and presented a holy personality before the Lord. Hence, we see how closely Pentecost was associated with Passover, and we see how passion was incomplete without this Pentecostal feast.

(2) Because it commemorated the birth of Israel as a nation having been delivered from Egyptian bondage. At Passover they were delivered from bondage, which typifies the believer's deliverance from the bondage of sin. Pentecost reminded them of the giving of the law when God came down on Sinai in flaming fire and they became a nation of priests. How fitting that the church should have its beginning in the flaming baptism with the Holy Ghost. Thus, Pentecost marked the beginning of the "New Age" of the gospel.

(3) Because this day was inclusive in its character. All kinds of offerings were made on this day. There was the sin offering, the burnt offerings, meat offerings, and the peace offerings of various kinds. Such is the character of the worship in the gospel. There should be no need of a separate "holiness

meeting" in this gospel age. People may get saved and sanctified at the same altar while others are having a peace offering.

(4) Because Pentecost was a day of great rejoicing. The Passover with the bitter herbs was a thing of history and now the joy of harvest and ingathering rolled in tides. A good time for the Lord to give His people the long-promised joy, the joy of the Holy Ghost. One of the marked features of the Pentecostal blessing is uncontrollable joy which bursts forth in mighty glory.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PENTECOST

THEY WERE IN THE RIGHT PLACE. The large upper room was full of sacred memories. It was selected and arranged for the last supper by the Lord himself. The Lord had told His disciples to go into the city and they would find a man carrying a pitcher of water who would show them a well-furnished upper room. They found the man and said, "The Master hath need," and he gladly let them have the room. This worked out and it was here where they had eaten the last supper and where the Lord had appeared unto them. What holy memories must have crowded into their minds as they waited for these seven days in continued prayer for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Who could be included in the 120? Of course, all the disciples were there. Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha with Lazarus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea were doubtless all present. James, the Lord's brother, who had been so wonderfully convinced of his Lord's divine Sonship after His resurrection, was possibly present. And no doubt many who had been marvelously healed through our Lord's ministry were included in the group.

The eight days had quickly passed as they continued in prayer and supplication. The great feast of Passover some weeks before with its thrilling events. The thronging crowds had gathered in the city for the noted feast of Pentecost. Some

estimate that nearly a half million of strangers from all the various countries were in the city at this time. There was general interest and excitement everywhere.

The disciples, unnoticed by this mixed multitude, had gathered in the upper room bright and early for their morning prayer and waiting before the Lord. They were all engaged in earnest prayer with upturned faces, and every heart beat high with expectancy, knowing that all was clear, not a cloud in the sky. Then all was hushed in holy stillness with an indescribable calm. Suddenly, there burst upon them a heavenly sound like the whistling roar in a mighty tornado. Their hearts were strangely touched. The divine fire of the holy presence of the Lord glowed and burned in their inner being, until the flame took shape in forked tongues of sacred fire and flashed upon their brow. They were filled. Yes, FILLED. Filled with an inward sense of God. Filled with holy fervor. Filled with a consciousness of purity. Filled until there was no room for anything else but God; satisfied and filled. Their tongues were loosened. No wonder they went into holy raptures of great joy and overflowing delight, for the Holy Ghost had come and they were filled.

There was a sound of a rushing mighty wind. There has been a question as to the extent of this sound. Was it distinct enough to be heard throughout the city or only in the room? The record seems to indicate that it filled the room where they were assembled. The gathering of the crowds came as a result of the experience being noised abroad or rather reported amid the excited joy of the believers. Doubtless, there were many thousands who had heard Christ preaching only a few weeks and months before, and had been much attracted by His gracious words. For only a very few weeks before, it was stated, that the whole city had gone after Christ and had taken sides with His ministry. But His crucifixion and death had disap-

pointed their hopes. Now two months had passed, but reports of His resurrection had awakened new interest. Could it be true? Was that mighty Teacher and Preacher who had done such mighty deeds of mercy, alive from the dead? We can well understand how such a body of expectant worshipers at Jerusalem were so awakened.

THE RUSHING WIND

The sound of the rushing wind seemed to be symbolical of the deeper spiritual meaning wrapped up in this manifestation. We must not confuse the various manifestations in the descent of the promised Comforter with the essential experience itself. The same manifestations as given in Acts 2, have never been repeated in all their fullness, but the essential facts in Christian believers have been continued through the gospel age. We may, thus, study with interest the spiritual meaning in this sound from heaven.

(1) Wind is a great mystery. "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." Its cause and currents, rise and fall are not fully explained. There is and always must be a great mystery about the working of the Holy Ghost.

(2) Wind has the elements of life. "God breathed into man the breath of life." There is a spirit in man and the in-breathing of the Almighty giveth him understanding. So in the spiritual life, the breath of God is the secret of spiritual being. Christ breathed upon His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In the upper room, God breathed into the early church the new life of the gospel and the church became a living power in the world. The prophet was told to go into the valley of dry bones and breathe upon them and after repeated efforts life was given. O for the breath of the Almighty in these days to give life to the dying church which has almost become a valley of dry bones.

(3) The wind is often soft and refreshing. How often on a

hot sultry day we have longed for a breeze which would clear the atmosphere. O that we may have a breeze from the skies above.

(4) The wind brings a shaking and clearing effect. Transitory, movable things are often removed. There are many old dead leaves which hang on until the fall winds shake them off. In the same measure there are old ideas and notions waiting for a heavenly cyclone to remove them from our minds. The Word speaks about the fig tree casting her untimely figs when shaken by a mighty wind, and there are some untimely things which seem to hang on to many people but such a wind as they had at Pentecost will effectively remove them.

(5) The wind has freedom. The old adage says, "As free as the air." "The wind bloweth where it listeth." Who can bind the oncoming wind, or who can regulate its course? Who can tell just when or where it will strike. Who can tell just what it will do? As there is freedom in the wind so there must be freedom in the work of the Holy Ghost. Every attempt to regulate or legislate the Spirit hinders his work. He must have his way in all things. Not the right of way or some restricted way, but his unhindered way.

The coming of the Holy Ghost in the manner of wind was not by accident, there was a deep meaning connected with this sound as of a rushing, mighty wind. The sound is strange and peculiar in itself. The voice of God in the soul will satisfy every question, and the breath of the Almighty will calm every troubled wave of the anxious soul. Nothing but the breath of God will give us life in this valley of dry bones.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The experience of the disciples on the day of Pentecost opened the beginning of a new era in their activities. Thus, Luke in his record was very careful to place much emphasis upon the personal experience of those who were responsible

for carrying forward the gospel in this "New Age." Luke, in his gospel, carefully followed the events of the birth of Christ, giving four full chapters to the details. In his record of the beginning days in the history of the church, he was very careful to note what took place in the personal experience of the disciples.

Because similar demonstrations have not followed such as, "rushing, mighty wind, or tongues of visible flames of fire," some have limited the Spirit's work to only marking the opening of the dispensation. But a continued reading of the Acts, will show that the essential elements of the experience of the disciples on this "Feast of Weeks" was intended to follow for all believers, even to all who might be afar off.

The experience was personal. It was for "each of them." The Holy Spirit can only come to the church as he is received into individual hearts. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." "If any man will open the door I will come in unto him and sup with him," is the word of our Lord.

We may, in conclusion, consider a few essential matters in relation to the coming of the Holy Spirit into our own hearts and lives.

(1) It is well to avoid any one particular notion or prejudice as to manifestations in the coming of the divine Spirit. He may come in the quietness of the midnight hour by a "still small voice." He may come with a "rushing, mighty wind." We cannot plan on a quiet outpouring of the Spirit's presence. Neither can we order a noisy time when He comes. The Spirit himself, must have his own way, and give manifestation as he wills.

(2) Whatever the sound may be, it must come from heaven. There is a wide difference between the earthly rattles and the heavenly music. It is much more distinct than the difference between the bray of the mule and the neighing of the horse, or the bleat of a goat and the gentle bleat of the

sheep. There is a screech which is repulsive, and there is a sound which falls like sweet music on the ear. This heavenly kind is full of inspiration and has drawing power.

(3) When the Spirit comes, he creates the rushing sensation within. He himself, becomes the inward cause. "I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." "Holy men spoke as they were moved." The Holy Spirit is aggressive; he is bursting forth in new praise and service. The Spirit moves the church out of old ruts into new methods, and out of all dying forms into new ways of life. It may be difficult to travel as fast as the wind but it can be done with modern appliances. If the church keeps up with the divine Spirit, we must go ahead faster in the spiritual life and activity.

(4) There is force and power in the rushing wind. It seems irresistible. Something must give way, as in the case of Ezekiel, "He was carried by the spirit"; or of Philip, "Who was caught away by the spirit." Surely, we need something from heaven which will make the church invincible and irresistible.

(5) When the Holy Spirit comes, he is all prevailing and filling every part. "He filled all the house." The Spirit must fill every part, all the house, all business activities, all our society doings, every part. He will never be pleased to occupy a back seat and live in a closet. He wants all the house. Every room and every closet.

(6) His coming marks a new epoch. Suddenly he came on this memorable day, and suddenly he comes to take up his abode in believers. It marks the dawn of a new day, and new things are now on hand.

Would we enjoy his presence? Then seek to be filled. Make room for His coming. Listen for His voice of satisfaction and pleasure. Walk in the light. Keep the commandments, and by simple faith, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER VI

LIGHT AND FIRE FROM HEAVEN

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them (Acts 2:3). He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire (Matthew 3:11).

In reading this vivid account of Pentecost, no one can doubt the reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost. His personality was very clearly set forth in the teaching of Christ: "When he is come"; "I will send another Comforter"; "Whom the Father will send"; "Who shall be able to reprove, teach, guide, and show you things"; "Speak the things he hears and impart joy." All these things could be done only by a personality.

Although he is not seen, yet his manifestations prove his presence. The great sun moves in the distant heavens, but the presence of the sun is seen not only on the mountain top but in the valley as well. The rays of light now passing into this room cause us all to say, "There is the sun." So when once the soul has been purified from inbred sin and made transparent like unto fine glass, the presence of the Holy Ghost can be realized by a million souls in all parts of the world at the same time. Then, he may be said to fill the entire being with the glory of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

The reality of his presence in the soul will be just as self-evident as the bursting forth of the sun in mid-heavens after the passing of a mighty storm. Thus, no one will have to take it by "dry faith" or by mere claiming. The divine glory now floods the soul and all doubts have come to an end forever.

Nothing but reality will satisfy the longings of the soul; reality settles every question.

THE SHEKINAH CLOUD

The bright shining light in the cloud by night had guided Israel from bondage. This cloud had hovered over their camp; had floated into the tabernacle to abide in the Holy of Holies; had gone before them to direct their journey; and when in camp had moved behind a dark cloud to their enemies for their protection. A mysterious flame of fire came down from heaven in the victorious day when Elijah prayed, and became so unquenchable as to burn water-soaked materials upon the altar.

From Israel's tabernacle the fiery cloud had departed. The altar fires were no longer sustained by a mysterious flame. The cold ritual of the priesthood, no longer inspired the worshipers at the temple. Formal prayers had taken the place of the heart-throbbing petitions of former days. Such prayers as that of Hezekiah, when he poured out his soul and spread his desire before the Lord were in the past. Eyes were no longer red with weeping, as in the days of Hannah when she poured out her soul before the Lord as a sorrowful woman and left the temple with her countenance no more sad. Faces were no longer all aglow, as in the days of Moses when he came from the presence of God with such a shine of holy light, that others could not behold him for the glory of that sublime radiance. Things were dead and cold. The temple worship in Jerusalem was filled with formality.

There were a few who had been with the prophet of Galilee, and had looked upon his face while engaged in prayer. They had seen radiance breaking forth, until his whole frame seemed transformed into an object of light itself. The cloud which had enveloped his whole being was so bright that it appeared a white light of heavenly majesty.

Truly, this company in the upper room had witnessed the black cloud that darkened the heavens, when their Savior died on the cross. He was surely the light of the world. When he died, the sun of their soul went down. But now he had risen as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in the winged light of radiant hope. Now in the upper room as they prayed and waited, the rushing wind seemed to fan into a flame the very atmosphere around them, and tongues of fire were seen over the heads of each of them.

It must have reminded them of the departed fire in the old historic shekinah cloud. God had no place in the temple made with human hands, but He had found a resting place in their hearts. Their very bodies henceforth were to become the temple of the living God. Their hearts and lives and bodies to be a habitation of God through the Holy Ghost.

FIRE, A SYMBOL OF DIVINE PRESENCE

Fire is a fitting symbol of the Holy Spirit. These manifestations were temporary and passing, but their meaning must abide. They could not always have the rushing wind or flames of fire, but they could have the great truth which these elements represented to them. Thus, Paul exhorted Timothy to stir up the gift, or to fan to a flame, of the gift he had received.

(1) Fire is a mysterious force. How important is this element of fire. We may not be able to tell what it is, but we know what it can do and how vital it is in the progress of the race. Life is a kind of fire which warms the body, and keeps it going. The body would die without that flame of life. So the church becomes dead and cold without the burning presence of the divine Spirit.

Here is that cannon, large and ponderous. We can tell when and where it was moulded, but it is only taking up space. There lies the powder, but inactive. A bird may carry it away.

Over here is the ball of metal, but cold and an object of stumbling. Now put the powder into the cannon, then place the ball close to it, add one spark of fire and listen to its roar and witness the result. All church machinery may be good and proper, but it must have the fire of holy Presence.

(2) Holy Fire has always marked the line of separation. There has been a false fire. It has been used as a symbol of the gods in heathen worship. But the false can be clearly distinguished from the true. How can we know the false from the true? Put this test to our religion. Does this gospel or teaching make holy manhood? Does this experience build holy character? Does this experience make bad men good? Does it deliver men and women from sin? Does the fire of our religion give victory over inward evil dispositions and lift the life into triumph in the hour of death? If not, why fool with such false hopes. True Christianity will stand the test, as the gospel of Christ is allowed full sway in the lives of men. It clearly marked the line of distinction in the worship of Abel and Cain. It told when God was in the experience of Israel and Egypt. It stood the test in the days of Elijah and the Baal worshipers, and will stand the test today. Where is the impassioned prayer for a lost world? Where is the fiery eloquence to adorn our pulpits? Where is the white heated love of fervent charity for others, even enemies? Where is the burning zeal for sacrifice and service? This may lead us to more prayer and honest devotion. Blazing tongues of fire will mark the true line of distinction even in these formal days.

(3) Fire is cleansing, purifying, and refining. It takes fire to purge the dross from the gold, and fire to refine the silver. Who then shall stand in his holy place? The answer is, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." In the Holy of Holies nothing but pure gold could be used, which teaches that no sin can come into the presence of God. How we need

the fire of the Holy Ghost to purge the native meanness out of the heart. Thank God it has been provided in the blessing of the other Comforter.

(4) Fire is luminosity itself. God is light. Christ was the Light of the world. Now, "Ye [the believers] are the light of the world." "Ye were darkness, now are ye light in the Lord." Ye were illuminated. How? God hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Hear the prophet Isaiah, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Doubts are burned away, and they disappear like dew before the sun. The darkness of spiritual ignorance is now passed, and "the true light now shineth."

(5) Fire is an aggressive force, always moving onward. It is never still, always giving forth new and fresh vision of its beauty and attractiveness. John the Baptist was a burning and shining light. To shine we must burn with holy passion. Painted fire will never fill the need of the hour. There must be the living flame such as touched the lips of Isaiah as given in the sixth chapter of his book.

(6) Fire is metamorphic. It charges every element it touches. It changes the weak, chalky rock into beautiful marble. It consumes the whole burned offering into ashes, and turns the living sacrifice into the ashes of a self-emptied devotion. We need this touch of Holy fire to change our cold worship into throbbing hearts of praise. We need the warm glow of holy love to move the church into holy evangelism.

(7) Fire is always self-evident. No argument is needed. No added sign or witness required; fire itself tells the story. Thus, the Holy Ghost himself is the witness. Shakes or jumps, or physical thrills are not sufficient when the heart is strangely warmed by the fire of divine Presence. Physical enthusiasm must take a back seat while holy calm and perfect peace now

fill the soul. The heart is melted into liquid flowing joy, while the soul is throbbing with white heated love divine.

UPON EACH OF THEM

The temptation has been to generalize the experience and, thus, make it impersonal. Some have tried to limit the experience to only the apostles. However, this can hardly explain the careful statement of inspiration, "Cloven tongues upon each of them." And the record mentions the number as one hundred and twenty. We are safe in concluding from the record, from the confirmation of history, and from personal experience, that the essential elements of the experience promised by Christ and received on this mentioned day of Pentecost is for all true believers. The time has come when God would dwell in believing hearts, and make the heart His home. "Christ in you the hope of glory." "Filled with all the fullness of God," is Paul's conception of a normal believer. The church as a body may reject, but as individuals we may accept and walk in the fullness of the blessing.

TONGUES OF FIRE

The symbol of Pentecost is a tongue of fire. This would indicate the large place which human speech must occupy in the dispensation of the gospel. The human voice has been a great power for truth. "Words fitly spoken are like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Truth voiced by human speech falling upon the atmosphere will set in motion currents of thought and waves of everlasting power in the human spirit. Christ had not placed His thoughts in writings, yet He told His critics that heaven and earth would pass away but His words would not pass out of existence. How and why? His words were like fire which burns in the human spirit and its force and power abides as long as the human spirit lives.

What power there is in the tongue. Unsanctified, it may

become a world of iniquity, and bring on the fires of hell. It may be like an unbridled horse, or a ship without the rudder in a gale, or a raging fire driven in the wind. With its serpent-like sting it throws its poisonous fangs into the home circle with unkind words and thoughtless expressions, which destroy the peace and comfort of all.

When the heart has been made free through this fiery baptism, the symbol of tongues aflame with holy fire to carry the glad news, indeed, seems most striking. The gospel of Christ is differentiated from every other religion in that the message must be carried over human lips, with words aflame with holy passion.

Pulpit oratory and eloquence are something more than words and phrases. Some seem to think that attractive eloquence is to rattle vowels and consonants together, or the use of big words and many adjectives. But these only make language sound like a tinkling cymbal. No, that is not eloquence, all that is the counterfeit. Eloquence has been defined as "logic on fire." Richard Sheridan said, "I go to hear Rowland Hill because his words flow hissing hot from his heart." The secret of Dr. Chalmer's power was said to be in his "blood-earnestness." O for tongues aflame in these days to make known the living Savior.

While the visible symbol could not remain, it left its meaning deeply embedded in the spiritual understanding of the ministry. "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It is these refined and burning words which have given our great revivals and have moved the world to God. This passing symbol would seem to teach that the power of the gospel message was not of man, but must be sustained by a heavenly presence. The gospel itself, is the power of God. It is full of

radiation, light, and life. This fire of life must burn on the tongue which carries the message to others.

How powerless we are left alone. We are like the chisel dormant beside the marble. We are useless by ourselves; cold and inactive. Here comes the artist. He picks up the chisel, and begins his work. Now, the cold steel is effective as blow on blow the marble is made into its artistic design. Yes, the artist's hand needs the chisel, and Christ needs the church. But we are cold and useless without the divine Presence to fill us and use us to His glory.

CHAPTER VII

SPIRIT FILLED OR SPIRITUAL INTOXICATION

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:4). Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine (Acts 2:13). These are not drunken, as ye suppose (Acts 2:15).

This new born experience received by the followers of Jesus at the "Feast of Weeks" seemed like confusion to some. The on-lookers had never witnessed such strange sights before. They were amazed and astonished. Naturally, they must find an explanation for this new manifestation. The only conclusion was that they had been drinking new wine. But Peter exclaimed, "These men are not drunken *as ye suppose.*" Peter knew that this overflowing joy was something new, but it was not the kind of intoxication mentioned by the critics. It belonged to another source. A much higher source, for these were filled with the outpouring of the divine Spirit in fulfillment of prophecy. The critics would explain the source of such experiences as coming from below, while Peter declared that it all came from above. It was not human and earthly; it was spiritual and divine. It was something more than physical enthusiasm or some strange emotionalism. Peter corrected the mistaken supposition, and explained the source as coming from God and was the fulfillment of His promise. While the conduct was new, it was evident that it all came from a fullness within. Not a fullness, "As ye suppose, but, this is that," a fullness from above.

The incarnation of the divine Son was crowned by His holy manhood. His atoning sacrifice was crowned by His res-

urrection. His ascension and glorification were now crowned by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers.

PENTECOST IS NORMAL CONDITION IN EXPERIENCE

We reach the crowning work and effort of God in New Testament truth. Every effort of heaven may be said to cluster around this one desire, namely, that man should be lifted from the level of the natural into the realm of the spiritual. Man is of the earth earthy, and lives much in the lower plane of the human appetites and desires. "The first man was made of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven." Christ came to earth to lift man from the earthly things into heavenly, so that man would be able to know spiritual things. "As is the earthy such are they that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The possibilities of this glorious transformation lay not in the natural but in the supernatural, for the apostle concludes, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, just as corruption cannot inherit incorruption."

There is a position recognized in the New Testament as "spiritual." Paul said that he could not write to the Corinthian church as unto the "spiritual." He that is "spiritual" judgeth all things. The natural man receiveth not the things of God, for they are to be spiritually discerned. Peter says that we are built up a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices. And Paul says that we are builded together for a habitation of God through the spirit. To be spiritually minded is life and peace.

The elements of man's spiritual nature were placed in his being when he was created. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Man has a spirit and is capable of understanding spiritual truth by the aid of the Holy Spirit. At the new birth, which is from

above, he comes forth as a new creature quickened into spiritual understanding. Yet, the center of his being is still clouded by the effects of sin in the fall of Adam, the first man of the earth earthy. He must be delivered from this color blindness, and cleansed from all sin before he can be made truly spiritual. Paul says: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child and understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now [in the childhood experience] we see through a glass darkly, but then [after having been delivered] face to face." Carnality so clouds the spirit of man that as he looks out upon the things around him, he sees things through a darkened glass. The work of Christ has found a way to take this sin color out of the vision so that man may see things clearly. The Holy Ghost brings into realization the divine presence and man becomes Spirit-filled.

The normal condition of a New Testament Christian is to be filled with the Holy Ghost. This is a life, a state, a condition. Not a filling at times for special work and then left alone, but a constant and continuous and an abiding fullness. When Peter was called before the rulers and elders to defend his authority for healing the lame man, he could answer because he was filled with the Holy Ghost. This filling came on the day of Pentecost. When Paul met the sorcerer, Elymas, who had hindered his efforts in getting Sergius Paulus converted, the record reads that "Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him and said, O full of all subtlety and mischief, thou child of the devil." Just as completely filled as when the holy hands of Ananias were on his head, when he received the Holy Ghost.

We are told that the rendering in these two instances would more clearly read, "Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost," and "Paul, being filled with the Holy Ghost," that is to say this was their constant experience. So we gather that after

Pentecost the normal condition of the heart was to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILLED?

Just as the room was filled with the odor of the ointment when Mary broke the alabaster box and poured its contents on the sacred head of her Lord, so the soul is to be filled with the glory of the divine Presence. Just as the room was filled with the sound of the rushing, mighty wind, so the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost. Just as the glory of God came and filled the ancient temple and the Holy of Holies was filled with the sacred light, so the Holy Spirit takes possession and fills all the inner temple with the light of the divine Presence.

The enemies of Jesus were filled with madness. At the healing of the lame man at the "Beautiful" gate of the temple, the people were filled with wonder and amazement. At the preaching of the apostles, the rulers and elders were filled with indignation, and at another time the Jews were filled with envy. Satan filled the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost, while Peter, whom they lied to, was filled WITH the Holy Ghost. To be filled with sin, envy, wrath, indignation, is to be controlled by these baser forces. So to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be under his control and moved by his impulses. Stephen, delivering that great speech just before his stoning, was moved by the Holy Ghost and poured his thoughts upon the people. The record says that he was filled with the Holy Ghost. The real glory in the record of a few special characters mentioned in the Acts seems to be that they were "good men, full of faith and the Holy Ghost." Such men were chosen to fill responsible places.

This fullness in the Holy Ghost did not make the disciples insane or outlandish in his talk or manners. But instead, the disciples were more calm and better able to look after the

service of the tables, buy bread and meat, and look after the needs of widows, and do the detail work of the deaconship. When they were to build the temple in the wilderness, Moses understood the needs of the hour and sought out men "filled with the Spirit of God" as carpenters and gold and brass workers. The Holy Ghost is very practical and wants to make every one useful in life. He makes one not only good, but good for something.

The presence of the Spirit cannot be determined by feeling. It is not feeling full, but being full. Often the preacher or worker may not feel full, and sometimes they feel empty just before the Holy Spirit uses them in a very wonderful way. The great need is the fullness of the Spirit to meet difficulty, and overcome trials, and triumph in the hardest places. We need His fullness to give joy in the midst of sorrow, and peace when the storm beats in awful fury all about us. We need His fullness for power to calm the raging sea in temptation, and strength to walk upon the rolling waves of fear and doubt. We need to give fearless testimony in the presence of kings and those in authority, and then face the storm without compromise.

SPIRITUAL INTOXICATION

Dr. A. J. Gordon said the text, "Be filled with the Spirit," should properly read, "Be God intoxicated men." That is to be God-possessed; be God-controlled; to be filled with God and His truth; be filled with elements of His holy nature. Be filled with the light of purity for God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Be filled with faith, for God calleth the things that are not as though they were. Be filled with love, for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God. If we loved as God loves, we would be moved with tender compassion toward those who are wrong, or have even wronged us. If we are filled with the Holy Ghost, we shall live in the

full light of God's presence. If we are filled with the spirit, heaven becomes real, and we live in the realm of spiritual realities. Christ becomes a real friend, and God is nearer to us than our hands, our feet, and closer than our very heartbeats; the Holy Ghost lives with us and in us. To be filled with the Holy Ghost faith is as natural as breathing and as common as eyesight. Under these conditions, all doubts are burned up in the fiery glow of spiritual certainties.

One filled with the Holy Ghost, is often misunderstood just as on the day of Pentecost, the doubters misjudged the disciples as being filled with new wine. There are some reasons why this is so often done.

(1) One is misunderstood because he is often called to do things which seem contrary to natural laws, and against reason, and common sense. The apostle says, "We become fools [not foolish] for Christ." We are called to do things so different from the old way, the natural way of doing things. What could be the matter with a man who would take his own darling son up to the mountain side and there make an effort to offer him up as a sacrifice? Think of asking an army to stand still in the face of a Red Sea while the enemy is hot after them, even at their very heels; and then to attempt to get water out of a rock pile or the side of a ledge. Think of asking a body of men to cross a rolling Jordan with their sandals on and expect them to reach the other side with dry stockings. Who would ever think that a general would receive orders to reduce his army from 32,000 to 300, and then divide them into three small bunches, and simply break pitchers and shout, and gain the victory over a great army that outnumbered them a hundred fold. How absurd it must have sounded, to hear that old prophet declare that he could hear rain in great abundance, when there had not been a sprinkle in over three years.

Our Lord said that the way to live was to die, and the way to have everything was to give away everything you now have. Think of an army soon to perish with thirst, being directed to find water by digging rivers in a dry country like Moab, or receiving a promise of plenty of water from wells on the top of great mountain peaks. Think of a man standing before a body of men who had toiled and worked hard for weeks trying to keep the old ship right side up, and had been driven before the wind for days, and just as the land is coming in sight, declaring, "The only way to be saved from the wild waves is to stay on this sinking ship." No wonder that God's people filled with Holy Ghost have been thought to be filled with new wine. This heavenly philosophy while a little different from natural science, gloriously works.

(2) A soul filled with the Holy Ghost is often misunderstood for he is unaffected by circumstances. He may be poor and dressed in rags, but he does not seem to know anything about it for he walks like a man dressed in broadcloth and feels like a millionaire. If he is in sorrow, he simply takes another drink from the cup of salvation to drown his sorrow. So the man filled with the Holy Ghost has his poverty turned into riches. He sings:

*"A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there!
Tho' exiled from home, yet still I may sing:
All glory to God, I'm a child of the King."*

Though he may be wading through sorrow over his head, what makes the difference, because he feels like he is riding in an automobile, with air cushions and with balloon tires; or sailing through the atmosphere in an air-ship; or soaring on eagle's wings to the heights above. He is all immuned to his conditions or circumstances. Is it any wonder that people

think he is strange, and that he must be intoxicated. That he is, but with a spirit that is from above which makes him the most sane man in the universe. He sings and shouts above the battle's roar and glories in tribulation, knowing that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope."

That is what made Jesus rejoice when misunderstood. When before scribes and critics, He unfolded to them the deep things of God, and they said, "The young man is gone mad, and what he is saying seems to us like nonsense." The records tell us, "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent and hast revealed them unto babes, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'" This is the explanation of the conduct of the disciples, when they were persecuted and driven out of the synagogues. This is why Paul and Silas with blistering, smarting, bleeding backs in the darkest place of the prison, could catch glimmers of a sacred light which shone into their souls with brighter beams than ever shone on land or sea. This is why they received such an enlargement of the heart that songs and shouts were their only safety valves, and God smiled and the angels danced with an earthquake which opened the doors and gave them perfect bail from the courts above. This is why the church filled with the Holy Ghost will be misunderstood by the world who will look on with astonishment as she moves along undaunted by the discouragements which seem to surround her. This is why she comes forth from every difficulty, "As fresh as the morning, as clear as the moon, and as bright as the sun, and as terrible as an army with banners.

(3) The disciples were misunderstood for with the new wine of the kingdom they were free to act and speak out what was in them. A person filled with the new wine of the kingdom talks and sings in blessed freedom. His tongue is loosed and

he must talk. He is not afraid what kind of a show he will make of himself, he is simply free to act according to this spiritual impulse. Thus, a soul filled with God under the control of the Holy Spirit has wondrous freedom in manifesting inward light and glory.

O for God-intoxicated men and women who are so filled with the Spirit that they are lost to the opinions of the folks. God saved Paul from the people as well as from sin. And the salvation which God gives delivers us from the folks and what they may think concerning our experience.

(4) There is often chance for misunderstanding for the new wine of the kingdom is invigorating, uplifting, and inspiring. No wonder the disciples were thought to be drunk. Did they not know that their leader was no more? Did the crowds not know that He had been crucified and His followers were nothing but a set of ignorant men, and the whole movement had been scattered to the four winds nearly two months ago? What could be the matter with these men and women? They surely must be intoxicated. O yes, they knew all this and more, for they had just received fresh news from heaven and were filled with a new spirit. Thus lifted, they were inspired, compelled, and moved by the Holy Spirit. This was in harmony with the promise, "I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my ways." They were lifted above the mighty forces which were against them, and that great throng of people, a veritable mob, had not the influence to dampen their zeal. They were filled.

The church talks much about the moral forces which seem so hard and cold that nothing can be done. The great need is a mighty baptism which shall open the eyes of the church, to see these mountains filled with horses and chariots of fire, and a realization that, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." She needs to be lifted to the heavenlies with her Lord, above the things which would naturally dis-

courage, and learn from the early church fearlessness in presenting the truth of the gospel. The church is not straitened in God or her possibilities of reaching the world, but in her very self. When this filling comes, she is lifted to see her resources are all in God.

(5) Another source of misunderstanding is in the fact that Spirit-filled people are not often easily hurt. Or if they are, they do not seem to know anything about it. The hurt comes most often where we are the most sensitive. If we can get away from a self-centeredness, we shall not mind the light afflictions which are but for a moment. I do not want to seem to carry this point too far, but when the soul is filled with the Spirit, the possibilities of getting hurt are greatly eliminated.

HOW TO BE FILLED

This is the most important question of all. For the command is given, "Be filled." It is just as much a command to be filled with the Spirit as it is not to steal or murder. We must keep the commandments of God, and not neglect this most important part of the Christian life. "Be filled with the Spirit." How can we be filled?

(1) We must be emptied. The struggle is at this very point. "O to be saved from myself, dear Lord." The easiest thing in the world is to fill a vacuum; the hard thing is to make a vacuum. This takes a pump and power to remove all the gases, but air will rush in on the smallest movement. It is said that light fills the room and drives the darkness out. Yes, but there is something more than filling this room with light. To perfectly fill the room with light, the pulpit must be removed, the organ taken out, the pews taken away, the carpet taken from the floor, and all the dust swept from the floor. All this will require an express wagon for hauling. But then light may be said to fill the room and drive out the darkness. As long as this furniture remains, there will be shadows and dark places. And until there is a cleaning out in the soul,

a putting off, a taking away, the Holy Spirit cannot fill. There are two ways of emptying a glass of water, namely: (1) It may be inverted at once; or (2) quicksilver poured in will drive the water out. But remember that quicksilver will never take away the sand or dirt in the bottom of the glass. These elements must be cleansed out, then the water may be driven out by the pouring in of quicksilver. In other words, there must be a work of preparation by dying out to the old man and to self. It is not an easy job to wash up and make clean, but it is often very necessary. It is not a vacation job to move and carry out the old furniture, remove the seats, and clean up things in general, but it often must be done. If the Holy Spirit fills, there must be a cleaning out of everything which is unholy. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice."

(2) There must be aggressive faith. Faith is a soul conviction of truth based on divine evidences, together with trustful loyalty to God. Faith moves out into the presence of God and believes God, and calls the things that are not, as though they were. Faith is that thing which compels a man to make an attempt to stretch forth a withered hand, in order that it may become strong like the other. Faith is that thing which moves a leper to start to show the priest that he is clean, while as yet the leprosy is still on his body. And while the leper is walking in the light of obedience and trust he is cleansed. Faith is not taking it; faith is not "claiming it." Faith says, "It is already a fact; not I believe He will come, but He has come." If one of you in whom I had perfect faith should agree to meet me here at a given hour, and the time had arrived but I was not there, I would say, "I must hurry for Brother M. is at the church waiting for me." Not I am going to wait and see if Brother M. comes but that Brother M. is already there. God's time is now. Faith knows that God is faithful and cannot lie, and moves right out in perfect confidence. Faith says,

“God is here, He has arrived,” and acts just like God, the Holy Ghost, was now present.

(3) There must be a receptive attitude. “When ye pray, believe that ye *receive*,” or more correctly, “Believe that ye have received and ye *shall have*.” This is the battle ground, and so many fail to keep the heart wide open for God, who is now here to manifest Himself. We should have all the windows opened and the doors off their hinges expecting God to come. Then expect Him now, for He is here. After we had moved into a certain home, strangers still came to inquire about the rent. They thought the house was still empty because the lace curtains were not up at the front windows. But we instructed them to move on for we were living there. It is not for us to worry, if the Lord does not hang lace curtains in the front windows of the soul at once. For as long as He lives in the kitchen, and is with us in the dining room, we may rest assured that He will get around to the front windows after a little. He will ornament your face with joy, and let the neighbors know that He has arrived in due time. Don’t find fault with Him, just let Him have His way. Keep open to receive what He has to bring.

(4) There must be an abiding confidence. The just shall live on the ground of his faith. Then he says, “Ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.” “For yet a little while and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.” Now, out there in the solitudes of God’s presence after having done the will of God, patiently holding in steady faith, comes the temptation to draw back. “But if any man shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” “But we are not of them that draw back, but believe to the saving of the soul.” This abiding confidence in God brings the glory and the fullness of the blessing. Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. And you shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GIFT AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

He will give you another Comforter (John 14:17). When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (Eph. 4:8).

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We can never overestimate the importance of the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church in this dispensation. The command of Christ was, "Wait for the promise of the Father." "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." "Tarry ye, in the city of Jerusalem." The apostles, through their ministry in the early church, gave great importance to the presence, power, and work of the Holy Ghost. Their preaching, praying, and singing were moved and inspired by this divine Presence. The church itself, is a spiritual house, built for a habitation of God through the Spirit. In the promise of Christ, the Holy Ghost becomes our comforter, guide, and teacher—the very conservator of orthodoxy. His presence in the church pledges conviction for sin, righteousness, and judgment. He becomes the strength in the inner man, empowering us with all strength that we may comprehend the incomprehensible. He bursts forth in holy fruitage, manifesting the gracious fruits of spirit. He testifies of Christ and searches all things, yea the deep things of God. He takes the things of Christ and shows their precious reality. He is the witness both to our regeneration and sanctification. In the ministry of the Word, He is the precious unction while the preacher presents the message. He throbs in the hearts of the Church as it prays in the Holy Ghost, with groanings which

cannot be uttered. He falls in gracious power upon Christian testimony as holy men speak, being moved by the Holy Ghost. What more shall I say? Therefore, we must not misunderstand what is comprehended in His gracious GIFT.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

We must distinguish between the GIFT of the Spirit and the GIFTS. "He, the Spirit of Truth, divides to every man severally as He will." The Holy Spirit has carefully separated the GIFT and the GIFTS. We read, "How much more shall your heavenly Father GIVE the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13). The promise of Christ says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall GIVE you another Comforter" (John 14:16). On the day of Pentecost Peter answers, "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" (Acts 2:38). In this text, as in all others, the foundation is clearly laid in conversion, regeneration, or the remission of sins before the promised GIFT of the Holy Ghost can be received. In the 39th verse, Peter follows, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children." Thus, Peter connects what they received on the day of Pentecost with what Christ had spoken of when He said, "Wait for the promise of the Father, which, ye have heard of me." Thus, Christ connects this promise of the Father back to His discourse in the 14th and 15th chapters of John. Now, take up the record as given to us in the 8th chapter of the Acts, where we have the story of the gracious revival under Philip at Samaria. Here it is written, "When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them)." After prayer and the laying

on of hands, it is stated that, "They received the Holy Ghost." And when Simon saw, that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was GIVEN, he offered them money to obtain this power. Peter, in his rebuke to this unholy ambition, said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the GIFT of God may be purchased with money." Thus, again we have the GIFT of God associated with the receiving of the Holy Ghost, and also the expression "falling upon." In the 10th chapter of the Acts we have the record of Peter's visit to Cornelius' household. Here Peter preached a most acceptable discourse. In the midst of message the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. This astonished those of the circumcision, because on the Gentiles, also, was poured out "the GIFT of the Holy Ghost." Then Peter exclaimed, "Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Now, when it became noised abroad that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God, and that Peter had gone in and preached to those uncircumcised Gentiles, the Jewish believers took him to task. How strangely modern this seems, for if someone associates with those who disagree with us, how apt we are to discount them. But Peter's explanation was as follows: "And I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God GAVE them the like GIFT as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 13:15-17).

Thus, we have Cornelius received, associated with what was received at Pentecost. It is also designated as the promised baptism with the Holy Ghost, as spoken of by Christ, and comprehended in this noted expression, "the GIFT of the Holy

Ghost." Thus, Peter showed clearly that the GIFT of the Holy Ghost was the promised baptism by Christ. And Christ associated this promised baptism, in the first chapter of the Acts, with the promised baptism of the Holy Ghost as mentioned by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11. Thus, to recapitulate, we have in the Scriptures the following expression: The GIFT of the Holy Ghost; the Father's promise; receiving the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost coming upon; the Holy Ghost falling upon; the promised baptism with the Holy Ghost, all meaning and comprehending the same experience. One other expression is noted in Acts 4, namely, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Thus, to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, to receive the Holy Ghost, to have the promise of the Father, or to obtain the GIFT of the Holy Ghost is to be filled with the Spirit. This fact is all-important in the consideration of the blessed work of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience. If you should be asked, "Have ye received your Pentecost?" You could answer in the affirmative if you have received the Holy Ghost, or if you have been filled with the Holy Ghost. Because you have received the promised baptism, which was given on that day, for the promise is "unto you and to your children."

THE INLAND WORK WROUGHT BY THE HOLY GHOST

Why was the Holy Ghost given? What was the work accomplished when he came? Shall we limit his baptism or inward filling, merely as a power for service? Was there any moral cleansing or work in the experience received by the disciples on the day of Pentecost? What happened to the converts at Samaria or Cornelius' household? Let us carefully look over the Scriptures again.

(1) The metaphor used in the statement of John the Baptist emphasized purification. "He shall baptize you with the

Holy Ghost, and with fire; Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor" (Matt. 3:11 and 12). What is the teaching in this metaphor? Is it not a thorough cleansing and purging promised in the baptism with the Holy Ghost? Most assuredly this scripture teaches an inward cleansing and purifying.

(2) The metaphor used in the work of the Lord, as prophesied in Mal. 3:1-3 emphasized purification. Who was the Lord? Is it not the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ? What was comprehended in his temple? Is not this his church? When, then, did He come suddenly to His church? Most assuredly, He came on the day of Pentecost. What was the character of the work accomplished? "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver." Thus, the promise was that of purification. In both of these metaphors, we have the destruction of chaff and the destruction of dross, in order that the heart may be cleansed and purified that there may be an offering in righteousness. I have sometimes wondered why so many have objected to the thorough cleansing and purging in the experience of the GIFT of the Holy Ghost. I would rather be an armful of wheat in the hand of the Lord than a haystack of chaff; or I would rather be a small gold piece to bless society than a mountain of mere rock. Our Uncle Bud Robinson once said, "When the Lord was purifying or sanctifying my heart it seemed like I was put in a melting pot and thoroughly melted. Then the Lord began to skim off the skimmings. Thus, He kept adding more fire and skimming off the skimmings until I felt that all of myself was going to skimmings." That's it, my brother, less dross and better gold; less chaff and more wheat.

(3) The clear statement of Peter in the 15th chapter of the Acts emphasized purification. This statement was given before the apostles, elders, and the church gathered at Jerusalem in the great General Assembly which considered the

Gentile question. "Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, GIVING them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:7-9). Notice in this declaration that he was speaking about the GIFT of the Holy Ghost. And said that this GIFT of the Holy Ghost, which came to Cornelius' household, was the same experience which they received on the day of Pentecost; that God had "put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Hence, the real experience which Cornelius received and which they also received on the day of Pentecost, was a clean heart by faith.

(4) A comparison in the lives of the disciples before and after Pentecost clearly showed a moral change. Before Pentecost, the disciples manifested strange ambitions. John desired to be the greatest among them. Peter was frightened out of his experience by the questions of a little maid. Selfishness was in evidence as they clamored over the alabaster box. What a change in the lives of these same men after the Holy Ghost had come upon them! Peter was no longer frightened, even by the Sanhedrin or the high priests. Selfishness and self-seeking were entirely eliminated, and John, who desired the chiefest place among them, was never president or chairman of the General Assembly until the other apostles had passed away. Covetousness and stinginess were completely gone, and they laid their all at the apostles' feet.

(5) To be filled with the Holy Spirit necessitated the elimination of all that was unholy. Someone has said that this filling may be gradual, and the elimination of the impure a slow process, as illustrated by the emptying of a glass of water

in the pouring in of quicksilver. This illustration would be forceful, if there were nothing but purity in the heart after conversion or regeneration. But Christian testimony, as well as the Scriptures, indicate that after the first work of grace there remaineth moral depravity in the human heart. Yes, beloved, our heart must be cleansed and purified in the in-filling of the Holy Ghost.

(6) The Old Testament text in the promise of the divine Spirit revealed purification. In the words of Ezekiel "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." This text has been commonly understood to mean the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we may see that a cleansing and purification was comprehended in the promised out-pouring of the Spirit.

(7) Christ's own words in John 15:2 illustrated by the vine and the branches showed purification. (1) He clearly stated that the ingrafting into himself must be a success, for, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." (2) He also stated, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it." Thus, the promised purging by the Father.

How is this cleansing and purging to be wrought? He distinctly states, "Now ye are clean [or cleansed] *through* the word which I have spoken unto you." What word was this? He was right now in the midst of His noted discourse concerning the promise of the Holy Ghost, another Comforter. These were the words which He had just spoken unto them. Hence, He promised this cleansing in the coming of the Holy Ghost.

(8) We may see the work of the divine Spirit as described by Paul as cleansing. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the LOVE of God is SHED ABROAD in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is GIVEN unto us" (Tim. 5:5). Thus, in the GIFT of the Holy Ghost the love of God was shed

abroad, which must be understood to mean love perfected. With the various facts which we have noted, one cannot question the moral purification in the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Is sanctification associated with the GIFT of the Holy Ghost? What is meant by sanctify or sanctification? Sanctification, in a proper sense, is the deliverance from all sin, and includes an instantaneous power therewith given, always to cleave to God. Thus, we have in sanctification a moral cleansing or purification. Note these texts: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us" (Heb. 10:14, 15). "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14). Notice how clearly he defines the work of sanctification: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, SANCTIFIETH to the purifying of the flesh; How much more shall the blood of Christ." Hence, in any sense sanctification must comprehend purification. How much more the blood of Christ was able to purge and cleanse through its efficacious and sanctifying power by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Thus, if the disciples and Cornelius' household received a clean heart in the work of the Holy Ghost, and sanctification is a cleansing and purification of the heart, then, the disciples, as well as Cornelius' household, were sanctified when the Holy Ghost came upon them.

Was cleansing all which the disciples received on the day of Pentecost? From the records, it would seem that there were other gracious manifestations of the Spirit. Because the Scriptures declare that when Christ ascended on high He led

captivity captive, and gave GIFTS unto men. Thus, on the day of Pentecost the disciples not only received the GIFT of the Holy Ghost, but they received GIFTS of the Holy Ghost as well.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

No one can question the divine plan, through the administration of the Spirit, in the impartation of various GIFTS. For the Holy Ghost divides to every man severally as He will, for the profit of all. In the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians, these GIFTS are mentioned as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, prophecy, discerning of spirits, miracles, healing, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. After speaking of the various gifts, the apostle then shows how all these manifestations must work to the unity of the body. He concluded the chapter by clearly showing that all the GIFTS are not for every one, and that no one GIFT is for each or all, not even the least and last and smallest of the GIFTS.

Some one has asked, "Shall we seek the GIFTS?" I would answer in the words of the apostle, "Covet earnestly the best GIFTS." But yet, above seeking the GIFTS there is a better way: "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way." This way is clearly elucidated in that most wonderful 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. This more excellent way, the way of divine love, as set forth in this most blessed chapter, is for each and all. Prophecy may cease, tongues may cease, knowledge vanish away, but the one thing for us all to seek and obtain is this glorious experience of divine love. This abideth and is even greater than faith and hope. If there be any seeking of the GIFTS, a few principles must be observed.

(1) There should be strict honesty of heart. There should be no handling the Word of God deceitfully, but we must commend ourselves to every man's consciousness in the sight of

God. There must be no desire to claim more or profess more than is divinely given.

(2) There should be a most earnest desire to try the spirits. We are commanded by the apostle to try the spirits and believe not every spirit, for there are many false prophets who have gone into the world.

(3) There should be only one objective and that is for the glory of God. Boasting is forbidden. We are but earthen vessels, and the excellency of the power must be of God and not of ourselves.

(4) There should be a desire for the best GIFTS. May we know what these better GIFTS are? What GIFTS are we urged to seek? Let us notice a few of them:

(a) Prophecy. "But rather that ye prophesy," and again, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Thus, we are taught that prophecy supersedes in importance as spiritual evidence, speaking in tongues.

(b) Wisdom. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Thus, we are taught to pray for wisdom. This kind of wisdom is clearly defined as follows: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

(c) Faith. In the words of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith," and from Paul's statement in 2 Thess. 1:3, we may learn that the believers in this Church had an enlargement of faith.

(d) Knowledge. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and in-

creasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power" (Col. 1:10, 11). This is the most important branch of all knowledge, the knowledge of God.

(e) Healing. While we are not taught to pray for the GIFT of healing, yet the Church did ask the Lord in the 4th chapter of Acts to stretch forth His hand to heal, that signs and wonders might be done in the name of the holy child Jesus. It may be noted, however, that this was for the purpose of a more effectual preaching of the gospel, and not for personal notoriety or aggrandizement. I believe we may say with modesty, that all the above GIFTS more or less have been present in the church. While they are not manifested in all their fullness, yet in the passing years God has been able to manifest Himself in the impartation of all the above mentioned GIFTS.

(f) Tongues. It may be a little strange, but it must be noted, that nowhere are we taught to pray for or seek the GIFT of tongues or languages. On the other hand Paul devotes two whole chapters to correct strange ideas concerning this one manifestation. In the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we may observe (1) in seeking spiritual GIFTS, prophecy supersedes all other GIFTS (verses 1, 3 and 5). (2) If any one speak in tongues, it must be in some language which can be interpreted (verses 6-11). Mark well the word "unknown" is in italics and not in the original. There is no such thing as a tongue unknown. Some have mentioned tongues of angels, but that any one has spoken in this world in such a tongue is not recorded. (3) There must be no public speaking in tongues without some one to tell what language and give the interpretation (verse 28), and this speaking must be limited to two and not more than three. (4) All things must be done unto edifying.

IS SPEAKING IN TONGUES A SIGN OR EVIDENCE?

What was implied when Christ said, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents" (Mark 16:17 and 18)? Note carefully, that the signs followed and these signs were to appear among the believers. This text does not indicate that all believers were to have the signs. It has been true in the history of the church. The signs did follow in the history of apostles and there have been manifestations of these signs even in our day. In this connection we must not fail to mention this reference, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Cor. 14:22). Thus, we see clearly that speaking in tongues is no sign to the believers, but a sign to the unbelievers. Many of our dear ones would twist this around and have speaking in tongues a sign to the believer, and speak in such disconnected sounds as to have no meaning at all to an unbeliever. This is rather a sign of reproach than of divine power. While there may have been gracious manifestations in speaking a language, yet even this Paul showed it to be ineffective: "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:21).

It has been asserted by some, that there is a difference between the GIFT of tongues or language and speaking in tongues, and that on the day of Pentecost they spoke in tongues, thus, this was given as a sign or evidence. But it must be noticed, that this very same expression as found in the 2nd chapter of Acts is again used in 1 Cor. 12:30 which asks, "Do all speak with tongues?" This clearly implies that they did not and should not expect to do so. Also notice, the same expression occurs in the following: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues,

and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Cor. 14:23). Therefore, this contention falls to the ground with no support whatsoever.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST?

(1) The speaking in tongues was in a language which could be understood by the unbelievers. "How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" The Greek word for "tongues" in Corinthians is the word for language, but here it is even a stronger word, which means dialect. In other words, these unbelievers exclaimed, "How hear we every man in our own dialect wherein we were born?" Thus, this speaking on the day of Pentecost was not a jargon of sounds or a gibberish of expression, but a clearly understood language. It was not the natural language of the speaker, and in that measure it was unknown.

(2) If one physical phenomenon or manifestation of the Spirit, which was given on the day of Pentecost, is to be emphasized, why not all? If that be the case, the strongest expression relates that which each and every one received, was the cloven tongues of fire. Thus, we should look for cloven tongues of fire today.

(3) The speaking in languages or tongues on the day of Pentecost was not universal, but rather limited. In this connection, notice:

(a) The absence of the word "all" in its application to the speaking in tongues. The scriptures distinctly state that they were "all" in one accord, and that they were "all" filled with the Holy Ghost, but when speaking in tongues the word "all" is absent. It is not used. We may ask why? Simply because it was not true for they did not "all" speak in tongues.

(b) The word "began" most assuredly teaches that the speaking was not universal. If I should say all the family was

in the room and began to eat, the word "began" would indicate that the eating was only commenced. The expression, "And all the church were gathered together and they began to testify," would imply that the testifying was only in part. Hence, we may conclude that all did not speak.

(c) The speaking was by direct inspiration and not as a result of the evidence of His coming. "They began to speak with other tongues AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM UTTERANCE." They had no power to speak in tongues by the mere virtue of His coming or filling, but the Holy Spirit inspired the speaking.

(d) They were all filled, but the speaking came some time after. There is no hint or evidence that the apostles anywhere regarded speaking in tongues as a sign or evidence of His presence. The testimony of the apostle Paul agrees that the speaking in tongues is not a sign to the believers, but unto the unbelievers.

What, then, is the real evidence of the Spirit's presence? It cannot be any kind of physical manifestation or demonstration, for all of this can be counterfeited by the enemy. In the manifestation of Spiritualism and other false doctrines, there have been strange physical contortions and strange speaking in professed languages. Even divine healing, in which we all believe, has been strangely counterfeited by the powers of darkness. But the real witness to sanctification is the Spirit himself. "The Spirit himself, beareth witness with our spirit." Nothing can take the place of the divine Spirit coming into the human heart and consciousness. In other words, the inward manifest glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the unmistakable evidence. Nothing can ever take the place of the conscious presence of God within. When once the soul has been filled with the divine glory, the manifest holy, the presence of God, it becomes satisfied.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

The GIFT of the Spirit is for each and all. The GIFTS are divided to every one severally as He, the Spirit, wills. Not all have the GIFTS and the manifestations of the Spirit. Doubtless we would have more and better manifestations of the GIFTS, if we only knew better how to use them. God seemingly cannot trust the church with much power in this wicked age. Man so soon takes the glory to himself.

There are many beneficial manifestations of the Spirit which all may and should enjoy, namely: unctuous preaching of the Word to the edification of the church; building up the church in its most holy faith; praying in the Holy Ghost; inspired testimony, full of instruction and helpfulness; spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts to the Lord; the glorious fruits of the Spirit in gracious abundance, love, joy, peace and so forth; burden of spirit and travail of soul for the lost, bringing on gracious revivals; freedom and liberty in holy worship, shouts of triumph over victories gained; honest, sincere devotion to Christ and His Word; loving self-sacrifice and service for others in every possible effort to spread the gospel to a lost world. Such manifestations of the Spirit will instruct, edify, and comfort the church and give gracious success in the cause of God.

In these days of extreme manifestation, the holy people must give much care not to be hindered in the true and precious manifestations of the divine Presence. If we are not careful, we shall become self-centered and fearful of fanaticism and extremes and draw ourselves away from the Spirit's operation, until we become cold and dead and formal. This is no time for the church to draw back, but to push out and on in more devoted prayer, heroic sacrifice, and determination to have God's best and richest at any cost. Let us all be sure to receive the GIFT of the Holy Ghost in his cleansing, purifying

grace, which will empower for service. Let us also hold the GIFTS in the most sacred reverence, giving more prominence to the best GIFTS, for edification. Then finally, study how we may better manifest the graces of the Spirit in holy worship and devoted service.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST GOSPEL SERMON IN THE NEW AGE

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them” (Acts 2:14).

The Holy Spirit had come in power. His presence was an established fact. The report had reached the multitudes. From the multiplied thousands who had gathered in Jerusalem, a very large company now assembled not far from the place where the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the disciples. The gathered crowd interrupted the meeting. They were astonished and demanded an explanation. “What meaneth this?” Something must be done. Someone must answer the inquiring crowd. And, thus, we have the first Gospel sermon delivered by Peter. It will be well in the study of this sermon to take note (1) of the congregation; (2) refresh our minds with the person of the preacher; (3) study the method of address; and (4) study the sermon itself, with the closing exhortation which seems to have brought such success.

THE INTERESTING CONGREGATION

The historian mentioned many countries from which the people came, but all were Jews and proselytes. These devout worshipers had come from the east, Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and some dwelling in Mesopotamia; from the north, Pontus and Asia; from the west Phrygia, Pamphylia; and from the south, Egypt and parts of Libya about Cyrene. Many strangers were also from Rome. To sum up, he tells us there were Cretes and Arabians. What a crowd living in so many different nations.

Many doubtless were very familiar with the events of the past few weeks. Some without question had heard the prophet from Nazareth in person. And some had consented to his death. It may be that there were some who had been healed, and others who knew of relatives who had been blessed under his ministry. All had some idea about the Messiah. Some were honest, some were critics; others were mockers. It was no small task to get their attention and hold it long enough to awaken interest and bring conviction.

In my imagination, I watch for a few moments this crowd of Jews and proselytes. At this time, the Jews had many colonies in distant parts of the world, and in Alexandria and Rome they figured considerably in the population. I am interested in such a crowd. I watch the various faces as they change from one expression to another like the moving sea, first wonder, then astonishment, then to laughing and mocking. At the same time others are becoming excited by heated debate, while others are asking earnest questions. "What meaneth this?" The reply comes with a laugh, "These men are full of new wine." Nothing could be gathered from such a religious mob that was excited into a religious frenzy over the passing events. Nothing was more feared by the Roman authorities than a Jewish mob excited over religious matters.

Under these trying circumstances, Peter stood up with the eleven, and lifted up his voice and began his defense. His voice rang out clearly over that great throng of religious enthusiasts who were over against him and his company. As he moved along in his talk, the uproar gradually died away. As he took up his defense, quoting, explaining, and applying Scripture, a stillness covered the entire congregation, until his voice rang like a bell as they listened attentively. Some were now drawing a deep breath, others were wiping away a falling tear as he pictured afresh the scenes of the crucifixion. They

remembered so well the awful tragedy of that day. Just over there, many were filled with groans, while deep conviction fell in all directions. With bowed heads, aching hearts, and flowing tears many were under a deep sense of awful guilt. They question, "Is there hope for such as we? Can there be pardon for such a crime?" They could stand the pressure no longer and began the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? O tell us of some way out of this awful condition of things." Then the clear directions were given, which seemed like the gentle breezes cooling the burning sands of the desert plain. Three thousand people broke down and gave their hearts to Jesus Christ.

There are some things about this first gospel sermon and some things about the preacher which are of interest to us all. We can but give a brief outline. Inasmuch as we are all preachers in some sense, I trust we may be able to learn of the method of his success and be able to pattern after this effective discourse.

THE PREACHER

This man Peter, full of impetuosity, just a few days ago had backed down before a young maid, but was now facing this great religious mob. He faced the crowd with undaunted courage, in pure simplicity, and in deep earnestness told the truth. Peter has often been misjudged in his denial and his actions following the trial of his Lord. One of the important things to remember, is that while Peter went wrong at one time, it only took a short time for him to repent in bitter tears, and become restored. If all who make a slip would have the same immediate repentance, there would be little difficulty in their restoration to the favor of God and with the people.

The important thing about Peter was that now he is filled with the Holy Ghost. Christ seems to have given no clear directions as to the organization of His church, but rested everything

with His apostles and their receiving the Holy Ghost, who, when he should come, would guide them into all truth. A clean and empowered ministry is the great demand of the hour. The churches would be much better off if they would place larger importance upon a ministry that is clean in thought, word, and deed; obtain men who are well saved and know how to seek out the lost. But they generally seek for the eloquent, men pleasers, "good mixers," and those who are able to make after-dinner speeches for the entertainment of the worldly crowd. Among our Spirit-filled people, the demand is being intensified every year for men who know how to pray, who are filled with a passion for the lost, who know how to love and care for the people. A clean and devoted ministry is the slogan of the hour. Peter, fully cleansed from all carnality, was able to overcome that timid fearfulness which bothered him in the judgment hall. Now he stands forth before that great rabble of mockers declaring the whole counsel of God with a fearless heart. At the same time he is filled with such heavenly tenderness as to melt everything before him. As he told them the simple truth of the gospel, filled with the Holy Ghost and power, they were convicted.

METHOD OF ADDRESS

He did not appear before them in that bombastic fashion to skin them alive and show no mercy for anyone. But on the contrary I notice:

(1) He shows **STERLING GENTLEMANLINESS**. He is willing to meet them on their own ground and make full explanation of the question which had caused them so much trouble in their thinking. He gently tells them that they are mistaken in their judgment of the cause of this disturbance. "These are not drunken as ye suppose." He does not tell them that they are blockheads because they cannot see through the

thing. But he treats them as careful thinkers and gives them the reason why this condition could not exist. "Seeing it is but the third hour of the day." This would not be a sufficient excuse in our cities in these times with whisky delivered at early dawn. But in those days the wines used were very mild even the sour kind, and also drinking was not the first thing in the order of the day. In any event his manly approach to the people is a fine example for us all in the pulpit and in the pew as well.

(2) He makes a COURTEOUS APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE. "Ye men of Israel," which is the devoted title, chosen to gain their attention. He could have called them names not so endearing, such as a rebellious people, and told the truth, but why cut off their ears before he finds a way to their hearts. Nothing is lost in this courtesy and evidently much is gained. The preacher or worker must first gain the confidence of the people before he can have much attention, and the attention is the all important thing before truth can be effective. Courtesy and devotion to the people is all important, if we would win men to Christ.

(3) He is THOUGHTFUL IN ASSOCIATING HIMSELF WITH THEM. Men and brethren is his plea. This is something more than the "editorial we" which is made so much of in these days. This came from the depths of his soul. The thrust is gone. We must get down where the people live, if we would meet them and win them to our Lord.

(4) HE IS WISE IN THE CHOICE OF WORDS BY THE SPIRIT'S POWER. Do you see how he takes up their beloved prophets and shows how they had spoken of the very experience which was poured out upon them this very day? Then he takes up the words of David, their honored king, which must have had great power over them. How much better for us to find some common ground where we can meet

the people and begin here to reason concerning the truth in question. So many spend time in discussing the differences until all hope of finding any common ground is impossible. It is better to recognize the good which we can find among all people, and commend the excellent things before going on to reprove the bad. It is better to find out the things on which we are agreed before taking up the differences for discussion. This wisdom in gaining the point of attack is vital in the art of gaining the confidence of those whom we would win for Christ. So Peter's manner of address to the people was used for the glory of God in the salvation of many.

(5) He directs every word to their heart and conscience. "Ye have taken." "Ye have crucified." Until all seem to feel that they had a part in the matter of the death of Christ. And as Christ died for sinners then every sinner must feel that he is in some sense guilty in His crucifixion. He speaks with much authority, "Let all the house of Israel know." There is no guess work, or need of further investigation. The presentation of truth with directness and definiteness is the only way to impress men and win them for God. There can be no chance for doubt or question. God's demands are urgent. The needs of the human heart are pressing. Now is the time to act. Now the heart is warm. Decide now. Truth must be pressed home to the heart, for the people know enough, they only need feeling enough to act.

MATERIAL USED

(1) Just about one-half of all that is reported is clear quotation from the Scriptures, and one-half of the remainder is an application of the Scriptures quoted. The other verses are brief statements of history, things which they knew. This must impress us with the power of the word in preaching. Nothing will get hold of the hearts of men like the Word of

God quoted in the power of the Spirit. "The words which I speak, they are spirit and they are life." "The word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." The Word cuts two ways, through thoughts and feelings. The word of God goes to the very center of the soul and moves the will. Confidence in the power of truth will gain the victory, for God has promised that His word shall not return void, but it shall accomplish as God pleases and prosper in the thing whereunto it is sent. It will prove a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. O the power of truth.

(2) He directs every word to their heart and conscience. "Ye must have taken." "Ye have crucified." Until all seemed to feel that they had a part in the matter of the death of Christ. And as Christ died for sinners then every sinner must feel that he is in some sense guilty in his crucifixion. He speaks with much authority, "Let all the house of Israel know." There is no guess work, or need of further investigation. The presentation of truth with directness and definiteness is the only way to impress men and win them for God. There can be no chance for doubt or question. God's demands are urgent. The needs of the human heart are pressing. Now is the time to act. Now the heart is warm. Decide now. Truth must be pressed home to the heart, for the people know enough, they only need feeling enough to act.

THE FIRST GOSPEL SERMON

(1) Peter undertook to correct their suppositions by showing that this was the fulfillment of prophecy. He opened his message in this manner because he knew that the crowd was acquainted with prophecy, thus, this would give him a chance to appeal to a common background. He seems to say:

(a) This is the fulfillment of prophecy because what you see is universal. It is for everyone of all ages and for men and

women in all grades of society. And the promise is for "all flesh," your sons and daughters, young men and old men as well, servants and handmaidens.

(b) Here are the manifestations of fulfilled prophecy. The promise contains the same. The young men are seeing visions of usefulness and are swinging out into spiritual freedom and liberty. A church baptized with the Holy Ghost will have visions out beyond its own towns, cities, states, and nations. It will see the dark skinned people of Africa, and the yellow men of China. The outstanding men of history have had visions and have moved out into other fields. Like as Paul who saw a man beckoning and saying, "Come over and help us," so our young men are seeing visions of a thousand times a thousand beckoning hands saying, "Come over into China, Japan, India, Africa, and the Islands of the sea and help us." The young men are now flocking from the plow handles, grain fields, ships, and market places; from the homes and streets and lanes of our cities, to our schools and universities to prepare for this work of meeting the needs of the hour. Churches void of the Holy Ghost are perishing without this vision, and have hard work to get young men to fill their pulpits with the offer of a comfortable salary and a beautiful parsonage. On the other hand, young men and women are coming by the thousands to live and die on the battle field, that holiness may be announced in every land, among all people, of every color, and walk of life. Old men dream dreams, and tell things of interest which they have heard or seen, saying, "This is just what we have been longing for all our life."

(c) This is the prophesying mentioned in the promise. "UPON MY SERVANTS AND UPON MY HANDMAIDENS . . . AND THEY SHALL PROPHECY." God-given utterances shall be theirs. "I will give you a mouth." A divinely given message is the call of the day. Prophecy is a spiritual utter-

ance full of soul passion. "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit which should be earnestly coveted and sought after and which can be enjoyed by all.

(d) This is the fulfillment of prophecy because "I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath." Where the Holy Ghost has his way, the spiritual heavens are filled with divine wonders, which may be seen at the altar service, and in the change in people's lives, and in answers to prayer.

Walking miracles of divine grace are for signs to all the earth. The battle cry of the church is the cleansing blood and the fire of the Spirit, while clouds of glory from human testimony encircle the atmosphere. The center of human life has been changed. The sun and the material laws have been blotted out, while the glorious sun of holiness has risen, throwing its tinselled glory of perfect love into the heart. The soul now has a sun that never more goes down, for it reached the blazing light of eternal day. The soul lives in the atmosphere of eternal life, and the glory of this day is that light bursts forth from within the very center of spiritual being. Here the soul knows what the prophet meant when he said, "Arise, shine for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Thy sun shall no more go down, nor shall the moon withdraw itself. The Lord shall be thine everlasting light and thy God thy glory." Here the soul reaches a great and notable day of the Lord, where she needs not the light of the sun or the brightness of the moon for she walks in the light of the Lord.

(2) PETER MADE CHRIST THE CENTER OF HIS THEME. "Jesus of Nazareth" was not new to them. Large numbers had seen Him. Many had heard about Him. He had been widely known by this title. Not only His disciples

had known him as Jesus of Nazareth, but even demons had recognized this title. He had entered Jerusalem in triumph and was designated with the same expression, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee." When He was arrested in the garden He said, "Whom seek ye?" They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." Over His cross when He was crucified, the inscription was written, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The angels after His resurrection said to the women, "Ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified." Peter could have used no better terms to let all know of whom he was speaking. He thus called their attention to His humanity. "A man approved of God among you." He evidently meant to tell them that the miracles and mighty work were evidences that God had worked through him, and had approved him as a fitting instrumentality to show forth Himself. The conclusions were clear, therefore, he was an example of holy manhood.

(3) PETER DISCUSSED THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S ATONING SACRIFICE. How carefully he took up the discussion. He did not mention the crucifixion first, but rather "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God." He seemed willing, as far as possible, to take away the crime, the horrors of that dastardly deed, and emphasize the true aspect of the cross as having been foreknown and planned by God in the interests of men. It was all according to the eternal purpose which the Father had purposed in his Son, that in the age of the fullness of His grace, He might gather all things in His Son and make Him the head of a new race. For God had chosen a people in Him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. This pre-determination and election included a people who by their own free choice should be conformed to the image of His Son, this holy man of Nazareth.

The Christ of God, the Savior of men, was not captured and dragged to the cross, but He was delivered. "He laid down his life," in harmony with the divine plan. We are saved not through a murder, but through one who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. This came first and was most vital in the preacher's mind as the fruitage of the crucifixion. The cross was not a mere accident, a common murder, but there was a purpose, a divine plan. It is here we rest as we seek deliverance from sin. Thanks be unto God for His wondrous plan in our redemption! On the cross, redemption was wrought and finished according to the eternal purpose. Of course, there was a human side, which would not excuse the wrong of wicked hands. The crime was wrought by lawless hands, but they, "Israel," had demanded His death; therefore, all were guilty, both Israelites and Gentiles.

(4) Peter emphasized the resurrection of Christ, "Whom God hath raised up." This was the center, the very foundation stone. The very one who had lived among them, had been tested and approved, a man demonstrated, and delivered for their offences; He was the very one "Whom God raised up." His triumph in death also sealed His redeeming work, for death could not hold him. "I lay down my life that I might take it again." He loosed the bonds of death. He died, but He was above the power of death. Thus, He came triumphant from the grave by the power of God. Death could not hold such a one, for He was all-victorious.

These facts were then sustained by the words from David, their honored hero of history. How tactful to quote from the Psalms; the Psalms accepted by all as containing prophecies of God's "Anointed One." Peter had mentioned three facts about this Jesus of Nazareth: (1) His perfect life; (2) His determined death; and (3) His victory over death and the grave.

Peter saw these facts sustained in the words of David. The words seemed to be reverted because His exaltation at the right hand of God was mentioned first. But the exaltation came because death could not hold Him. His soul could not be left in hell. Such a one, with a perfect life approved of God, could not suffer corruption. Therefore, with such a life lived among men, He was victorious in death, and seated at God's right hand.

(5) Peter presented the exaltation and priestly office of Christ. The fact of David's death and the place of his burial was too well known to be in question. David's body did see corruption, and he had not been exalted at God's right hand. But this Jesus of Nazareth, "Hath God raised up whereof we are witnesses, and his flesh saw no corruption."

Should anyone question His resurrection, they were free to produce His body. But this could not be done for He was exalted at the Father's right hand. All that had taken place in the center of the universe cannot be told in human language. This we know, in harmony with His own word, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter," had come to pass. That He had been exalted and glorified was evident, for having received from the Father the promised Holy Ghost, He, this same Jesus, "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Therefore, "Let all the house of Israel know that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." The climactic proof of his exalted life, His atoning death, and His victorious resurrection, and glorious exaltation, all centered in the triumphant outpouring of the Holy Spirit which all had witnessed. I believe we should agree with this preacher that the conclusive evidence of our holy Christianity rests upon the ministry and blessing of the Holy Ghost in personal experience. The church

could have saved much time and effort in Christian evidences if she had tarried for her spiritual baptism.

These points cover the essentials of gospel preaching, and will carry conviction when announced over anointed lips from a burning heart. The results were glorious on this day and will always follow such gospel preaching. His closing exhortation was to the point and was convincing. How the Holy Spirit witnessed in bringing conviction unto repentance. As preachers, may we know how to exalt Christ that sinners may come trembling to find mercy. This is our great need.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH IN OUR AGE

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved; or more properly, Such as were being saved (Acts 2:47).

We take our place amidst that vast throng of people gathered near the upper room on the day of Pentecost. We see Peter as he comes to a breathing place. From that great crowd of people several hundred come near the disciples, and give every evidence of true repentance. They acknowledge the Christ whom Peter had preached unto them. We are warranted to believe that full and proper instructions were given these people.

I can see that great company as they prepare for the baptizing. As the service moves on through the day and this 120 fire-baptized believers laboring among the people, preaching and exhorting. The number swells until before they close the work of that long day, as near as they could count, there are about 3,000 gathered into the fold. I am not sure that they were all baptized this day, the record does not say that, only, "They that gladly received the word were baptized." It has been supposed that it was all in one day from the statement which follows: "And the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls." If the adding was by their baptizing, then this would follow. But if the adding was *by the Lord* as indicated in the text, "The Lord added to the church such as were being saved," then the adding was something different from baptizing.

All this is of small importance to the all-important question concerning the life and spirit of this first gospel Church. The reading of the description as given in this record would show great success following the coming of the Holy Ghost. The

first manifestations of divine grace are of great interest, and a careful reading will show some of the important requirements for success in the gospel Age.

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

(1) THE SUCCESS OF THIS GOSPEL CHURCH CLUSTERED AROUND A FIRE-BAPTIZED MINISTRY. This is what attracted the crowds at the first, they came to see and hear for themselves. If there were more going on within the church, there would be more going to the church. When the world can see tombstones in the church windows, and signs which indicate that the building is vacated and "rooms are to let," it gets the idea that there is "nothing doing" and only give it a passing thought. If there were opportunity for reading and research along particular lines of simple gospel truth, it might be a little more interesting to come. If the church could only see her chance and build her buildings for salvation business, and not for tombstones to mark the place of the dead; and instead of keeping her doors closed and windows darkened; have everything attractive and more beautifully lighted, heated and ventilated; and have something going on every night in the week, there would not be as many men spending their time in the show rooms and on the street corners.

A fire-baptized ministry ought to make things attractive enough, at least, to get a little criticism. It would seem that they would do things a little different once in a while, and not stand like a wooden man behind the pulpit and forever read in the same tone of voice. They might throw a chair, or tip over the pulpit, or break a glass, to do or say something new. Almost anything to get out of the awful ruts in which most preachers find themselves. The one thing our common people are looking for is soul, spirit, and life in the man who tries to preach the Word.

Reading the words of the fire-baptized Peter, we see how fearless he had become all of a sudden. He stood before that great mob, and lovingly yet fearlessly told them the truth about themselves and the awful result of their sin. At one time he seemed afraid of offending even the little maid, now he seemed to care little what the priests and elders thought, for he was filled with the all-consuming passion to reveal truth to their hearts.

He was careful to state facts and make the right application of truth. The first Church was built around this fire-baptized ministry. The great need of our day is a fearless ministry with a passion for lost men. Clean in heart and hand with a life above reproach. A life filled with prayer devoted to the one calling, "Preach the Word." This new church had a fine start in her ministry and as the people followed there was glorious success. Such will be the result everywhere in all ages. What a responsibility rests upon those who bear the vessels of the Lord in keeping clean from all worldliness.

(2) THEIR SUCCESS WAS BASED UPON THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. All religious movements to be lasting and truly successful from the spiritual standpoint must be accompanied with divine power. Paul endeavored to convince the world's educators at Athens of the reality of Christianity through scientific reasoning. But when he came to Corinth, he determined to follow the better way, "Not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." After this, he said, "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." God must touch the soul with divine power before there can be any permanent rest or continued satisfaction. Anything other than this will place the soul on the rolling waves of discontentment, ever learning and always seeking, but never able to come

to the knowledge of the truth. One word from heaven will calm every raging sea and land the seeker in the haven of perfect rest, where there is quietness and assurance forever.

(3) THEIR SUCCESS WAS BASED UPON THE SINCERITY OF THE SEEKERS. (a) You will notice there was Holy Ghost conviction. "They were pricked in their hearts." They were not only convinced but convicted. They not only saw their need, but their hopeless condition and threw up their hands so to speak in perfect surrender crying, "What shall we do?" Conviction is like having the soul seized with the iron hand of a friend, that reproves and convinces, then draws it to higher things. Some of us will never forget the day when the Holy Ghost thrust us through with that sharp sword of truth, and we felt cut into pieces and were helpless at the feet of Jesus, crying for mercy. "No man can come unto me except the Father draw him," said Christ. There must be a divine awakening; a soul conviction which is deeper than being intellectually convinced. "Pricked in their hearts"; "kicking against the goads," are beautiful expressions of the truth of real conviction.

(b) A deep repentance followed. The first step in Peter's directions was "repentance." Some might have thought that this should have been forgotten in the gospel. This is not so. We first hear the voice of John the Baptist crying from the wilderness: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Christ came through the same country, His disciples were preaching the very same message: "Repent ye, for the kingdom is at hand." The first directions given after the Holy Ghost came, were, "Repent and believe the gospel."

The directions given for salvation should not be misunderstood for they are clearly announced. Take the several statements which have been given in the Acts and the Epistles of Paul. Christ told His people to go and disciple all nations. This work of making disciples would be accompanied by the

Holy Spirit who would convince the world of sin. (1) "Repentance" is the foundation for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). (2) *Prayer* is necessary: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Also do not forget Christ's own words: "Knock and it shall be opened unto you, seek and ye shall find." (3) Faith is essential: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). (4) *Grace* from the Father is essential: "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Thus, we have conviction, repentance, prayer, faith, grace or favor of God, but all are "according to his mercy." "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "With the heart man believeth and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Confession of sin is not a means of salvation but something we do which opens the door of our hearts to receive salvation. It is true that we cannot save ourselves. Christ has provided salvation for us having made a full and sufficient atonement for our sins, and all we have to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are conditions of faith. "How can ye believe when ye receive honor one of another?" Conditions must be complied with, for without works faith is dead. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation." If salvation does not come immediately, be sure to work in a little more repentance.

(c) Public confession in baptism followed true repentance, prayer, and faith in Christ. Too little value doubtless has been placed on this very important act of confession or publicly putting on Christ. The directions given by our Lord seem to have been changed and instead of "discipling all nations, baptizing them . . . and then teaching them," our workers are trying to make disciples by teaching, and then after a long time baptize them if they hold out. This seems to have been the method employed by Constantine. He reserved his baptism until the very last thing, believing, I

suppose, with some people of our times, that when baptized, all his sins would be washed away. Thus, it would seem that he made provision for his sinning, trusting the final washing by baptism, to be the "cure all" for a life of sin. If water baptism washes away all past sins, what shall be done when the person sins after being baptized? Some say they sin every day. In this case, it would seem that baptism should be daily and that, just before going to sleep. "Arise and be baptized, to wash away thy sins," the words of Ananias to Paul, must not be taken alone as the only revealed truth for salvation. It will be much better to take note of all the other directions given whereby we are to be saved.

The outward mode of baptism is not so important as the inward repentance and faith of the earnest seeker. Baptism doubtless was intended to represent cleansing or washing away of sins by the unmerited favor of Jesus Christ provided in the atonement, and a means of public confession of salvation through Christ.

EXAMINATION OF THE DIRECTIONS TO SEEKERS

(1) They were directed to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"; yet this was no evidence that the formula as given in the directions of Christ, (Matt. 28:19) was not used. The directions as given by our Lord were truly as authentic as any statement in the Acts, and He clearly states: "Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." In the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," it is clear that as early as the close of the first century, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was the recognized form. In this same writing an article on the Eucharist states: "Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist, save those baptized in the name of the Lord, for of this the Lord said, 'Give not what is holy to dogs.'" Here the same writer, who told the baptizer to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit, now only mentioned the name of the Son. He had already given them the correct formula, and did not think it necessary to mention the three persons, so only mentioned the name of the Lord as they would surely understand. So the writer of the Acts only mentioned the name of the Lord Jesus, when speaking of baptism, as there was no question about using the names of the Father or of the Holy Spirit. No believing Jew would object or question about these two names. The name in question was that of the Son, hence, this name is mentioned as the important one in designating Christian baptism.

It is noticeable also, that the three forms as mentioned in the Acts are all different. It is the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Peter commanded the house of Cornelius to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48). The disciples of Ephesus were said to have been baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:5). This clearly showed that there was no exact formula used for baptism, in the name of the Christ, to be used as such. But these statements would prove that in baptism the baptized had fully accepted the truth of the gospel. When we consider the instructions given by our Lord in Matthew, saying, "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," we can see why the preachers in the Acts were careful when instructing the believing Jews to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. It was because the people had already believed in them in the general way.

(2) On the question of the remission of sins there should be no misunderstanding. Let us compare Scripture along this line. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for [or unto] the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preach-

ing the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). This same John through his ministry "gave knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins" (Luke 1:77). This same teaching is carried over into the gospel: "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46). The ground for the remission of sins is clearly stated in the two following texts: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Here the blood of Jesus Christ is the ground for the remission of sins. In Peter's sermon at Cornelius' house, he says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Here faith in the Lord Jesus is the ground for the remission of sins. Paul connects these two facts and shows how the work is done: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Romans 3:25). Thus, the one text in the 2nd chapter of the Acts, in the light of the texts already given, is made plain and should read: "Baptized unto the remission of sins which is salvation from sin." Remittance of sins is a divine act based on the atoning blood through faith, flowing from a true repentant heart, and water baptism is the open confession thereunto.

(3) They were then directed to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost then is the free gift of God, not gained by works, or their own personal goodness. The heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than earthly parents are to give good things to their children. There can be no question about the Father's ability or willingness.

This clearly marked a second step in the directions of

Peter given to these believers. For this gift of the Holy Spirit was something more than repenting, or the remission of sins, or being baptized. This gift was to follow all of these in their experience. Peter explained the matter by saying, "The promise is unto you and your children." This then was the Father's promise for which they waited and tarried until the Spirit was poured upon them. The conditions of the Father's giving this precious promise of the Holy Spirit must apply in this case, as well as in all other cases mentioned in the Scriptures. We cannot mention all, but only a few to show that Peter in his other exhortations doubtless did not neglect to fully instruct these people.

The instructions may be summed up as follows: (1) Obey: He giveth the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him. (2) Pray: He gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. (3) Believe: When ye pray believe ye receive and ye shall have. (4) Receive: Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.

These were a few of the conditions. Obedience covers all the consecration and dedication of ourselves to God. Their question, "What shall we do?" was evidence that they were in a praying, seeking attitude. That they were open to receive the truth was indicated from the personal act: "Then they gladly received the word." They exercised faith and trust when they joined the new crowd and were added unto them.

No wonder this young church became the mighty power of God in Jerusalem. No church can reject the work of the Holy Ghost and prosper in the real work of God. The importance of receiving this priceless gift of the Holy Ghost cannot be overestimated. The Church will come forth in her glory and beauty when she gladly receives the full word of God which contains the promise of the Father, the mighty indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Without this, she suffers a great loss in her work and ministry.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHURCH IN OUR AGE (*Continued*)

"And the Lord added to the church such as should be saved"
(Acts 2:47).

We have all looked back to the days of Pentecost and wished for such times to be repeated. Some of us have felt that if the conditions were met, we might have something of the same results. God is no respecter of persons. In every nation they that worship God and work righteousness are accepted of him. He is also the unchangeable God, and with Him there is no shadow of turning.

A continuous revival with seekers praying through to victory and throwing in their lot with the people of God, should be the common experience of every body of believers. If this is not the case, there is something in the way. No effort should be limited in reaching the unsaved ones of the city, town, or families, and gathering them to the place of worship.

The writer of this book of the Acts has carefully noted some of the important things in the belief, behavior, worship, and characteristics of this first gospel Church. We shall see some of the necessary requirements for a successful church, and some of the reasons for failure on the part of the followers of our Lord and His people. Every word seems filled with meaning and every expression loaded with precious ore from the mine of divine truth.

God has promised to be with us while we are with Him, and His promise never goes beyond this. If we want God in mighty power, we must meet conditions according to His word. All is easy if we make the connections with the Lord. It is

impossible to run with the trolley off, but adjust the trolley to the wire and the wheels will turn. Let the church adjust herself to known conditions and then move up the hill to victory.

This early church seems to have discovered the secret of victory. As long as they kept in touch with the forces of heaven, they were a triumphant body of believers, ready to live or die for the truth.

FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

(1) They had a good doctrinal foundation. "They continued in the apostles' doctrine." You might as well talk about a tree without roots, a house without a foundation, fish without water, human life without air, as to talk about the church without a well known system of doctrine. We often see this sign: "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are." It may be well said: "Tell me what you read, what you believe, and I will tell the measure of your spiritual experience." Much has been said about doctrine being dry bones, but the objection should not be with the bones, rather in that they are dry. None of us would want to be without bones and become a jelly fish. On the other hand we do not want to be nothing but bones. Doctrine is the frame of the church body, the very foundation of her existence, the root of her very life.

The early church clung to the apostles' doctrine taken from the sermon of Peter. It contained at least five great and all-important points, namely: (1) The pure earthly life of the Christ attested by God. (2) His atoning sacrifice to complete the plan and counsel of God. (3) His resurrection as spoken of by the prophets. (4) His exaltation and crowned as Lord. (5) His priestly office at the right hand of the Father in giving the Holy Spirit. These five great points of truth are the very backbone of the gospel, and no one can go far astray

who gladly receives and lives around these truths. If every believer would always be ready to give a reason for the hope he confesses, with meekness and fear, there would be less backsliding or turning away from the hope of the gospel. The one who reads, studies, and thinks with his Bible in his hand will be a successful Christian, and will also be able to help others into the fold.

(2) They enjoyed abounding fellowship. Someone has said that fellowship means, "fellows in the same ship." But it would seem to mean even more than this. It is companionship of persons on equal and friendly terms. It is glad and happy associations together. It is spiritual affinity and co-operation. It is that spiritual law in spiritual life which draws and binds pure spirits into heavenly oneness. This then is fellowship, a relation which draws and binds pure spirits into heavenly oneness. This is that relation which two rays of light sustain to each other, or the law by which two drops of water flow into one. There is nothing more precious than this beautiful fellowship in the house of God. It often fills the very atmosphere with a strong, yet heavenly aroma wafted on the breezes of heaven from the very garden of God. The church is held spellbound by it, and the world is attracted because of its presence.

Fellowship caused Jonathan to love David as his own soul. The Christian Czar, Alexander I, said, "I can understand a Christian in five minutes. Whether a monarch or a peasant my heart is with him." It is said that Livingstone felt the failure of the Universities Mission, although it was the work of another denomination, much more than his own recall from Africa. He could hardly write of it, for he was more inclined to "sit down and cry."

Real fellowship is soul response. To be known it must be felt. It cannot be described in human language. It is too

deep in spiritual consciousness for expression, and yet we know when there is true fellowship. True fellowship is heaven let loose in this old world. We are one with every holy person in the entire universe. No wonder the redeemed sing, "This is like heaven to me," while glorious fellowship rolls in tides from the heavenly kingdom. "Heaven comes down our souls to greet, while glory crowns the mercy seat." With this precious fellowship, the disciples swept through Jerusalem like a flame of fire and gathered into their midst the common people as well as a multitude of the priests.

(3) They did not neglect the ordinances or means of grace. "They broke bread." This may refer to the love feast, and the bread covenant. But it has been taken to indicate their faithfulness in the ordinances of the Lord's Supper. The abiding spirituality of any body of believers may be determined by the way they observe the ordinance of Holy Communion. If it is looked upon as a mere custom and is gone through in a careless way, with little or no heart in the service, it will prove a curse rather than a blessing. "He that eateth and drinketh not discerning the Lord's body, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." The heart must be in tune with heaven, and the vision must be bright and clear with an upward gaze fixed on the Lord himself or there can be little blessing.

This is a sacred hour of waiting in His presence when all earthly things are shut out and the soul communes with its Holy Lord. The broken bread brings to memory clear and strong the cruel nails and thrusting spear, showing that our Lord's earthly body was bruised for our iniquities. As the lips touch the flowing wine, the pure juice of the vine, our eyes are opened and we behold the poured out life blood which is efficacious to cleanse us from all sin. All this brings us close to the gates of heaven itself. The pure soul bathes in the crystal waters which flow from the throne of God, and lives

in the fountains which play before the throne of the Eternal over and over again. As we come out from the presence of God, new hopes, new strength, and higher inspirations are given for the battles of life.

The church that would abide in spiritual life, must give great care that this sacred service does not become a mere form of worship. It must be frequent and ever fresh in devotion to our blessed Lord. The entire service should be filled with spiritual freedom and, as little as possible, with ritualistic prayers. Holy emotion should throb in every breast, while on bended knee faith sees the invisible Christ. "As oft as ye do this ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come."

(4) They were prompt and faithful at the prayer service. "They continued in prayers." The one thing which distinguishes Christianity from every other religion is the service of prayer. Other religions have much praying or forms of prayer, and they think by their much praying they are to be saved. They pray and continue to pray before images or to their gods hoping that they shall finally be saved. The Christian is the man who has been saved from all sin through submission to the will of God, and trust in the all atoning merits of Christ, then with a conscious knowledge of salvation, he prays and labors in prayer to be a partaker with Christ in the redemption of the world. Prayer is his business as a Christian, and he succeeds as he works at his job. He becomes a priest unto God to offer spiritual sacrifices. He stands between the world and God, as Abraham stood between Lot and the destruction of the cities of the plain. The believer has many subjects for prayer, namely, church, the ministers of the gospel, the missionaries, the world at large, his enemies and his friends, for kings and those in authority, for special and particular persons who have been placed on his heart, for his own guidance

and protection, and the success of the work of God in every place.

There is special soul blessing in the service of prayer and especially in private and secret prayer. No church can expect to accomplish the work of God in the world that is not a praying church. Prayer is the strong arm of all believers. Prayer is work and labor, and must be taken up with a joy and pleasure with faith in results. The early church continuing in the apostle's doctrine learned how to pray, first of all, and continued in prayer. O for a revival of the burden and joy of prayer. "I would," said the apostle, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." Then, we shall see salvation flowing like rivers and glory upon the people.

(5) They possessed an unwavering steadfastness. This early church not only made a good start, but "they continued steadfastly."

We are impressed with the importance which the apostles placed on the establishment of believers. Justification and sanctification are both works of grace wrought in the soul instantaneously, but it must not be forgotten that all the necessary submission and consecration, conditions and attitudes of the soul, must be maintained as an ever-present and continuous fact, in the further development in spiritual life. Steadfastness implies the force of the will, determination to go through. It is that word which gathers strength the farther it moves out into God. It never wavers or turns to the right or the left, but ever marches "in the middle of the King's highway." Steadfast in fellowship, in spite of reports and appearances. Steadfast in holy communion with its Lord, regardless of the incoming tide of worldliness which sweeps many away. Steadfast in prayer, even though prayers do not seem to have any immediate answer. Steadfast in faith, though Satan

tempt with his "ifs" to make the soul doubt and draw back. Continuing steadfastly to believe seeing or no seeing, feeling or no feeling, walking right into every rolling Jordan of duty. After a little, the soul will form the habit of steadfastness, and it will be easy to move forward in all the will of God. Though the way may be filled with trials and sorrows, God's will becomes sweeter than honey in the honey comb and sought after with great delight.

Jesus set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem although He well knew that it meant awful suffering and death. He would allow nothing to turn Him aside. And when in the garden amid the awful struggles of that hour, each time that He came for a little sympathy from His disciples, He returned to go a little farther into the darkness of the struggle. We would not shrink or draw back. How we need this steadfastness to go through with Jesus. The disciples seemed to impress this upon their followers. Trials, disappointments, and sorrows will come across your pathway, but continue steadfastly, beholding the glory of God and you will be changed from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord.

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS AND RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH. Christianity is a very practical way of life, and all who are united to Christ are related to each other by the closest ties. We are members of His body and also members of one another. These holy and sacred ties, which bind the church of Christ into one great body of believers, have their fruitage in social relations which give beauty and glory to the entire body.

The important principles of their social relations are as follows: (1) Their religious life was carried into the home. Pure Christianity can never be confined within the walls of the church. It finds its most congenial atmosphere in the home circle and around the fireside with loved ones. It builds its

family altars and gathers around the sacred fires husband and wife, children and friends to share in the common meal of spiritual food from the table of the Lord. How many Christian wives, through their loyalty and devotion in the home, have been able to win their husbands to the fold of Christ? How precious has become the relation of husband and wife when both are mindful of the other's interests from the standpoint of Christian principles. Both are in study not to please themselves but to please and serve the other. The home becomes a heaven; the glory of God surrounds the fireside; pure love beams from every brow; and the light of perfect joy sparkles in every eye. The children's merry laugh and the baby's prattle are filled with music for the happy parents. The conversation is loaded with a sweet aroma of love as from a garden of flowers wafted on the gentle breezes of Spring. The harsh word has been supplanted by the gentle expression which inspires hope like the gentle dew upon the withering herb. God is here and His presence crowns the home. A true gospel experience is at its best in the home life, where it has the best chance for practical demonstration.

(2) In their relation to each other, they were unselfish and filled with liberality. "They sold their goods and parted as every one had need." When the Holy Ghost comes upon the soul, his mighty fires destroy all selfishness, and untie the purse string making a great joy of giving. The only cross is when the ability to give more becomes impossible. It has been said that the one great hindrance in present day Christian churches is the sad neglect to care for their poor. Millions of dollars are invested in expensive church edifices which could be better invested in devotion to the interests of the needy and in winning the working classes to Christ. How much better it would be to provide for the sick and the needy, rather than

for churches to compete for the highest steeple or the most beautiful structure.

May we find one of the avenues of spiritual blessing in obeying the commands of our Lord? He said, "When ye make a feast, call in the lame and the halt and the blind; they cannot recompense you, but ye shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." One of the special points of commendation, by the apostles, was that they had cared for the poor. This brings us to the next point.

(3) There was glad equality among them. "They were together and had all things common." How far this was literally carried out we are not told, but the spirit of the disciples surely is important in the church of Christ. (We shall take up Christian Socialism in another place). In the church, care must be given that the most humble saint clad in the poorest garb may have equal attention with those who are more prosperous. There must be no "sit ye here in this corner" to the poor, and a better place offered to others who are dressed in better clothing. All are one in Christ, and all are beloved of the Lord. There can be no race, color or social distinction in fellowship, male or female, bond or free.

(4) They kept the law of Christian unity. "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple." When the Holy Spirit came the disciples were of one accord, and if the Holy Spirit remained with them this beautiful one-accordness must be maintained. How grieved the Spirit often is when this tender cord is broken, and believers are separated in their feelings toward each other. Christian unity is like the precious ointment which sends its sweet perfumes to every part of the room, or "like the ointment on Aaron's head running down to the skirts of his garments."

This unity is often maintained under great sacrifice. Some must often humble themselves, and others may be obliged to

sacrifice the pleasure of speaking out their pet ideas on some questions. "We should endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." Spiritual anarchy is not conducive to the law of unity. If we practice everyone for himself, the devil will get the whole.

One accord means musical harmony of soul with heaven. This puts us in beautiful accord with all who are attuned with the heavenly choir. When the church is like a well-tuned instrument, what melody the Holy Spirit is able to bring forth in the worship, through prayer, song, and testimony; and how the music rolls out upon the air, inspiring everyone who comes within the sound of such glorious harmonies. What possibilities are within the reach of the church of God, when this law of blessed unity is carefully observed, when every member is careful to guard the interests and feelings of others. What sorrow and deep humiliation should be experienced when this law is broken, and discordant notes are found to break the spiritual harmonies in the church. Every effort, even though painful, should be made to restore this lost accord by deep compassion for one another, loving as brethren, being filled with pity, and overflowing with courteousness. To keep the Holy Ghost, this law of unity must be maintained and must never be forgotten.

THEIR RELATION TO GOD

(1) They had singleness of heart. "One thing I know." "One thing I do." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be filled with light." "Finally, be ye all of one mind." And the multitude that believed were of one heart. The double heart is a most unstable thing.

(2) They had overflowing gladness. A glad happy people will be a conquering people. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

(3) They believed in praising the Lord. Praising God seemed to have been a part of their business. It shall be said in that day, "I will praise the Lord." Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

(4) God made their lives tell on the outside. "They had favor with all the people." There may be criticism but when the truth is known, the world respects those who are sincerely devoted to God and His truth.

(5) They had a continuous tide of salvation because God was with them to bless. "And the Lord added to the church such as were being saved." These heart conditions will always bring results. It is impossible to keep the truth down; it must triumph.

Thus, the record of this successful church closes in a blaze of glory and salvation. No barren altars where the Holy Spirit has the right of way. Trials and persecutions may come but this is only another occasion for special rejoicing, that we should be counted worthy to suffer. If prisons be the lot, this would be a fine place to get the jailer to an altar of prayer and pray him through to victory. The gospel church is a glad and victorious band of faithful believers.

CHAPTER XII

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AT WORK

(The First Miracle)

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk (Acts 3:6).

This interesting story which is recorded in the 3rd chapter of the Acts took place soon after Pentecost. We are not told the exact time. There seems to have been a little rest or quiet period following the events of the second chapter. This is not strange, since time would be needed to teach and lead the three thousand into the full light of the new found life in Jesus Christ. While there was great power of spiritual illumination and quick development in divine things, as a result of the Pentecostal blessing, from the record it would seem that time was needed to root and ground these people in the truth.

The statement, "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine," would indicate a longer time of teaching and a fuller amount of instruction than was possible in the one day of preaching. The closing statement, "And the Lord added unto them such as were being saved," would also point to the fact that the work of salvation and instruction were carried on continuously. The soul is saved and sanctified on the ground of free grace through the merits of Christ, and both works of grace are instantaneous; yet we should not forget that teaching and careful instruction are needed, and the seekers must continue in the doctrine if they are to develop into strong Christian characters. Too many come to our altars and are left to themselves, because no instructions are given them whereby they

may find clear directions. This point was not neglected by the apostles, as we may gather from the record in the second chapter, and also from their practice which we may see in the experience of the converts at Samaria in the eighth chapter.

When our manufacturers want to put a new article on the market, they send agents into all the great cities to demonstrate the utility and practicability of the article. In the very beginning, God seems willing to make a demonstration to the chief priests and leaders of the people, that Jesus Christ was still alive and active in the affairs of the new church, and also that this new movement was full of vital force. God has ever been seeking opportunities to manifest and demonstrate divine things. He welcomes a challenge. "Ask of me and I will show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not." "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, prove me now herewith." "Put me to the test, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing big enough to more than meet every need."

Moses was called from the back side of the desert to show himself before Pharaoh: "Manifest, demonstrate thyself before Pharaoh." We well remember how he did this until his rod had swallowed up all the rods of the Egyptians, and the plagues continued until the backbone of opposition was broken. For Moses' faithfulness, God was willing on the glory crowned mountain heights to demonstrate, manifest Himself after hiding Moses in the cleft of the rock. When Israel had backslidden, God called Elijah from the woods and told him to go before that wicked king Ahab and show, manifest, and demonstrate himself. He builded an altar and soaked the wood with water, then fire from the throne of God came down and demonstrated that God was God to the satisfaction of all. Christ Jesus was the manifestation of God among men, and the church must be the manifestation of Jesus Christ in the world.

The opening of this new era in the revelation of truth required a demonstration of divine power. Peter and John on their way to the temple saw the opportunity, and they were not slow to act. This lame man, who had been lying at the "Beautiful" gate day after day for years, was an honest beggar and they could not pass him by. As Peter and John walked close to him and looked upon him with pity, he returned the look with a wishful heart expecting something from them. Then Peter exclaimed, "Silver and gold I have none, but what I have you may have. In the name of Jesus the Nazarene arise and walk." As an act of his own faith, Peter took him by the hand and lifted him from the ground. Quicker than a flash, strength came to his ankles. He was able to stand, then he walked around and soon he was leaping. He grabbed both Peter and John and holding them fast, he went with them through the gate into the court walking, leaping, and jumping and at the same time shouting the praises of God. What a commotion. The prayermeeting was broken up. He still held these two disciples, and went with them to Solomon's porch where the crowd gathered for an explanation. The healing of this man together with the explanation, furnishes some lessons in divine manifestation and a true gospel demonstration.

MANIFESTATION AND DEMONSTRATION

(1) God chooses fit channels for the manifestation of His power. Peter and John were on their way to the temple for prayer. Peter was so quick and impetuous; John was calm and sympathetic. Both were filled with the Holy Ghost. It seems quite wonderful how these two men were associated in all these years. They were partners in business, converted about the same time. They were with Christ in the holy mount, and also witnessed His sufferings. John was close by when Peter denied his Lord, and was present when He was restored to fellowship

by the Lake of Galilee. They were much together after Pentecost.

(a) They were used because they were in a worshipful attitude. They were going to the temple. At the temple, there was much corruption in the priesthood and many things to which they might have objected. They might have stayed away because their own experience was much beyond even that of the priesthood, for they had received the Holy Ghost. But they looked over and beyond all the deceit, corruption, selfishness, and miserable hypocrisy, and went to the temple to meet the Lord. A noted professor asked a new student at one of our universities where he went to church. The young man replied that he could get just as much good out of going to the hills, and looking on the wonders of creation, and worshiping the God who made them all, as he could out of going to church. The professor replied, "But what do you do when it rains?" There are rainy days and hard times for those who leave the public worship to go out into the open. Better find a place of shelter and come in out of the rain my come-outer friend.

(b) They were used because *they were on time*. They were there at the hour of prayer. Promptness in attendance means much if we are to be made a blessing. Few people get blessed or are made a blessing to others when they neglect punctuality in their worship. Be early at the service, take a front seat, and it may be the Lord will select you for a channel through whom He can pour His blessing to others.

(c) They were used because they were going to the temple for PRAYER. Their object in going to the temple was not to see sights or get acquainted with new people; nor view the new styles and note the changes in hats; nor to be prominent in business circles. They were going there to look after more important business, prayer. The native Christians in

one of our mission fields have a custom of finding their way to the woods for secret prayer. This is practiced so frequently and so continuously that they have a well-beaten path to their place of prayer. One time, a young woman reminded her friend that she noticed the grass was growing in her path, and this might be the reason for her defeats. Bishop Leighton used to go so often to a given place, in one of the public parks in his town, that the public deeded him that spot as his own personal property. Love and devotion for prayer becomes all-important if we are to be made channels for the manifestation of divine glory. Only as we are "God conscious" can He demonstrate His power. Then others will see that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him as did the apostles.

(2) The man at the beautiful gate illustrated the world's great need, and the opportunity for divine demonstration of the gospel. The prophets looking down through the years saw the world's need, and presented it in terms of physical pictures. They saw the human race full of wounds and bruises, putrefying sores, the head sick, and the heart faint. When they received a view of the coming salvation, they cried, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." The church is exhorted to make straight paths for their feet that the lame be not turned out of the way.

The world is lame in their purpose, in their will, and in their moral conscience. Out through the cracks and crevices of their soul, they are able to see higher possibilities just beyond, but they are lame and cannot get the strength to realize them. Many a soul would like freedom from enslaving appetites. To arise seems to be the impossible. O for some unseen hand to help them and to lift them to a higher plane. They are impotent, helpless. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags"; "And we are as weak as water spilt upon the ground." And the worst of it all is that we were born that way: "Lame from

our birth." This is the reason so many have a sick head, and are not able to "walk aright," or run in the way of his commandments. "The whole heart is faint." This is the seat of all their trouble. The Psalmist had the right philosophy when he said, "I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart." God commences with the heart and then through the heart reaches the ankle bones.

The world is lying weak and helpless like this poor lame man. It is waiting the passing of some Peter and John. Someone must go where they are and give them the helping hand. Christ came to help the helpless. "The whole need not the physician but those that are sick." This man was lying at the "Beautiful" gate of the temple, which was on the eastern side, where he might receive every opportunity for help from natural sources. The sun broke over the eastern hill and poured its warm rays upon him. He amused himself with the beauty and architectural splendors which ornamented the gate. All this did not give him strength; he must still be a beggar; he must still be lame, helpless, and impotent.

When Christ came, he found lame and impotent humanity lying at the beautiful gate of Roman civilization. She had her laws of equity and courts of jurisprudence; she had her magnificent statuary and brilliant works of art that adorned her beautiful cities and costly temples. But at the very gateway of all her material improvements which then astonished the world, helpless humanity lay right at the beautiful gate of Greek culture with her schools, universities, and systems of philosophy, poor humanity was lying helpless and lame. Athens, the proud city of the Greeks, boasted of her culture, yet at her very gate was Corinth with her sin and shame, vice and crime. There was the beautiful Jewish ritualism sounding forth in her magnificent temple service. Here the high priest announced the morning sacrifice from a pinnacle on the temple heights;

here the ascending smoke of the morning sacrifice encircled the golden dome sparkling in the sunlight of the rising sun, and told the distant worshipers of morning prayer. Right at the "Beautiful" gate of gorgeous ritualism, in Jewish worship, the common people were lying in great numbers foodless, lame, helpless, and crying for spiritual bread. Blessed be God, the apostles had something on hand for this poor cripple! And the Gospel church has something for impotent humanity which will give strength to heart, and give the ankle bones power to run in the way of the Lord's commandments. Helpless humanity without Christ is so near and yet so far away from God, even at the very gate of opportunity, and yet does not enter.

So at the very gate of our modern civilization, and the culture and refinement from our great universities and schools of higher education and fine arts; at the very temple gates of our modern Christianity with her rich and musical display of worship; poor lame humanity in countless thousands is lying helpless without the bread of life. What salvation can we offer? Is there still power in Jesus' name? Must they continue to wait for some other Peter and John, who will have something on hand to give away? Who will step forth not afraid to meet the situation squarely in the face, and with the life-giving touch of Jesus the Nazarene, impart strength, and bid the lame to arise and walk?

(3) *The expectation of this lame man impresses us with the lawful attitude of the world toward the church.* "He gave heed expecting to receive something from them." The world has a right to expect something from the church. When the world gives heed what does it find in our worship? Nothing but dry forms, lifeless worship, heartless service, clouds without water, wells gone dry, bones bleaching on the sand? No wonder the world has become sick and refuses to give any

more heed to the church and her announcements. Like Christ, they have come around the fig tree and found nothing thereon but leaves. Some would blame our Lord for blighting that tree because it had no fruit. I cannot. He must have thought, "Here is the perfect picture of profession without the sign of fruit." While it was not the time for ripe figs, yet there should have been young figs in the development, and even this was wanting. So much like the lives of many professors, it was meet that he should give an illustration of the withered, dried up life of a mere profession without signs of fruit. How disappointing to our Christ and how much so with the world. It would be much better to have a fig tree without leaves and have young figs developing on the limbs, than a beautiful tree with no sign of fruit.

The results of this gospel demonstration were twofold. Wherever there is a real demonstration results will follow. (1) It gave the apostles a great opportunity to preach the gospel to the multitudes. How the crowds came together and how Peter did preach to them Jesus Christ. He put himself in the depths of humanity and regarded himself as nothing. He lifted up the name of Jesus, telling the people Christ is all and in all. The real cream of his talk was to the effect that Christ was alive and active, and through His resurrected life, at the right hand of the Father where He had fully received honor and glory, this man had been restored to health. He pushed on rapidly to the climax, namely, that while they were guilty, yet there was salvation for them through the same name. (2) It caused many to turn to the Lord. "The number" was given to indicate those who accepted the Lord Jesus on that eventful day. Please notice the kind, tender and courteous, yet fearless presentation of the truth. It was full of hope for all. The gospel will succeed, victory will crown our efforts if we present a message of hope. Do not be surprised if all do not accept your

message. Some may oppose and doubtless will. However, God will stand with the message of truth and it shall not fall to the ground.

METHOD OF PETER AND JOHN

(1) They sympathized with the man on account of his physical need. They came near to where he was sitting. How easy it would have been for them to have made the excuse, that they had received such a soul blessing that there was little time for anything else, and the body was of so little account anyway. They seemed to have learned this lesson well from their Lord, namely, care for the body first, and then for the soul. The church has turned the tables and has neglected the body trying to help the soul. It might be better to get back to the Christ method, namely, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and they will be glad to listen to our message.

(2) They fastened their eyes on Him, or faced the real condition. The church seems to be leaving the masses and the down-town district, and moving its costly buildings into the wealthier parts of the cities. The church seems to desire to get away from this vision of the poor and the needy. The great mass of the unchurched population of our cities are left to themselves. O for a few more silver tongued orators, like Chrysostom, who will pour their soul out on the street corners and in the shops among the working people.

(3) They did their best. They took hold, touched, lifted him up. If the church ever lifts the world, she must get hold of the body. Christ came with healing for the body as well as for the soul, and deposited this treasure with the church. Thus, through faith in Jesus the Nazarene, she may have power to say, "Arise and walk."

There are two things in this connection which should not be forgotten, namely, (1) the personal touch; and (2) the manifestation of our faith in the co-operation with the seeker

after God. Nothing can take the place of a personal touch with men. This was so clearly emphasized in the ministry of our Lord. Neither should we neglect to manifest our faith in the presence of the one who is to be helped.

(4) They had a supply of grace for the emergency. I am impressed with the importance of keeping a good stock of grace on hand at all times. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee." Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh thee of the reason of the hope that is in thee. "Thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

In the story told by Christ of that man who went to his friend's house for three loaves, much importance has been placed upon the seeker's earnestness. But if we look a little deeper, we shall find the cause. A friend of his had come from a distance, tired and weary, having had nothing to eat for a long time, and there was nothing to set before his friend. The wife had neglected to do the baking that day, and they had eaten everything in the house. The stores were all closed at that time of night. He felt ashamed and abashed and did not want the situation to get out on him. So he slipped around out through the back door and across lots to his neighbors in search for bread. He must have something, not for himself, but for this friend. Thank God, the church need not go through this experience, for God is able to make all grace abound. We may always have a sufficiency in all things, and have plenty of bread on hand all the time.

Spiritual poverty, the apostle says, is much like "wells without water." What can be more disappointing than on a dry and hot day to come to a well and find it without water. How much better to have plenty of the water of life in the soul and plenty of good fresh bread to give away.

Peter told this man that he did not have much which the world called wealth, but he did have something which was of

greater importance. Health of body is more than gold, and health for the soul is worth even more than that. This man evidently received both health and soul blessing.

THE RESPONSE OF THE LAME MAN

(1) His weakness was made his strength. His ankle bones received their strength. God puts strength into the weak will, makes strong the weak purpose, and the places where once the soul was weak now becomes a fountain of power.

(2) He manifested aggressive action. First, he stood, then walked, then commenced leaping. Like a flash of lightning he was healed, but it seemed to take a few moments to get his bearings and fully realize what had happened. Do not draw back because the first effects are not fully up to the ideal. Move out on the first divine impulse. God will take care of the results; step out on the promise. God will be true to His word.

(3) He burst forth with unbounded praise. He was leaping and praising God. No wonder! He had been crippled all his life, and now that he had a chance to move around a little, what else could he do? So the soul healed of its awful disease of sin will find help in giving vent to the emotion of joy. The more the praises flow from the heart, the larger the stream of joy which comes in. If this is continued, joy like great rivers will roll and swell through the soul. Then the leaping and shouting of this man will be fully appreciated.

(4) Following this, he was seen standing up with the apostles. In the midst of the trial and persecution which followed, this man did not forsake his friends. When they were brought before the elders, he was standing with them. This gave the apostles victory in the face of opposition. I like to preach when there are men, once lame, who have been healed,

standing around. It puts fire into the message, and gives courage to speak.

ATTITUDE OF THE LAME MAN

The attitude of the lame man and his relation to truth is important. Did he have faith? Did he do anything at all, or was he just passive? I cannot bring myself to believe that he was careless and listless. While the outward indications do not seem marked with extreme action on his part, as in the case of the prayer of the Syrophenician woman, yet we may see that he was not altogether inactive.

(1) Peter got his attention, and this is the first noted step.

(2) He gave heed unto them, which indicates a receptive attitude.

(3) He looked expecting to receive. He may not have had a clear understanding of results, but expectancy was aroused.

(4) He manifested sincere co-operation because Peter raised him up with only his right hand.

Thus, I am led to feel that this man had something to do with his deliverance. Surely he was not wilfully opposed to Peter's gift. He did not hold back or pull away. His conduct afterward indicated that he was glad to be delivered from begging. He was not only shouting and leaping happy, but his holding on to Peter and John showed his deep appreciation.

CONCLUSION

I am forced to a few conclusions:

(1) As important as healing has been, this must not be sought for personal notoriety or glory. Our Lord was constantly drawing attention away from the physical to the spiritual.

(2) That physical manifestations, when given from God, are intended to lead unto the spiritual. That the desired end is

spiritual fruitage. When the spiritual has been reached, there will be less dependence on the material.

(3) Our behavior in trial, our attitude in the midst of opposition and persecution, is most important in the spread of our glorious gospel. How sweetly and how calmly Peter and John met the fiery threats of their critics. And what a change was manifested in Peter. He not only has put up his sword, but does not have it with him to use.

(4) That the church must demonstrate her faith in the supernatural. Beautiful doctrine is good, correct church polity is desirable, and right discipline helpful, but the world would like to see examples of our faith in practical demonstration.

(5) Heaven is always ready to co-operate with our faith. The opportunities are all around us, waiting for action. Let no man pass by with careless inattention. But like these two faithful workers, let us ever be on the lookout for opportunities to give as we have received.

CHAPTER XIII

A GREAT UNITED PRAYERMEETING

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken (Acts 4:31).

BACKGROUND OF PRAYERMEETING

This prayermeeting followed the report from Peter and John of a threatened persecution by the authorities. This strenuous opposition was brought on through a sermon preached in Solomon's porch to a crowd which had gathered, on account of the excitement created by the demonstration of the lame man who had just been healed. The excitement was natural, for they had seen the man so often at the "Beautiful" gate with his helpless twisted feet. Now, he was walking with his feet in perfect condition, and it was impossible to suppress the opportunity to declare the good news of salvation.

His preaching was along the same line as his sermon on the day of Pentecost. He was humble, still tactful and kind, but firm and uncompromising. He magnified his Lord and mentioned the trial before Pilate, and called attention to the Christ as "holy" and "just." He gave his Savior a new name and called Him the "Prince of Life," which reminds us of His leadership as the author of our faith and captain of our salvation. It was through this name they had obtained this victory for the healing of the man. He turned with eyes of pity and was willing to regard the awful deed of killing the Prince of Life to their ignorance. What a change from his smiting sword in the garden a few weeks before. Evidently, he had listened to his Master's word on the way to the cross, "Lord, forgive

them, for they know not what they do." And again he told them that it was all in harmony with the Divine plan as foretold by their prophets. Then with a throbbing heart, he injected an exhortation for repentance, which was backed by the promise of forgiveness, and provided in a refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Peter took one step farther in speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, and said, "The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus," and "God having first raised up his Son Jesus, now sends Him to bless them."

He had so clearly grounded his statements on the words of the prophets who had spoken in the name of the Lord, even from the beginning of the world, that only one more would complete the chain. This one was Moses. Peter took up the words of Moses, their accepted leader, as found in Deut. 18:15, 18, 19. Like unto Moses. How? they may have reasoned. Moses was a prophet mighty in deed, Jesus was also a prophet. Moses was a leader, Jesus was also a leader, a Prince, a Captain of salvation. Moses led God's people from bondage to liberty, Jesus was doing the same, leading men and women from sin to glorious freedom. Moses proclaimed a message of holiness and revealed God's will, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." This Jesus of Nazareth, a holy man, had also manifested the Father's will and declared, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Other similarities could have been gathered, but the point had been made, Peter now climaxed with, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant God made to Abraham." They knew at a glance what the covenant embraced. It was a spiritual deliverance which would enable them to serve God in righteousness and true holiness all the days of their lives. This is given in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel.

This strong appeal went home unto their hearts, and there were mighty results. The leaders of the nation were stirred

to opposition, but many who listened were converted, "And the number of men were about five thousand." That surely was a mighty victory for Peter and John. They could afford to sleep in jail that night.

The issue was now well under way. Many were compelled to take sides either with Peter and John or with the authorities. In the morning, Peter and John were brought forth to give an explanation of their conduct. All the leading men were gathered. The rulers, elders, and scribes, the two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas with all the pomp of their official position, were all in evidence. John and Alexander were mentioned, I judge, from their political influence. At any rate the strong men of the Sanhedrin were interested and present.

When all were assembled Peter and John were brought into the midst for a careful questioning. This method was in harmony with the law. We shall more clearly understand the scene before us by reading the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy. Let us read a part: "If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, [a good picture of Peter and John], and he give thee a sign or a wonder and the sign or wonder come to pass," (just what had taken place, in the healing of the lame man), then if there was a tendency in the matter in question to lead away from the Lord their Jehovah, God, who brought them out of the house of bondage, then follow directions for judgment. There was a careful searching to find out the truth.

Now the question came: "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" There was no contention over the healing, for before them stood the man, who had been made whole. Although the Sadducean position in doctrine did not admit of the operation of angels or spirits in such a work as this, they do not bring up that question. It may be interesting to note, that the opposition now seemed to come from the Sadducees,

while only a few weeks ago it was largely from the Pharisees. Very evidently, many of the Essenes as well as the Pharisees, had received the gospel. Three thousand had been converted on the day of Pentecost, and the Lord added daily such as were being saved. Only yesterday five thousand more believed upon Christ. Surely they were filling Jerusalem with this new gospel of salvation. Now the Sadducees, the class of financial influence, were to take a back seat or this new gospel must be stamped out.

As to the point by what "power," by what "name," was this miracle wrought we give our attention. Evidently, in the background of their thinking, they were trying to bring out that if in any name were used other than their Jehovah God, the way would be open for serious charges. What was the power and name? Would such a course as this lead from their God who had brought them out of bondage? All was still; a breathless silence filled the room. What shall the answer be?

Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, was not slow to reply. What confidence! What assurance! The healed man was near his side, smiling and happy. The answer came: "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doeth this man stand here before you whole." Note well, he brought to the point "a good deed," "man made whole," then he gave the name. Here he used his full title, "Jesus Christ, the Nazarene." "Jesus" meant Savior, Christ, their Messiah, the Nazarene. It covered the prophetic name as given in Isaiah 11:1-4, and Jeremiah 23:5, 6. His residence at Nazareth was, thus, divinely intended to fulfill these prophecies according to Matthew 2:23. Moreover, their God had also given testimony

after His crucifixion, in that He had raised him from the dead. Jesus himself, who was alive and had been exalted at the right hand of God, had done this good deed to the impotent man. Truly, they had rejected Him, but He was now at the head of the corner and still doing and teaching. They were not looking back to a great prophet, but rather the glorified Christ through the divine Spirit was in them, doing His work. The courage and sweetness of Peter's spirit put them to their wit's end. They could see the Christ spirit. These men had been closely associated with that Jesus. They had learned His heavenly genius. But they had too much at stake to accept, hence, they must reject. If they cannot stamp it out, it must not go farther. Hence, in their secret council they determined to give most strenuous threatenings. Now the fight was on. Rigid and unretiring efforts shall be put forth to stop all preaching in this name.

After Peter and John were loosed they went to their own company to make a report of what had happened. Of course, this great company of young converts had already heard of their imprisonment. They were doubtless waiting their return from the court.

How glad the two disciples must have been to reach a different atmosphere. They were at home among friends who were sympathetic. Doubtless the healed man was with them. And what a story he must have told. No wonder that Peter and John were bold before the council, because they had a man like this one "standing with them."

THE CAUSE OF THE PRAYERMEETING

This prayermeeting is one of the most noteworthy of all records in the Acts. The record is full of interest and furnishes many lessons of vital importance. We may note that there are some expressions in this record which may be found in the

record of the first Pentecost. And this seems to be another mighty outpouring of the Spirit to give added strength in the midst of trial. We shall have but little time to outline the many points covered in this chapter.

The persecution was the cause for this prayermeeting. All prayer must have some point at issue. This may be one of the reasons why much of our praying is of so little value. Asking for things having no special objective or just praying to fill up the time, is of little use. The first great persecution had broken out and the disciples were in great trial, there, they must have help and that right away.

The points of contention between the disciples and the authorities were very sharp and determined. If the disciples were right, the Sadducees, who were the leaders of the people, must be wrong, for the Sadducees taught that there was no resurrection. At the beginning, the Pharisees were against Christ because His system of inner heart experience cut across their notions of outward religion. After the resurrection of Lazarus, both Pharisees and Sadducees were united against Christ and had part in His death. After the great multitudes were converted through the preaching of Peter, the opposition seemed to have centered in the Sadducees, who were grieved because the disciples taught and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees at once saw the point at issue. If this crucified Christ were alive, then His blood must be on their hands and soon they must step down as leaders of the people. Something had to be done and that at once. So they threatened the disciples with severe punishment if they should preach in that name.

God allows His people to go through great trials. Persecution seems the very hot bed in which He grows His saints. Job was handed over to be tried as with fire. Christ won

His great victories in the midst of temptation. The trial of our faith is much more precious than gold.

Persecution is divinely intended to develop our spiritual metal. It becomes the occasion of development of our wings of power that we may reach higher places in holy communion with God.

Persecution drives us to prayer. We are found most often on our knees when we are passing through some dark place where we cannot see our way. We then gladly wait for divine direction and are careful to feel our hand in the hand of the Almighty before taking a forward step.

The disciples were not able to affect these hard-hearted rulers. This was no evidence that they had lost any of their power. We should not throw away ourselves because our efforts seem useless at times. The devil would take advantage of some at this point and would have them throw away their experience. There are some people whom God himself, has given over and their opposition seems fixed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORSHIPERS AT THIS PRAYERMEETING

(1) They were men of courage. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John they took knowledge of them." What a change in this man Peter before and after Pentecost. A little maid caused him trouble before, but now he stands before the rulers with sweet calm and fearlessness.

(2) These men used great wisdom and marvelous tact. You will notice that when they were threatened, they calmly put the question to the rulers, "Whether it is right; judge ye?" There was no brazen, flippant, blustering swagger in their statements. Here is the finest point in experience. To be brave and firm, yet kind and true with both wisdom and tact as we stand before opposition, is, indeed, a very choice attitude.

(3) They were men who had seen and heard things. A personal experience is the great need of the hour with our young people. Doubtless the one reason why the false doctrines have such a power in the world today, is because the churches and ministry have been too careless about the experience of those who unite with them. Souls who have seen and heard and have an experience of their own are not so easily moved from the hope of the gospel.

(4) They had positive convictions of truth. The flimsy, wishy-washy, jelly-fish attitude of many professors in our times is indeed sickening. We can never tell what many preachers believe. What they don't believe is clearly seen, but what they really do believe is never mentioned, and if it should be, it is clothed in such obscure language that no objections can be made.

(5) They were possessed by an all-controlling power. "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." We need so much grace from God that we do not have to pull ourselves together and try to be active, but we speak, sing, or pray by inward constraint.

(6) They were with people of their own faith. What influence should draw us to the house of God? Are we drawn there to enter society. Or do we meet because of habit? You will see that these people had a company. "They went to their own company." This was perfectly natural. "Birds of a feather flock together." If a telegram should come to our door and find us away Sunday morning, would the neighbors know where we might be found? Do we go to so many different places, with our membership in the tribe of "Gad," that no one would know where to find us? Find your company, my friend, and stay with it until you can find a better one.

They seemed to be under the law of spiritual affinity. Nothing must hinder or hold them. The natural law of their

being was to go to their own. You have seen that crowd of school children that was kept in school with their studies. The bell rang and they were let go. What a rush. How they ran and how the boys gave vent to their pent up feelings. "Being let go."

There is a law of crystallization by which particles are drawn together. These particles all have attractive and repelling poles, and, thus, the crystal is formed. So in the spiritual realm, this law of spiritual affinity draws pure spirits into beautiful unity.

There were two boats, one sailing for a prize-fight, the other for a campmeeting. Two men were running to catch these boats. In their haste they made a mistake and each boarded the wrong boat. Both were disappointed. The man going to the prize-fight began to curse and swear, and declared it would be hell to him that day. The man going to the campmeeting was indeed disappointed, but soon thought, "Well, here is my opportunity to win a soul." Soon he began to seek a chance to testify. However, he was glad to find his own company before the day was over.

The joy of spiritual fellowship had much to do with this meeting. They told all that the chief priests and rulers had said. How beautiful to mingle our experiences with those of like precious faith.

ATTITUDE IN PRAYER

This most wonderful prayer brought the blessing. They lifted up their voice in prayer. There is no special power in loud praying, yet prayer to mean anything must flow from the earnest heart. The poor publican, although he could not lift up his eyes to heaven, smote his breast and cried, "God be merciful." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Careless, half-hearted praying never reaches heavenward. They also maintained the gospel attitude, which

was accordness. Differences of opinion had not separated them; criticism had not entered their midst; loss of confidence had not haunted them like a nightmare. All was perfect love; sweet union of soul filled the atmosphere.

(1) They recognized God's almightiness. "Lord, thou art God." When the soul is filled with a clear vision of the almightiness of God, all things seem indeed possible. Think for a moment how small we are, then think how great God is. "O Lord, thou art God." "Which made heaven and earth and all that in them is." Evolution had no place in their thought. They were not fatalists. God was their Creator and Father. This gave them certain rights and claims on the Almighty. God made the rulers as well as themselves. They would come right to the fountain-head of all things. God was not beyond their reach for they were made in His image; He could not turn away His own. What a comfort to know the God whom we love and serve created all things and knows all the intricate laws which govern in all the great universe. There is nothing too small or mysterious, but He knows and understands it all. We are all His handiwork and He must care for His own.

(2) They founded their prayer on God's revelation through His word. "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said." While the words were written by David, yet God spake the words. Here is the sure foundation for the people of God. "How sure a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word." Here the soul may rest behind the fortress of indestructible truth, built upon the unshakable rock of immutability. When the soul reaches the place of implicit faith in the word of God, gladly receiving the same as the very revelation of God, something must happen. Christ fought all His battles on the plain statements of God. "It is written," was His answer when tempted. Everything in sight seemed all against what was written, yet He believed without a doubt the Word of God and held steadfast in His confidence. "That

soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose, I will not, I will not desert to his foes." God comes very close to the soul who continues to abide in sweet confidence on the word which he hath spoken.

(3) They gladly noted the fulfillment of prophecy. David had seen the present conditions. "Why doth the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Now they see its fulfillment. "Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." It is often a great comfort in these times, to note the fulfillment of prophecy. The church need not be surprised at the events which happen if she will be wise in that which is written. She "is not in darkness," thus no event should overtake her as a thief.

(4) There was a submission to present condition. "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." God knew and foreknew all about the present conditions. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." There was no "why" in their thought, no chafing, no fault finding. It is impossible for people to have great blessings in the midst of trial and persecutions when they are talking back to God and asking "why." Let us take our disappointments and call them His appointments. They are the events which surround us as His providences, so let us rejoice.

(5) They placed all the things which seemed against them in God's hands. "Now Lord, behold their threatenings." We will not look at them any more, we will keep our eyes upon Thee, for thou shalt take care of them. While we are looking at our trials, our eyes are not on the Lord. Friend, put those trials and difficulties over into God's hands and let Him look after them. We cannot unravel the deep mysteries. The more we look, the more perplexing and mysterious they all become. Let God behold their threatenings, He will find some way of

escape. He can open the prison doors and make light to shine out of darkness. What comfort comes as we submissively place everything in His care and keeping.

(6) They were not drawing back but aggressive. "And grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." When the trial comes hard and the persecution rushes upon us, the temptation comes for us in some way to make a compromise, let down in our faith, back up and adjust ourselves in harmony with the desires of the people. What will the people think? What will the people say? And the church has been trying to so present the gospel without offence until little gospel is presented.

(7) There was full confidence in the supernatural and divine manifestation. "By stretching forth thy hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus." They had no idea that all the miracles were in the past. Christ, who now ascended to heaven and at the right hand of the Father, was more powerful than ever. As the son of God, his life work had just begun. Where is our faith in God and the eternal world? Should it not be just as easy for us to believe in God after all these years of proving, as it was for them? The promise, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto the Father," has never been withdrawn. One reason, why we cannot have mighty spiritual cyclones in the church, is because we do not expect great things. The devil has taken advantage of the coldness of the professed church and has brought in strange manifestations to deceive the people.

This was a most wonderful prayer. It covered the almighty creative power of God, based on the Word of the living God, sustained by the fulfillment of prophecy, with submission placing all in the hands of God, then firmly standing, believing, and expecting the Supernatural manifestation. Such praying will bring things to pass and it did.

RESULTS OF THIS PRAYER

(1) The place was shaken. Such praying will shake our trials and help us to gain the victory over all our foes. They were filled with the Holy Ghost. God himself, could but come in new power into such hearts as these. This gave them new courage to go on in greater power and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. The heavens are full of spiritual power. When we have been sanctified, we are only at the beginning of great and mighty things, if we can but open our eyes to our opportunities. Such meetings will prove a blessing to new converts and hard cases as well. No doubt hundreds came in on the tide of salvation.

(2) The presence of God was manifested. The needs around us are very great. The opposition to the gospel is, indeed, more subtle than the authorities of that day in its indifference. The demand is just as urgent for a great prayer-meeting of united believers for a mighty outpouring of the divine Spirit. God is expecting much of us as He did in the earlier days. How we need a great prayermeeting of all true believers. How sad when the prayer room is so deserted in the churches. Some special program or attraction must now be offered to gather even a few into the prayer room. Let us turn the tide and have mighty hours together in the service of prayer and linger long enough to hear from heaven and become mightily shaken with God's manifest presence. Then we shall sing with spiritual fervor, "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

(3) New converts were brought into closer fellowship with heavenly glory and were ready to receive the Holy Spirit. The thousands, who had recently been converted and brought into the church, embraced the opportunity and were filled with the Holy Ghost. The apostles and all believers were mightily strengthened and with great power gave witness to the grace of God. Such frequent outpourings of the divine Spirit will save the church from worldliness and produce a constant revival and ingathering of souls.

CHAPTER XIV

A FEARFUL WARNING TO INSINCERITY

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things (Acts 5:11).

In the prayermeeting, which is in the 4th chapter of the Acts, we seem to have reached a paradise of spiritual attainments in the church. The 5th chapter opens with a sad contrast which resulted in an astounding tragedy. The alarming story of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, awakens us from our dream of idealism in the church, and gives us a most impressive warning. The story, if studied by itself, seems indeed strange and unnatural. Why should a man be stricken dead simply because he did not want to give all his property away? And, what strange arrogance on the part of Peter in the transaction?

The incident has been taken by critics to judge, or rather misjudge, the conditions which existed in the earlier church. But if we will study the situation, I believe we may gain a very important lesson which the writer intended to convey to future generations.

In order to understand the situation, we should have a clear insight into the spiritual atmosphere of the church of which these two parties were members. Then, we should consider the custom regarding property rights which prevailed in the early church. We should not fail to look at the contrast between the personal conduct of Joses, surnamed Barnabas, and the parties in this story. We may then become better prepared to study the sin and judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, and gather a few helpful and impressive conclusions.

SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

We are led to conclude that Ananias and his wife were members and well known by all. They were doubtless in the great prayermeeting when the Holy Ghost was so poured out as to shake the place. Whatever their personal experience may have been, they must have witnessed the impressive scene, and mingled with the believers in the gatherings which followed. They heard the apostles preach the word in "great power" and witnessed the great grace which was upon them all.

(1) According to verse 32 in the 4th chapter, there was perfect unity. "They were of one heart." Then there was overflowing fellowship. They were of one soul.

(2) There was much prayer. Their devotion was also most marked for they continued in prayers. This devotion was only quickened and intensified by the opposition of the Sadducees which was brought on from Peter's discourse about the lame man. It was not new and created by a temporary excitement. It had filled the new movement from the very beginning.

(3) There was a clear understanding of New Testament stewardship. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." This was an old way, but it was intensified. These same conditions, attitudes, and relationships prevailed in the church following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. From the very beginning, they continued steadfast in doctrine, and in fellowship, and were of one accord. They enjoyed the grace of "singleness of heart," and were filled with gladness through the simplicity of their worship with the "breaking of bread from house to house."

All the attitudes and relationships which characterized these early believers are important; however, we can only mention two in this connection, "fellowship" and "steward-

ship." The word "fellowship" in the Greek is "Koinonia." It is translated as communion, communication, distribution, contribution, partners, partakers. The root of the word is found in the clause: "They had all things in common." The root of this word, "common," is the same from which we get the word "koinonia." Real fellowship, then, is having all things in common. The New Testament idea, then, is a divine fellowship. Note the apostle John's statement, "That ye may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ."

Here we have all things in common with the Father and the Son. All we have belongs to God and all He has is ours. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." All our resources belong to God, and all the resources of God belong to us. Then in this fellowship, there is a heavenly oneness described as "one heart and one soul."

This is truly Paul's idea and picture as given in Ephesians. To walk worthy of the Lord, is to endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is one "body and one spirit." We are to enjoy this union on the ground of "One Lord," for He is the Head; "one faith," by which we hold to Him; "one baptism," the baptism of the Spirit by which we are baptized in the one body. This is a vision of such union. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." This is what Paul means by fellowship, "koinonia." Here is where we hold all things in common. These attitudes and relationships can never be brought about by laws or governmental regulations. It is confined to a class, "Those that believe." To thus believe is to receive Christ. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, which were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God." There must be a communion of nature, a unity of Spirit. All drinking of the

same spirit. All living in the same heavenly light, all knowing and feeling the same heart throbs of holy love, all walking and acting by the same impulse of divine life. This is the heavenly fellowship expressed by the statement, "They were all of one heart and soul."

ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF THIS EARLY CHURCH

Now let us look at the question of community of goods or property rights. What was the practice or custom of the early church? Was it a Communism or a central holding of all property? Was it a kind of Christian socialism? Some have claimed this must be the meaning of such expressions as are found in the record. From this point of view they charge this as the first great mistake in the apostolic age. This apostolic mistake they attempt to explain in many ways. Some hold that the speedy return of Christ was the cause. That the early church expected Christ to return to earth at once, therefore, they would not need to retain their houses and lands. Thus the poverty which later existed in the Jerusalem church is laid at the door of this supposed mistake. The poverty which existed may be explained from another cause. The Hebrew Epistle written to Jewish believers declares, that "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Which would show that they endured the confiscation of their property during the persecutions.

Again, it is claimed by some that this great mistake was the direct cause of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. And this sad experience in the death of these parties led to the abandonment of this mistaken idea, which had broken out amidst the early enthusiasm.

Now let us look at the facts without prejudice. What is the stated cause or motive aside from their personal experience of grace and their fellowship? In the 45th verse of the 2nd

chapter of Acts, the "parting" or "division" of goods was to supply the needs of those among them who were in want of the necessities of life. Then in the 4th chapter, the direct cause of selling houses and lands is given in these words: "Neither was there any among them that lacked." Here we must place the emphasis in the need and a brotherly effort to supply the necessities of life. And it may be well to remember that the plural is used in houses and lands, which may imply that those who sold had more than one house and more than one lot of land. Thus, with more than they were using, they gladly supplied the lack of others. But if this last statement is doubtful, the clearly stated explanation is contained in verse 32: "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own."

In this we have a clear conception of true stewardship. In other words, the motive which governed the course followed by the early church was grounded in their deep sense of true stewardship. That God the maker of heaven and earth, their Creator, owned it all. Note carefully, as many as had possessions, "things" he possessed, he did not call his. He held all as a trustee, a steward. That there was no universal practice of everyone selling all and placing it in a community interest is clearly brought out in the case of Ananias. "Whilst it remained; was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power." There was no law or custom in the church which required his selling, or laying the price at the apostles' feet. It was purely voluntary. And all who sold goods did so not by law, but by the force of love and generous giving, to supply needs that none should lack the necessities of life.

THE SIN OF ANANIAS

Now we shall look at the contrast between the two men, Joses and Ananias. Joses, called Barnabas, was a Levite, and,

thus, in the line of the ministry. He lived at least once in Cyprus. His land doubtless was in Cyprus, and he had a right, although a Levite, to hold land in this foreign country. "He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and faith." He was named by the apostles, "a son of consolation," a loving, sympathetic peacemaker. He was entering the preaching force. Like Matthew, he left all to follow Christ. This seems to have been the custom in the early ministry. Peter said, "We have left all to follow thee." Christ said to the young man who desired to have part with Him in His ministry, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor, then come and follow me." Paul, in giving instructions, made it clear that the minister should be a good soldier, not entangled with the affairs of this life.

This course followed by Barnabas no doubt gave him special notice. It proved his sincerity and profound conviction of his call from God. Although he had possessions, he did not go away sorrowful like that other young man of history. He disentangled himself from all, and moved on into the ministry where he gloriously succeeded and much people were added unto the Lord. "But there was a certain man named Ananias." He is contrasted with Barnabas. He also may have planned on entering the ministry. He had a good name, which means, "God is gracious." His opportunities were just as good as those of Barnabas. He had a measure of devotion also. He laid down a large sum at the apostles' feet. Up to this time all seemed well. His difficulty was not that he had possessions, or that he refused to sell. Nor that he refused to obey the call of God in entering the ministry, which is implied in the contrast with Barnabas. It was not that he refused to give, or even to give all.

(1) The sin of Ananias was the sin of hypocrisy or sacrilege. He kept back part of the price, pretending that what

he had laid down was all. He knew better. What moved him to thus act we do not know. It may have been his love of money. It may have been his fear of coming to want in the failure of the new movement. It may have been a desire for a few luxuries along the way. It may have been a compromise with his wife. We know she was privy to it. Whatever the motive, he told or acted a lie. The gift was not to Peter or the apostles, the gift was to God. He lied unto God. Thus, it was sacrilegious. He pretended all was on the altar when in fact it was not.

(2) It was the sin of willful transgression. This wrong was deliberate and planned with another. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" These are words of pity. Why did you allow Satan to fill your heart with this deceit. He had willed it and that from his heart. Also he had agreed with his wife in mutually planning this hypocritical transaction.

(3) It was the sin of insincerity. All this had been planned and willed in the blazing light of holy purity and sincere devotion as manifested in the church. What brazen affrontery to the Holy Spirit, who had tenderly visited the church with grace and fellowship and mighty manifestations of power. Is it any wonder that he dropped dead, with such a dastardly deed acted in the very presence of holiness? In God we live and have our being. If He should withdraw His Spirit, all flesh would perish together. The sin against the Spirit was so brazen that the Spirit was withdrawn.

The result, of this brazen, deliberate lie toward God and the Holy Spirit, in the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira, is indeed shocking. But what else could we expect with the record of past history. They knew their Scriptures and should have thought of Nadab and Abihu or Achan the lover of money. And not long ago Judas had sold his Lord for money. The question is not raised as to the direct cause of Ananias' death.

The statement is not made that God struck Ananias and he fell dead. Nor does it state that Peter pronounced a curse upon him. But on the contrary, Peter's words seem full of sympathy and deep pity: "Thou hast not lied unto man, but unto God." Then follows, "And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost." When he fully realized what he had done and that his deception was known, he could not live.

CONCLUSIONS

In trying to deceive others, the deceiver, deceives himself. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. To pretend to be what we are not is a much harder undertaking than humble sincerity. The deceiver is always fearful of being detected, and must be on the alert to build a wall about himself out of sight by covering his head in the sand, while his body is yet exposed. The hands may feel like the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob.

(2) God has many ways of detecting hypocrisy. It is much harder to be a successful hypocrite than a successful Christian. The Christian has God on his side, while the hypocrite is dodging here and there for fear he will be found out. He lives in constant fear that his mask of profession will slip aside and his real condition will be known. There is no gain in dishonesty. Judas did not spend the thirty pieces of silver. Ananias kept back a part, but lost what he sought to gain.

(3) We are impressed with the fact that he who seeks to save his life shall lose it in the final test. Looking steadily on material things, will blind the vision for eternal values. The love of money springs from a wrong estimate of real values, and is centered around selfish interests.

(4) The church must be kept pure by discipline. And the most helpful discipline is the kind here taught in the lesson of Ananias and Sapphira. There was no threat made, or de-

nunciation by Peter. No committee of investigation and trial. When the church is filled with such manifestation of divine presence, as was realized in the closing verses of chapter four, sin cannot live long in such fiery glory.

No wonder that great fear fell upon the whole church. This judgment of Ananias not only purified the church, but had a protective force as well. And no man dared to join unless there was deeper sincerity. We need such blessing and power from God which will awaken careless professors, and protect the church from mere joiners with no experience. Howbeit, the people magnified them, and believers were added to the Lord. In these two expressions, "No man dared to join himself to them," and, "Believers were the more added to the Lord"; we have the difference between a human revival and one which comes from heaven. The church should be so on fire with holy power that man will not dare to join carelessly, but will be sure first of all they are added unto the Lord. Then they will truly be members.

(5) We also have before us a lasting lesson to all careless seekers and insincere worshipers. It is more serious, than some seem to think, to profess that all is on the altar, when in fact they know from their hearts they are keeping back a part of the price. Consecration is a great word and implies that all we have, all we know, and whatsoever may touch our lives is now and forever devoted to God. It is evident that Ananias and his wife were perfectly willing to give nearly all, and only kept back a small part of the price. It was not the amount they kept back, but the claim that all the price of the land was on the altar when it was not. We would not disturb any timid soul who may be trying to do his best, but surely if the heart does not witness that all has been given over to God, then there should be carefulness in professing to have what we are not sure of possessing.

God found fault with His ancient people on the ground that while they worshiped Him with their lips, their hearts were far from Him. While we sing beautiful songs, does the heart sing in tune with God's sweet will? One sister professed to be sanctified, and of course, all was on the altar. But when God called her daughter to the foreign field as a missionary, it took her many days to pray to the point where she was perfectly willing for her to go. Is it not our privilege to be complete in all the will of God? And if God owns it all by creation and His redemption, why claim any of it was ours, or why try to hold back a part for ourselves? When Abraham was called to give his one and only son on the altar of God, he never considered for one moment of keeping back anything from God.

May we not have in this lesson an explanation of so much spiritual deadness? Some keep back a part of the price, and their prayers and testimonies fall dead. Service is only half-hearted, and the results fall dead. Let us learn the lesson from Ananias and his wife, and then follow Barnabas in his full devotion to Christ and the church.

CHAPTER XV

THE INFLUENCE OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH

That at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them (Acts 5:15).

The awful tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira burned with vividness in the memory of all, both within the church and without the church, and great fear fell upon the people. This opened a larger door of service for the apostles. Many signs and wonderful experiences were witnessed among believers. There were great public gatherings in Solomon's porch, where Christ was preached to the multitudes. In the 13th and 14th verses of the 5th chapter of Acts, there seems on the surface a contradiction, but in reality there is a blessed harmony. "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them." Then it states, "And believers were the more added to the Lord." The result of hypocrisy in the case of Ananias and his wife put such fear on everyone that mere joiners ceased, and much attention was given to self-examination. The insincere joiners stopped, and real believers increased. I have thought some times if there were fewer joiners, we might have more real believers added unto the Lord. I am sure that if the church is filled with joiners, who join the preacher or some popular branch of the church, it will, in the long run, have its spiritual life weakened. Here is a lesson for our Spirit-filled churches to remember. Some local congregations are greatly hindered today by mere joiners, because they are not united or added to the Lord Jesus. If our evangelistic churches are to maintain their spiritual power, much care must be given at this point.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

(1) This Spirit-filled church at Jerusalem was so near the heart of the glorified Christ that sin could not live within its ranks. Ananias could not breathe in that holy atmosphere. It was so full of heavenly purity and devotion that the lie on his lips, or his acted deceit, took his breath and he fell to the floor. Here is the divine method of discipline in the church. Keep the atmosphere filled with devotion and prayer; keep the pulpit filled with holy passion to get believers sanctified; let the services be filled with spiritual freedom, and unctuous testimony and the glory of God over all, and sinners will be converted and, thus, added to the Lord. This will save the church much trouble and wasted time in discipline. However, if proper discipline is needful, God will bless a proper course on the part of every Spirit-filled body of believers.

(2) Those outside the church saw a people with proper standards of discipline. "The people magnified them." Doubtless we should not wonder that Ananias dropped dead with a lie spoken or acted, but the greater wonder today is that so many can live in the church with a lie both spoken and acted. The popular religion today is a profession of love for God and then serve the gods which are desired. It professes to be consecrated, but it still serves its own interests. It professes to be sanctified but it is still acting and dressing like the world. It professes to love God but it still goes to the world for pleasure. Both men and women on the outside will appreciate sincerity within the church. We need a greater appreciation of holy things and a higher conception of divine requirements in holy living.

(3) This body of Spirit-filled believers exercised a mighty influence, in so much, that sick people were taken to the streets, that at least the shadow of Peter might overshadow some of them. This may seem to picture extreme confidence, bordering

almost on superstition; however, it does tell us of the mighty influence which may follow a holy life. It is to this point we desire to call attention.

The foundation of this event involves the atmosphere which a man carries. Man as a personality may be represented by a storage battery charged with moral forces and living energy. Man is not only a force bearer, but a force producer. We must not only reckon with the orator's physical bulk, but we must carry the line about the atmosphere which he bears. Business men understand this and plan with it in view. The artist expresses it by the halo of light. The scientist now speaks of the magnetic circle. Jesus was known as the "Light" of the world. His great burden was to impart this radiance to others. He expressed His ideal for His disciples thus, "Ye are the light of the world." The candle is the smallest part, but the larger and more important part is the beams of light radiating from the lighted candle.

All of nature's forces carry a material atmosphere. The sun reaches us with its golden beams, although millions of miles away. Coals of fire send their warming glow to fill the room. The beautiful violets lade the atmosphere with their sweet aroma. The orange grove of rich golden fruit with its background of green so fills the atmosphere with its bursting flowers as to make its existence known long distances away. So man, like the alabaster box of ointment which Mary poured on the head of our Lord, is known by the atmosphere which he carries.

There are good shadows and there are also bad shadows. There are the valleys of shadows, and the shadows of death (Matt. 4:16). Then in the prophet's vision of our Savior, he was seen as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land (Isa. 32:2). And the redeemed are described as furnishing a tabernacle for a shadow from heat, and for a place of refuge (Isa. 4:6). We are invited to "abide" under the shadow of the

Almighty. For safety we may be hidden in the shadow of God's hand (Isa. 42:2).

As moral beings living in the sunshine of truth, we cast shadows. The shadow is like the object. What kind of shadows are we casting in our relation to society? Are they good or bad? Can the weary find rest and comfort and healing, or do our shadows chill others to the bone?

LESSONS FROM THE SHADOW OF PETER

No man liveth to himself or dieth to himself. No star rises without the operation of some influence outside itself. No life can be lived by itself. We are bound together, each to others, like the atoms of steel. Each atom has its own individuality, but all interlocked by the power of cohesion. Thus, human life is interlocked and we cannot live apart if we would. Everyone has more or less of influence; we all cast shadows, (1) by what we say; (2) then by what we do; and (3) by what we are.

(a) We cast shadows by what we say. Kind words never die. They are often like a switch which turns a life from the wrong to the right track. A few words spoken and a drunkard was turned into J. B. Gough to lecture in the interests of sobriety. A word spoken, and lo and behold, we have a Moffat, or a Livingstone to bless the world. O the influence of a word spoken in kindness. Let such men as Garrison, Beecher, Brooks, and John Bright tell their story and we see how a word has wrought wonders. "Words fitly spoken are like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

(b) We cast shadows by what we do. Walter Scott said to his boy, "Plant a tree, Johnny, it will grow while you sleep." A Salem farmer planted trees along the road side leading to the city, and today thousands of weary travelers are blessing the thoughtful farmers. When Alexander dashed into battle, thousands caught the daring courage and followed on to victory.

Paul said, "Follow me, as I follow Christ," and turned many from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.

(c) We cast shadows by what we are. What a change the very presence of a good man often makes without even a word or act. Carlyle tells about a furious mob in the streets of Paris which could not be controlled by the force of arms, but a gray haired hermit mounted a barrel in the middle of the street and stretching forth both arms, turned his face heavenward; and the mob became quiet and calm before that holy man. It was said of one, "His presence made bad men good."

(2) We should be impressed with the power of unconscious influence. Power is not only indicated in the cannon roar, and the mighty thundering of the Niagara Falls, but the silent force of gravitation overpowers the cannon ball and brings it down to earth; and gravitation is the force behind the thundering waters which pulls them down the stream.

We are often unconscious of the mightiest forces. They tell us that the atmospheric pressure is fourteen pounds to the square inch, and yet the infant's hand does not feel its weight. The sun does not try to shine, it simply silently shines, and scatters the mist before its conquering light.

Often our acts are silent, but they are clothed with the attributes of thunder and speak louder than words. Even the smallest things of life are often significant and overthrow the more grand and spectacular. The intoning thunder of the Niagara is awe inspiring, but the rippling rill has a sweeter music. Pike's Peak towers in lofty grandeur, but it is no more beautiful than the lily of the valley. The eagle soars high, but the canary bird has a sweeter song. A woman walked in the temple courts and dropped in only two mites as her offering, but the influence of that deed has thrilled the church for two thousand years. A woman poured ointment on the head of our Lord and the aroma of that deed has filled the world with the sweetness of its devotion, and is still teaching the church the

power of an explosive affection, and the glory of unfeigned love. Could we but realize the influence of our lives, how carefully we would live in the home, in business, and in our social relationships.

The influence of the beautiful face of Esther turned the relentless heart of the king and saved a nation. The presence of Daniel locked the lion's mouth and made him a safe companion for the night. Ananias with his planned deceit could not live in the presence of a holy heart which throbbed in the breast of Peter. No wonder the people sought his shadow for healing.

(3) The quality of Peter's influence depended on his relationship to Christ. Christ was God manifest in the flesh, and virtue went out from him to heal the suffering woman. Peter and the apostles were Spirit-filled, and people sought their shadow. The spiritual law is first "Be" then "Do." First be right and then do right. Nature governs the conduct.

There must be a substance to cast a shadow. Sin and all its long line of misdeeds in the category of iniquity, although it may sparkle with attractive pleasure, is only a life of vanity and vexation of spirit. It is all worse than nothing. The soul must partake of the divine nature before it can know of the enduring substance of moral worth.

Then, there must be the sunshine of truth, radiating with its glorious beams of the light of knowledge around us, to make shadows of helpful influence. We must also be in the right position and relationship if the shadows of our influence are to become attractive. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (2 Cor. 2:14, 15).

Some years ago I had a very faithful man in my church who was always on time. He moved into a new neighborhood. On the way to church he had to pass by the home of an infidel

whom no one had been able to reach. Soon this unbeliever noticed Brother D. as he passed every Sunday morning on his way to church. It was not long before the man would station himself at the window and look for his new neighbor, who always passed just fifteen minutes past nine o'clock. Of course, no one knew what was going on. One morning it was stormy. Again the infidel stood by his window watching and saying, "Don't think my strange neighbor will make it today." He took his watch in hand and waited. At ten minutes after nine the wind was blowing and the snow flying; two minutes later he thought, "Well, he will not be out today. Most professors are fair weather Christians, anyway"; and at the usual 9:15 o'clock along came the man. The infidel made a resolution that on the first fair Sunday he would find out who this man was and where he went to church. One Sunday night found him in the back seat of this man's church, and it was not long before he was seeking Christ. He wanted to live near the shadow of such a faithful neighbor, and, of course, they became fast friends.

PRACTICAL LESSONS

(1) How carefully we should watch in order to shun every appearance of evil. How sad when preachers professing to be Spirit-filled dress in flashy clothing like the world. How disappointing to see ladies with scanty dress and attractive trinkets trying to follow worldly fashions which must soon pass away. How appropriate modest apparel to those professing godliness. How beautiful the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. What a force and power for good is that unselfish life. What an influence for righteousness when young people, separated from the world, give themselves in full devotement to Christ. Their testimony becomes attractive and others will come hoping to find healing under the shadow of such Spirit-filled lives.

(2) How we need the power of the Spirit upon us. The Spirit-filled church was a mighty force in Jerusalem. We must remember that these leaders had never trained with those of political or financial influence. None of them had any standing in the circles of governmental power. But Christ was with them, and working in and through them. They were Spirit-filled. They were full of faith. They were shaking Jerusalem to its center. Three thousand had been converted following Pentecost. Five thousand after the healing of the lame man. A multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith. The testimony of their critics declared they were filling Jerusalem with this gospel. Sin could not live in this church, for there were such mighty influences of holy power. The people magnified them. The opposition was intense on the part of the authorities, but prison walls could not hold them. Angels led them back to the temple courts. This made them more determined than ever to proclaim all the words of life. They would not fight with swords. Arrested they went to court with no resistance. But fearlessly saying, "We can not but speak what we have seen and heard." No compromise, no calming down, no drawing back to follow after a proud, worldly professing church. God raised up a friend to plead for them. The shame of the whole unsought affair was their great joy.

The need of our times is a church so filled with God that she cannot be silenced. The devil has changed his method. He is now mixing the world with the church. Pride and selfishness have silenced the pulpit. Preachers and evangelists are compelled to turn their attention to the inside condition of the church. The church has lost much of her influence, because she refuses or neglects to be Spirit-filled.

Let the church take her place in the light of truth, seek to be Spirit-filled, and live apart from the world with its sinful pride. Then the common people will seek her shadow as from a great rock in this weary land.

CHAPTER XVI

CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:3 and 4.

The church was beginning to take visible form. The multitudes were seeking a place in the church. The business of the church must not be neglected. There had been such a tide of salvation and constant manifestations of spiritual life that little time had been given to the needful business of organization.

However, sufficient organization to preserve the work had not been neglected. Even in the early days of the movement when Christ was with them, method and organization were not forgotten. Twelve men had been chosen to take the responsibility and carry the burden of the public ministry. There were also seventy sent forth to spread the good news that God had again visited His people. This order adopted by our Lord must remind us of the organization set forth in the days of Moses. There were twelve patriarchs and twelve tribes. There were also seventy elders chosen in Israel to help carry the burdens of government, and this number had been preserved in the organization of the Sanhedrin.

The exact plan for organization is not so clearly stated in the Gospels, but we may safely conclude that there was order and government sufficiently strong to meet the demands in the beginning days. There was not a hit and miss, free for all method, so that each one was free to do what seemed right

in his own eyes. But Christ himself, did the ordaining. This method was so clearly pressed upon the minds of all, that when Peter mentioned the necessity of the choice of one to take the place of Judas, there was no objection.

The function of the apostles in the ministry is set forth by Peter in his epistle. Peter was an apostle and also an elder. The ruling elder or bishop had the oversight of the flock. Peter and the other apostles, who had the right to exhort, instruct, and ordain elders, were not only leaders but superintendents over the eldership and the church. This was all that seemed needful in the beginning. But as the movement took on larger proportions and the work became more difficult, the organization had to be improved to meet the demands of the growing church. This new departure in organization, which is set forth in the 6th chapter of the Acts, had its rise in the rapid growth of the movement and in some dissatisfaction, grounded on what seemed to be injustice. The apostles were awake to the situation and took action.

PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION

(1) Organization must be complete and elastic so as to meet the demands of changing conditions. A mistake is sometimes made when the church becomes so dead and formalized as to refuse to make changes and adjust its order and form to meet the needs of new conditions. Dead forms and customs must be thrown to the winds to better carry forward and protect the work. How sad to witness some bodies of earnest believers trying to maintain ideas, forms, customs, and methods of worship and service, which have been antiquated many years ago. They seem to make a kind of an idol or false god out of church polity, or system of organization, or method of worship and church work. It is well to hold fast the form of sound words and continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, but let us also follow their example and be ready to meet the needs of the hour in planning suitable methods.

(2) Organization should preserve peace within the church. This problem in the care of widows was perfectly natural. There were many widows in Israel occasioned by marriage customs and carelessness in their divorce laws. It has been supposed by some that the Essenes were greatly attracted to the gospel, and this was the reason why this sect of the Jews seemed to have largely dropped out of history in the gospel Age. It has been noticed that this sect of the Essenes was never mentioned as opposed to Christ. Whatever may be the facts, no doubt large numbers were won to Christ from this class as well as from the sect of the Pharisees. Inasmuch as we know that this unpopular sect of the Essenes were radically opposed to the aristocracy of the Sadducees, and lived in poverty as a protest to the wrong of their riches, we may in this discover one reason for the need of charity in the early church. Then we remember that Moses in his law gave special warning in the neglect of the poor in their midst. With the large increase of believers which had multiplied by this time into many thousands this department of the work soon became a problem.

Inasmuch as large numbers of the Hellenistic Jews had also settled in Jerusalem and Palestine during the prosperous day of Herod's reign, it is natural to suppose that large numbers of the converts came from this class. It has been stated that there were more than 450 synagogues in and around Jerusalem at this time. Some of these, doubtless, offered a good opportunity for preaching the gospel. This would naturally intensify the prejudice which existed between the Jews of Palestine and this Hellenistic population. This feeling would create a general sensitiveness on the part of the Hellenistic population.

We are not sure that there was any injustice in the daily administration in the church. The charge was not made. But on the part of Grecian converts it looked that way to them.

At the first sound of a mere murmuring the apostles took action. They did not allow the murmuring to develop into charges or unkind criticism which might result in division and internal trouble. How thoughtful and kind of the disciples to take the responsibility, instead of trying to sidestep the decision for action, and give a solution of the problem. Much internal trouble might be saved among believers if such a conciliatory action could be taken in time. Often the old adage, "A stitch in time saves nine," is true.

Even the united body of the twelve apostles did not use their authority, but called the multitude of the disciples together. Either as a congregational body or by their representatives, and asked them to "look out" or nominate seven men whom they could appoint. Just why they mentioned seven we are not told. It is said to be the perfect number. But in any case it is convenient, and often most desirable to have a small number so that a decision can be more easily reached.

The men nominated were evidently Grecians, and this was in harmony with the suggestion. They were asked to "look out" or nominate from "among themselves." This seems also to have proven wise. It is sometimes wise to choose those who are displeased and allow them to take the responsibility of adjustment.

I remember in one annual gathering, when the committee on Ways and Means gave its report, there was much dissatisfaction among the pastors of the smaller churches, because in proportion they were asked to carry the heaviest load. As chairman, I asked that the committee be discontinued and that a committee of seven be appointed from among the pastors of the smaller churches. This was done and when their report was placed before the congregation it was adopted without a murmur. I have noticed that when people have the responsibility, they are generally more cautious in rendering a report, than when they are engaged in murmuring. It might have

been just as well for the church, if they could have found a place of service for those of a more radical conviction of truth, rather than to have turned them out. Possibly we could have had better unity in the Christian body.

QUALIFICATIONS OF RELIABLE MEN

We may take lessons in the required qualifications of the men to fill this important position. Some would so belittle the position of serving tables, as to express astonishment that such requirements were insisted by the apostles. But the most humble service in the church should be filled with good men. Even a janitor needs wisdom. How often I have been made to think of that when trying to speak in a poorly ventilated room. The ushers may greatly hinder a service, or they can become great soul winners. Their kind, gentle thoughtfulness and attention to strangers mean much in the progress of the work. We also need men of wisdom to look after consecrated funds, especially those given for charity and the care of the needy. It was a high and important place to be filled in the church, because carelessness might turn the gentle murmur into fault-finding and division. Hence, the apostles were careful to outline the qualifications.

(1) These must have an honest report. It is well that officers and servants or deacons, as they are sometimes called, should have a good report in the background. This goodness must be honesty. Strict honesty in handling funds greatly helps in creating confidence. One mistake may close the channels of liberality and hinder the income of the church. It is not only business methods needful, but honest methods, and careful reports rendered which will help in carrying forward the work.

(2) They must be "filled with the Holy Ghost." They were to be spiritual and Spirit-filled. It was not enough that they should have been "born again" or known as disciples or learners. They must have experienced a further work of di-

vine grace which was the filling with the Holy Ghost. Much harm has been done by frequently placing men of influence on church boards who have never enjoyed the fullness of the Spirit.

(3) They were to be men of wisdom. Not merely the wisdom of this world which comes to naught, but the wisdom which comes from God. Wisdom is the art of applying knowledge. Wisdom has the sense of the fitness of things. Doing the right thing at the right time, and in the right way. Such men were needed in making adjustments then, and are greatly needed today in all departments of the church. Men of good judgment or men of sanctified common sense were needed. Men of excellent report within and without were in demand. This word rendered "report" is the very same word for witness, "Men of good witness." Such men are indeed great supporters of the church.

RESULTS OF ORGANIZATION

(1) The murmuring ceased. The spirit of unity was not broken but gloriously maintained. The apostles were free to carry forward the work of the ministry in prayer and teaching the Word. Here is one of the modern problems today. Most preachers acting as pastors cannot give time to prayer and teaching because they are bound by financial burdens, plans, calls, committee meetings, clubs, and many other details of running a modern church. It is no wonder that they must struggle to keep spiritual and unfold truth to feed the church. Many churches are dying of starvation for spiritual food, while the pastor is serving tables. Preachers need to be alone with God, hear His voice, drink at the fountain of life, and feel the inspiration of Divine presence. Take time to be holy and feed on the Word of eternal truths.

(2) The next result was the "Word of God increased." More truth was preached, more Bibles read, more promises be-

lieved, more Scripture memorized and quoted, more Scripture applied and lived. The Word of God was more deeply appreciated by the people. It increased as there were large crowds to hear the truths. The Word increased as there were more people to practice its blessed precepts.

The disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, the very center of their opposition. The apostles preached the Word and burned their way into the very strongholds of the enemy. To crown it all "many of the priests" were won over, and became obedient to the faith. Stephen, one of the seven waxing confident by such leadership, wrought great wonders and even miracles among the people.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) We may, therefore, learn that good church government and order and proper adjustment in methods will work no hindrance to revivals, but will promote them. Good methods, better methods, yes, the very best methods are to be earnestly sought in our efforts to get the gospel to the people. We may thank God that there were no professed loyal supporters of ancient customs to arise in the meeting and declare: "We never did this way before," or "Jesus never did things this way," or by another, "Our fathers did not do this way." They all loved the old paths, but the old paths were paths of faith, love and loyalty to Christ.

(2) The work can be greatly hindered by poor methods of organization. Some preachers blame the town, or the city, or the people for their failures, when, in fact, if they were to change the methods they might find the path of success. Some workers seem to have deified the methods of other years until a change to better methods has now become impossible. They evidently feel to make a change would be a compromise, when in fact they are making a compromise with their worn-out methods. One man cultivated a farm for years and lived in

poverty. Another man purchased the farm and made a good living and saved money. The difference was in their methods. The last man studied the soil and found crops suitable for that kind of soil, and kept the right kind of stock. This last man was careful to keep his farm well organized with suitable crops, and the right kind of stock, and made a glorious success where the other man had failed.

How easy it would have been for the apostles to have blamed the Grecians, and to have refused to make a change in the methods. They might have contended, on good grounds, that their Lord and Master had said nothing about deacons or any such office. That such had not been the custom in the past, and so on to the end. Not so with these apostles. They were Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, and were ready to adjust the methods and organization to the needs of the situation.

(3) We are not contending for radical changes in any body of believers, but we do feel that organization and methods should be elastic enough to meet the needs of a changing world and changing conditions. Our Lord seemed to plan for this, and allowed His church to be governed largely by the needs of the situation. How simple to see believers disputing over organization and methods and allowing a lost world to pass by to their eternal ruin. Almost any organization or method is good if it will produce the salvation of men. Any system is poor which hinders or fails to gain this all important objective. If our organization or methods, or our religious forms in worship do not create devotion, promote revivals, and awaken the church into greater passion for a lost world, then we should study how we can make a change which will contribute to these desirable ends in church activity.

(4) Above all, every change should be made which will produce peace within the church, and allow the ministry to give more time to the study of the Word of God and earnest prayer.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit (Acts 7:59).

These are among the last words of Stephen. The last part of the 6th and all of the 7th chapters in Acts contain the story of the call, life, and final martyrdom of this great young man. Little or nothing is known of him until he was chosen as one of the seven. He had such a grasp of spiritual truth that he was possibly converted early and was in the church from the beginning. At least, he was the leading character among the seven. It seemed to please the Holy Spirit to bring this man from obscurity into the limelight. There were hidden possibilities in Stephen for a larger service in the church. As soon as responsibility was placed upon him, it gave God a chance to work through him and bring to the surface powers heretofore unnoticed. Here is a blessed beauty in the ministry of the divine Spirit. He often takes a man from the sheepfold, or store, or factory, or out of the way farm and by grace brings him forth into service. He is placed among kings and princes. The Spirit takes the weak and insignificant things to bring forth his wonders, "That no flesh should glory in his sight." No one needs to plead weakness or inability, "God giveth more grace"; and will furnish sufficient power to do all his own will.

EXPERIENCES OF STEPHEN

He was doubtless a Grecian as his name indicates. Stephen means a "crown." Possibly the mother who gave his name did not think her boy would be crowned as a martyr for his Lord.

It became his lot to have the place in the history of the illustrious men who gave their lives for gospel truth.

We are able to see how the service in looking after the poor would take him to all parts of the city. From the events already recorded, we can see the lines were being closely drawn, and increased criticism and opposition were springing up everywhere. He would be called to visit many synagogues where an explanation would naturally be demanded. This would bring up argument and continued discussion. The opposition would, of course, obtain its greatest debaters to discuss with Stephen. But one after another they became silenced by his forceful logic in scriptural interpretation. No one was able to meet his conclusions. Many were put to confusion. Large numbers among the priesthood turned to Christ under the fiery wisdom of Stephen. The critics found no more words or arguments, thus, they exaggerated and misquoted Stephen's statements, and reported them to the authority.

The trouble at last broke out in the synagogue of the Libertines, which was made up of the Freemen from among the returning Jews to Palestine. Naturally, they would be more zealous for the law, and anxious to prove their loyalty to the Jewish customs. Finding no way to resist the wisdom and power of Stephen, they became infuriated and brought him before the council. We can well imagine this august body of elders, scribes, and leaders seated in a half circle with Stephen facing them. Then they summoned their witnesses, who testified that they had heard him speak blasphemous "words against the holy place" and "the law." Their real testimony was, "For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." There may have been some foundation for such charges. There evidently was a growing conviction in the minds of the apostles that the ancient position of their race

must be changed or abolished. There was no more need of fleshly sacrifices, which were only typical of the true sacrificial offering of Christ. Then in the warning, which Stephen stated, "There is no other name given under heaven or among men whereby they must be saved," we have the implication that if they rejected this salvation, behold their house would be left desolate.

Stephen was before them and in their hands. This evidently was a new experience for him. He was calm and composed. Then his face took on a heavenly radiance much like the face of an angel. Some saw it, and told it to others. One of the witnesses was evidently the young Hebrew, Saul of Tarsus. This Saul was a graduate from the college of which Gamaliel was the instructor or president. He could not have been in Palestine during the ministry of our Lord. But he had returned and was connected with this special synagogue. He was standing nearby when Stephen was before the council. It is evident that his consent was important in the trial and conviction of Stephen. After Saul's conversion, he mentions this fact in particular. Luke, the writer of these words, could have obtained his information directly from Saul, known as Paul, as he traveled in company with him.

CHARACTER OF STEPHEN

(1) He was a real man, a gentleman. He was so marked that he had a good report from all. They gave good witness to his uprightness.

(2) He was a full man. Full of all the graces of the Spirit. There was nothing lacking. Mention any fruit of the spirit, and Stephen was full of love, hope, faith, and all other graces of the Spirit.

(3) He had business ability. He was practical, not lazy, but full of service and activity. God chooses busy men; Elisha

was plowing in the field; David was tending his father's sheep; Christ called men who were busy mending nets and a tax gatherer at his table of work.

(4) He was not only converted, but he had received the Holy Spirit and was "full of the Holy Ghost." He enjoyed the fullness of the Christian blessing. He was not content to put up with anything less than the fullness.

(5) He was full of faith. All doubts were gone, no question marks. He accepted the records of the Old Testament, and saw God in history and providence. He had mighty faith in God and in the Supernatural. He magnified the Christ who had become so real to him.

(6) He was full of grace. A beautiful spirit in his words and a gracious interest in even his critics. He could smile under the severest thrusts from his enemies.

(7) He was full of wisdom. A heavenly art of putting the right word in the right place, just at the right time.

(8) He was full of power. Just what this may cover we do not know only he did wonderful deeds of mercy in helping others, healing, miracles, and gave evidences that God was with him in power.

(9) He was full of vision. To him the heavens were open. He was a true optimist. How the church and the world needs such men as this young man, Stephen.

(10) To crown it all, he was full of truth. He knew the Scriptures. He could recite history and the promises. No wonder his opponents were not able to resist his words of wisdom and the spirit with which he spake. To him the Old Testament was not a sealed book, but a revelation of God and His plan for His people and for the world. Of course his face shone. It had to. The God of light and truth was radiating His presence all through him. His face shone like an angel, for he had the angel nature within.

THE ADDRESS OF STEPHEN

Bear in mind that his accusers, as well as Saul of Tarsus and the members of the Sanhedrin were listening to his words. His accusers declared that his words had been blasphemous against God and Moses. They also testified that he had spoken against the holy place, which was the same as the temple and the law. To speak against the temple was the same as speaking against God, for God dwelt in the temple. To speak against the law was to speak against Moses for the law was delivered by Moses. Now the question was squarely put to Stephen, "Are these things so?" He could not answer directly, "yes," or "no," for an explanation was needful to make his position clear. Stephen must speak. He was calm and confident. In the background he had the promise of his Lord, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." In this confidence he arose to speak. Let us give a brief outline of the extensive ground covered in this great address which is given in the 7th chapter of Acts.

(1) We notice the absence of any personal interest in the entire address. He does not refer to himself or utter one word to contradict the statements of his accusers. His motive was far in advance. His great concern evidently was to unfold to them the truth as he saw it, and bring to their attention the greater truth of their illustrious history. His effort was away from himself in his supreme desire to make them see, that their call of God was to prepare the way for the coming of the "just One." Whoever reads the record without this thought in mind will miss much of the truth therein contained.

(2) He was courteous in his approach. "Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken." What an appeal to their sense of honor. So kind and tender in his method of address. No attempt to thrust back at them for any unkindness shown him, not even

a hint that he had been misused. He gave them every consideration, even gave them honor as fathers of Israel.

(3) We may see his deep reverence for the God they professed to defend, "The God of glory." How could they fail to see that this was far from blasphemy. While he would not defend himself, yet he would show the highest respect and devotion to the God they professed to worship.

(4) He referred to the authority of God and His faithfulness. God called Abraham when he was in a heathen land, and gave him a promised possession. Abraham believed God although there was no immediate fulfillment. But his seed went into bondage, and was delivered through the judgments of God. Moses was sent as a great deliverer. After he had shown wonders and signs, he led the people forth from Egypt to the land of promise. God had been faithful and had kept His word. But this great leader Moses had also spoken of another prophet like unto himself; it was this prophet like unto Moses with whom they had to do.

Joseph was rejected by his brethren and sold into Egypt. But the second time his brethren came for corn he was made known unto them and they fell before him. The very one they rejected became their savior in time of famine. Moses, who was learned in all wisdom of the Egyptians came as their deliverer, but at first was rejected. Then after his divine revelation at the burning bush, he was directly sent from God. This very Moses to whom they said, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" God sent to be their leader. This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me, him shall ye hear."

But in the deliverance under Moses were the fathers faithful? Indeed not, they would not obey. They made to themselves a false god, and turned to worship an idol. God gave

them up to worship the host of heaven. Because they went to idol worship, the people lost their inheritance and went into captivity to Babylon.

In regard to the temple, they were asked to remember that at first there was nothing but a tent tabernacle in the wilderness. The temple was not built until the days of Solomon, although planned by David. However, the prophets had clearly stated, "The most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and, again, "Heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool." "What house will ye build me?" saith the Lord. They must see the conclusion, namely: "That God wanted human hearts as his throne." He wanted to live in them and walk in them. What good could there be in sacrifices and offerings of the blood of beasts while their hearts were not right?

When Stephen saw the strict attention of Saul and the sneers of some in the council, he was moved to apply the trend of all this past rejection of God's plan as seen in this history. He exclaimed, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye." Then cited evidences from the lives of their great prophets. Some were cut to the heart, others gnashed with their teeth. The conclusion was so clear they could see the force of his logic. They had rejected that "just One," and now they were rejected. They could stand it no longer. He was guilty, he must die. He could not be executed without Saul's consent, so Saul gave the last word and consented unto his death. "So they stoned Stephen." And the church has the first gospel martyr.

STEPHEN AS AN EXAMPLE

(1) Stephen was a man of courage and decision. He did not shrink from the battle. He was sure of his convictions, and stood forth as a glad defender of the faith. In these days

of compromise, we must have such men as Stephen in the young manhood of the church. We have reached a crisis, a parting of the ways. It will be easy to tame down, and cater to worldly ideals and methods. It will be easy to supplant spiritual life with programs, pageants, shows, and spectacular display to draw or hold the crowds. May God give the church a host of young men like Stephen.

(2) The example of Stephen places before us the supremacy of the spiritual. From the natural point of view it seemed that stones were conquering Stephen. But not so from Stephen's point of view. This young man knew that stones could kill his body, but they could not kill his spirit. His Lord was not far away. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The material fear of death was gone. "Fear not him who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul." Death to Stephen was not a leap into the dark. The darkness had passed and the true light was now shining. The Sadducees might claim there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, but they were out of touch with what Stephen knew. Every stone was crushing his weakened body, but every falling stone was knocking at heaven's gate which was opening to receive his pure spirit. The earthly house was being crushed. It was being dissolved, but the building of God was not. The doors of that heavenly house, not made with hands, were now swinging wide open for Stephen.

(3) The example of Stephen was a testimony to the reality of the unseen. Spiritual things were the real things to him. He was not walking in the land of uncertainties, or feeling his way in the dark. He had passed the point of speculation, and the gospel was not a mere project. Christ to Stephen was the revelation of God to men. To Stephen heaven was no far away country. He saw heaven open and the "Son of man standing." The distance from earth to heaven is measured by our relation to it. "Son of Man," who was born of woman, lived our

example, crucified for our sins, raised again for our justification, was now glorified at God's right hand. He had finished redemption's work, and was seated at God's right hand. For a moment, Stephen saw Him standing anxiously looking to welcome the first martyr through heaven's gate. What a comfort to Stephen. Forsaken, rejected, and stoned, yet not alone for his own Savior was standing ready to give him a royal welcome.

(4) Stephen's example showed the triumph of the grace of God. "He cried, lay not this sin to their charge." In this, he followed the example of his Lord and Master, who said, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." A tenderness for those who are wrong when they wrong us is the triumph of God's grace. Stephen's body quivered amid the falling stones, but he could not hide that wonderful grace which filled his soul while speaking to them words of wisdom. His tender passion for the salvation of his people overshadowed the awful crime of that day. Here is an example of what Christ meant when He said, "Love your enemies." The sting of death is sin, but in Stephen the sting had been taken away. For him to live was to testify of Christ, and for him to die was eternal gain. What his death meant to all his critics we may never know, but we are led to believe that the young man Saul of Tarsus, who held the clothes of the men who did the stoning, saw the radiant face of Stephen and heard his tender words: "Lay not this sin to their charge." We know he did not forget it, for in vivid words he tells about it later.

The last stone fell, and Stephen closed his eyes. He had fallen asleep, and so the story closed. I did not say ended. No, it did not end there. The example of that young man, we are led to believe, lived on in the life of Paul, and the story has not ended even yet. The story still lives around the throne of God, and will forever.

The death of this great hero of the cross must have exerted a mighty influence throughout the church and established their faith in the reality of the glorious gospel proclaimed by the apostles. The triumphant death of Stephen must also have thrown a mighty influence over those who witnessed his glorious victory. God may allow His people to be buried, but He carries on His work. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Death of the martyrs has been like sowing seed for a great harvest in the church of Christ.

These devout men who carried Stephen to his burial may have been of the Jewish faith who were almost persuaded of the truth. Under such circumstances, it would hardly be expected that followers of this despised Nazarene would have volunteered to step forth for such an undertaking. A few of the devout men still left in the Jewish church felt that such a hero must have decent burial. This may be the reason why special mention is made of the closing scene. The curtain drops and passes from our earthly view.

The inspiration of this story of Stephen has inspired thousands of consecrated men to leave home, to go to distant lands, die in the jungles, bleach their bones on hot sands, and be buried in lonely graves. They have done this to know something of the sufferings of Christ, and give their lives for the salvation of others. While modern genius has transformed the world into better conditions for travel and missionary endeavor, yet the call for heroic young manhood to withstand the subtle temptations is just as urgent as ever. The church needs holy young manhood who can stand against the subtle theories of, "Might makes right," and "All is well if it turns out well."

It will require the courage of Stephen to go through some of our universities and come out with the faith which crowned Stephen's life and victorious death. It will also require the background of scriptural knowledge which graced the wisdom

of Stephen for our young men to withstand the doubts and questions through which they must pass in graduating from some of our higher schools of learning. Times have changed, but the stones of criticism and infidelity which are hurled into the face of our coming generation of young men, fall upon the soul with just as deadly force as in the days of Stephen. To face the sneering crowd of professors, with their popular influence in the higher circles of education, will require the same strength and fortitude of spirit which kept the hero of our story faithful unto the end.

The call comes loud and long for a new race of heroes who will uphold the cause of a holy Christianity, and like brave men stand firmly for truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Men who can withstand financial pressure and live only for the glory of God. Men like Stephen whose faces have been lighted with the holy flame of love divine, whose passion, kindled with sacred fire, cannot be quenched with the cold formalism of modern times. Such men will burn their way through church councils and stand like Stephen under the open heavens, while angels sing and chant the praises of God. Come on young men, because we still need more young men like Stephen. And they are coming, thank God!

CHAPTER XVIII

A TRUE GOSPEL REVIVAL

Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them (Acts 8:5).

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:17).

We have called our subject today the "Gospel Revival." A revival at the present time takes the place of an old-fashioned reformation. A revival as we understand it, is not complete without a reformation as well as a quickening of the church. A gospel revival is a revival that not only quickens the church and reforms the people's lives, but also brings in all the blessings of the atonement of Jesus Christ, including the reception of the Holy Ghost. A revival, therefore, is incomplete without the fullness of the blessing of the gospel.

The essential thing in the days of the apostles was not only bringing Jesus Christ into the hearts and lives of people in regeneration, but it was also establishing men and women in true Christian experience. That which establishes men and women in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the great truth that is brought out here in the lesson which we have read. The full text is as follows: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:14, 15). The occasion for this revival was the departure of Philip because of the persecution at Jerusalem. Sometimes the Lord has to allow a little persecution to get us out of ourselves, and out of our own ruts into His thought and purpose.

There are two main thoughts in the text and context. (1) Samaria received the word of God under the ministry of Philip. (2) These converts received the Holy Ghost through the special visit of Peter and John. There are two possible conclusions before us: either Philip did not know and did not do the work that God intended him to do; or Philip did know and comprehended God's thought, and did the work faithfully.

Now under the first thought, if Philip did not understand, and did not know, and did not do God's will in his ministry at Samaria, then the coming of Peter and John, that these people might receive the Holy Ghost without criticizing Philip, was a mistake. For if Peter and John had found a man preaching something that was not the gospel, they did wrong in not re-proving him. If Philip was in the gospel plan and was doing what the apostles could recognize as a gospel work, then these people were actually converted and regenerated. This initial work laid the foundation whereby they might receive the Holy Ghost. Peter and John laid down a precedent for all time when they prayed that these people might receive the Holy Ghost, as an "after experience." Thus, we have the truth of two works of grace before us.

Let us notice what we may understand by this expression that "Samaria received the word of God." This word "Samaria" is used here in the same sense in which we use the names of cities, to indicate the people. Samaria, that is the people of Samaria, received the word of God. This was a real genuine revival at Samaria. We should notice the character and qualification of Philip as the evangelist, for I think the character of a revival may depend upon the character of the evangelist. Let us look at Philip for a little.

CHARACTER OF PHILIP

Philip divinely received his call. Peter and the other apostles asked the church to select seven men, called deacons,

who should look after certain departments of the church work. What was the character of these men? The character of these men is stated as follows: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, whom ye may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). "And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6:5). When Stephen was slain by stoning, then Philip came to the front taking his place as the leader among that company of seven. And he was a man full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, and of good report.

(1) Philip was a member of the church at Jerusalem, and he was known as a Spirit-filled man. He was acquainted with the Jerusalem church, and after Stephen's death falls right into line to take Stephen's place. Philip was a man fully qualified to fulfill the place of an evangelist and occupy the place that he did in conducting this wonderful revival.

(2) Philip was a man of implicit obedience. He was going on his way down through the desert and he saw a chariot ahead of him, and the Spirit said, "Philip, you go and join yourself to that chariot." Now Philip might have said, "I will when I have an invitation"; but the Spirit said, "You go and join yourself to that chariot." Philip obediently joined himself to the chariot and led the man in the way of gospel truth. He obeyed the Spirit, and thus, brought about the conversion of the eunuch. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. After the blessing of the Lord came upon the eunuch, the Spirit caught Philip away and he was seen no more by the eunuch. The expression, "caught away," does not mean that Philip was taken up bodily into the heavens and carried through the air; but that the Spirit seized Philip by a mighty conviction, and he was taken out of the eunuch's presence, so that the eunuch did not know where he had gone.

(3) Philip was mindful of the members of his family. He had four daughters who were prophetesses. I think it is a real compliment for a man to be able to bring up four daughters and have every one of them prophetesses. Of course, it was because this man was full of the Holy Ghost. He brought up his daughters in the fear of God. We also find that he was a generous hearted man. When Saul was converted and came on to Jerusalem, Philip was there to receive him and introduce him to the apostles. Philip received Paul in Cæsarea, looked after him during his two years of imprisonment, and when Paul sailed for Rome helped him off on the ship. This man was fully and thoroughly qualified to carry on revival campaigns.

PHILIP'S MESSAGE

(1) His message was full of Christ. The first thing stated concerning Philip is, "He went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto the people." His message was "full of Christ." Oh, that all our messages might be so filled with Christ that the report would be, "That message was filled with the Christ, and only the Christ." He had a clear conception of the great plan of Christ's redemption. We find this in his explanation to the eunuch. The eunuch was reading from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and Philip preached unto the eunuch Jesus. How could he preach Jesus from that Scripture? He must have preached Jesus as the great sacrifice for sin, as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the great offering made for man's transgressions. In other words, he preached unto him Jesus as the sin offering. Philip not only had a conception of Christ as the divine Son of God, but he also had a clear conception of Jesus Christ and His atonement for sin.

(2) He did not neglect to declare unto them the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. "They heard Philip speaking concerning the kingdom of God." Philip preached Christ as

the great sacrifice for man's sins; he also preached Jesus Christ in His final glory. A man cannot preach such things pertaining to the kingdom of God, without preaching something about the reign of Christ here and now, as well as the glory that is to be revealed at His advent. Philip in Samaria did not neglect either phase of the kingdom and these people believed his message. There was also divine approval on the message.

RESULTS OF PHILIP'S MESSAGE

(1) His message caused the performance of miracles. "For unclean spirits crying with a loud voice came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsy were healed." God set His seal on that revival, and this is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus Christ. He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; and "These signs shall follow them that believe." We have evidence that the people of Samaria did really believe. No one can say that these people were not really converted.

(2) His message drew the attention of the people. "The people gave heed." That is a very important thing. If a man is going to preach, it is a very important thing that the people give heed to what he has to say. Because the people gave heed unto the message, great victories followed. The first encouragement was that the people who gave heed, listened opened their hearts, were ready for conviction. A man who closes his heart to truth cannot receive. He must open his heart up to God and listen and give heed. When Simon discovered that the people were all being converted, he concluded he would make a profession.

(3) It caused the people to believe. "When they believed, they were baptized, both men and women." Philip preached things pertaining to the things of God. They believed Philip's

preaching. Since they received Philip's message and he preached Christ, they received Christ. This implies, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"; hence, they are born again. If man believes through the Spirit that Jesus is the Christ, he is born of God. This must mean regeneration.

(4) It caused them to repent. They were baptized. This is a testimony to repentance. Philip would never have baptized these converts had they not given him some evidence of repentance. Baptism is the testimony of a divine work, and repentance, and turning from sin.

(5) His message caused great joy. "There was great joy in that city." Whenever a revival comes and wherever a revival takes place, you will find that one of the essential evidences is great joy. There was great joy when some fathers and mothers saw their boys and girls surrender to Jesus Christ. There was great joy when some wives saw their husbands giving up to Jesus Christ. It is stated of the church at Thessalonica that: "They received the word in much affliction and in the joy of the Holy Ghost." A man that has received Jesus Christ will be a happy man. That man has joy, great peace, and victory.

Thus, it is evident that Samaria had received the Word of God. "And the apostles and brethren that were in Jerusalem heard that the Gentiles received the word of God." It means that they had accepted the truth. "And the word of God increased." It doesn't mean that there was more of the word of God. It doesn't mean that the pages were multiplied. But it does mean that the word of God in its effect on the people increased, and that the people more and more received the Word of God. There is power in the Word of God. "Wherefore, receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). If the Word is received with meekness,

it is able to save the soul. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). If we receive the Word of God with meekness, we are brought into that position which, He says, is being born "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible."

The Word of God is quick and powerful unto regeneration and conversion. There is power in the Word of God. There is power in the Holy Spirit. There is power in the blood. All of these enter into the Christian experience in regeneration as well also as in sanctification. We understand that receiving Christ means, that the people who receive Christ are born again. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to be made the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

THE MISSION OF PETER AND JOHN

"When the church at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John down that they might receive the Holy Ghost." I think it is very evident to our minds that Peter was the proper evangelist. I am satisfied that all see that Peter had a proper gospel to preach, and that he had results following his ministry. Now here were the converts, here was the church organized. The mission of Peter and John was very important. The receiving of the Holy Ghost was something over and above what they have already received. They had been converted or regenerated, and they had been baptized. But as yet, the Holy Spirit had fallen on none of them. One man said, "Then these people at Samaria were a Holy Ghostless class of people." But this is not true. They had the Holy Ghost as a witness in their experience of justification, for they had "great joy" and joy is the fruit of the Holy

Spirit. But there was something that was lacking, and what was that? They did not have "the Holy Spirit falling upon them." The expressions, "filled with the Holy Ghost," "the Spirit falling upon them," "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," are different from the witness of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," and when the Holy Ghost was received at Cornelius' house, "the Holy Ghost fell upon them." These are expressions peculiar to this experience, comprehended in the thought of receiving the Holy Ghost.

Receiving the Holy Spirit was not a mystery. These people at Samaria had received Jesus Christ. I have heard people say, when people talk to them about receiving the Holy Ghost, that they get all mixed up. They didn't get all mixed up at Samaria. They had actually received Jesus Christ; they had received the Word of God; and they were living in the Word of God. I can imagine Peter and John saying, "I tell you, beloved, there is something more for you, and you must receive the Holy Ghost and be, thus, established." They reply "We want all there is for us." And so they had an altar service, I presume, for it says that, "Peter and John prayed for them, and they received the Holy Ghost." This was as easy and as logical as their reception of Christ had been, or the same as their reception of Philip's preaching. It was not a hard thing for them. They simply entered right into the experience. It is hard for people to receive the Holy Ghost after a month or six months or six years, sometimes after almost 40 years, if they have been opposing the blessing. If they would walk right out and say, "Yes, this is what I want, and I am going to have it," they would receive just as did these converts at Samaria.

CONDITION OF RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST

This has been noticed in the previous statements showing that these people were really converted, but it is brought out more fully in the experience of Simon. Simon did not receive the blessing of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Why not? Because he was not converted. Let us imagine the scene: One by one the people sweetly and blessedly receiving the Holy Ghost. Then Peter comes to Simon and Simon looks up kind of peculiar and says, "Say, give me power so that I can do the same thing that you are doing. So if I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Ghost." Peter, being astonished, replies, "You have never been converted." The Scripture says, "And when Simon saw that by the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter" (Acts 8:19, 21). What matter? The matter of receiving the Holy Ghost. The matter in which we are now engaged where people are receiving the Holy Ghost. Listen again, "For I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Simon had no part or lot in this matter because he had not been taken out of iniquity, because he was still in the world.

Jesus said, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, [and on the day of Pentecost] shall be in you" (John 14:17). These words are wonderfully fulfilled in the language of Peter when he says, "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter." On the other hand, Peter is implying that these people here do have a lot in this matter, and they can receive the Holy Ghost because they are delivered from the "bond of iniquity." Again, he implies that these people here who do receive the Holy Ghost, are not in the "gall of bitter-

ness." There is a class of people who cannot receive the Holy Ghost, because they are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. The Simons are not all out of the churches yet. Thus, we find why some people do not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. They never have been converted.

What happened to Simon? It is stated, "Then Simon himself believed also." How gently the Holy Spirit, in recording this incident, refrains from any reflection about Simon regarding his act of falling into line with the ministry of Philip. But remember, it was this Simon who had bewitched the people with his sorceries. There is nothing to indicate that he had made a confession of this practice. The sweeping revival had taken the people away from him and he was compelled to take the step of uniting with Philip. It was not a free and voluntary act. Moreover, the expression, "Simon himself believed also," may be taken to indicate a reservation on the part of Simon. It is true he continued with Philip, but this may indicate a human relationship. It does state he was baptized, but unless we accept the theory of water baptism as regeneration, there are no evidences that Simon's faith was a saving faith. "Simon believed also," but it does not say that Simon believed on the Lord Jesus. It is forcefully stated that Simon wondered, beholding the miracles. His faith led him no farther than "wonder," for he had his attention fixed upon the miracles. Devils have also believed and trembled. Had Simon's faith been a saving faith, I believe the record would have stated: "Many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds" (Acts 19:18). Had Simon really repented the result doubtless would have been far different.

I think that Philip was a little more careful in his method of baptizing after this sad experience with Simon. That public rebuke from the lips of Peter evidently lingered in Philip's mind, for when the eunuch asked, "What doth hinder me to be

baptized?" Philip was trying to make sure that faith was flowing from the heart, said: "If thou believeth with all thine heart thou mayest." Hence, he was a little more careful.

There are some who want the Holy Ghost so that they can pray better, or sing better, or testify better. There are some people who say, "Oh, I wish I could testify as good as that fellow." But there must be no selfish thought in receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. A man who does not want to receive the Holy Ghost for his spiritual need is taking the position of Simon. If you want to receive the Holy Ghost merely to do something wonderful, or something great, you are like Simon. He wanted this power so that he might go out and do the same thing that the apostles were doing. No! No! The Holy Ghost is not given for that. The Holy Ghost is given to make us better, and when we are better ourselves, there is no question about our having power. The Holy Ghost cannot be purchased with money. He cannot be purchased with tears. He cannot be purchased with good works. In fact the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased with anything. Because it is the gift of God to the individual heart. The Holy Ghost is not given to make us great or wise, but the Holy Ghost is given to make us good and pure. When we are good and have a pure heart, when we are in the right condition, there is no question about our having power.

PRECEDENTS SET BY THIS REVIVAL

(1) The practice of "laying on of hands" is found here. In the history of the past, we find not only in the Apostolic Church, but in the Roman Catholic Church and in the Greek Church, they have followed this plan for centuries. Where did they get it? Down through the days of the apostles the early church taught that a man was not a full-fledged member of the Christian church until he had received the Holy Ghost. He was not in a position where he might be confirmed in the

church, so to speak, until he had received this blessing. In the early church they believed that their children were in the church, but that they were not full Christians until they were about 12 years of age. At that age they came before the priest to be confirmed, and this confirmation embraced their receiving the Holy Spirit. This is mentioned in their formula at the present time. It is an impressive lesson to the Christian church. But may I tell you that to be confirmed requires something more than the bishop's hands. We must have the experience itself. And so when people are really confirmed in the gospel experiences, they are confirmed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a gospel confirmation, a settling, a rooting, and a grounding of the believer in Jesus Christ. We must not forget that while men are converted to Jesus Christ, it is very essential that they go on and receive the Holy Ghost.

(2) We have an illustration of the fact that *no revival is complete without its Pentecost*. This is an authentic account of God's plan in the Gospel Age. There is no possible way of getting around this truth. Here we have the account of a man who was Spirit-filled, who had heard Peter and John preach, and who knew all about the customs and the doctrine at Jerusalem after Pentecost. This man went to Samaria and preached the Word of God, and then sent for Peter and John. Peter and John came with the fire and the glory of their experience. They came not to criticize, but they take the work from that moment and carry it on until these people received the Holy Ghost. This objective was accomplished.

(3) This is an example of one who was after souls and not crowds. In Samaria the whole city was at Philip's feet, but his next call was to a much smaller crowd. It was down the desert way. Philip was after souls, and was glad to find even one man to whom he might explain the Word. Philip was not seeking big churches, great crowds, but was ready to obey when called

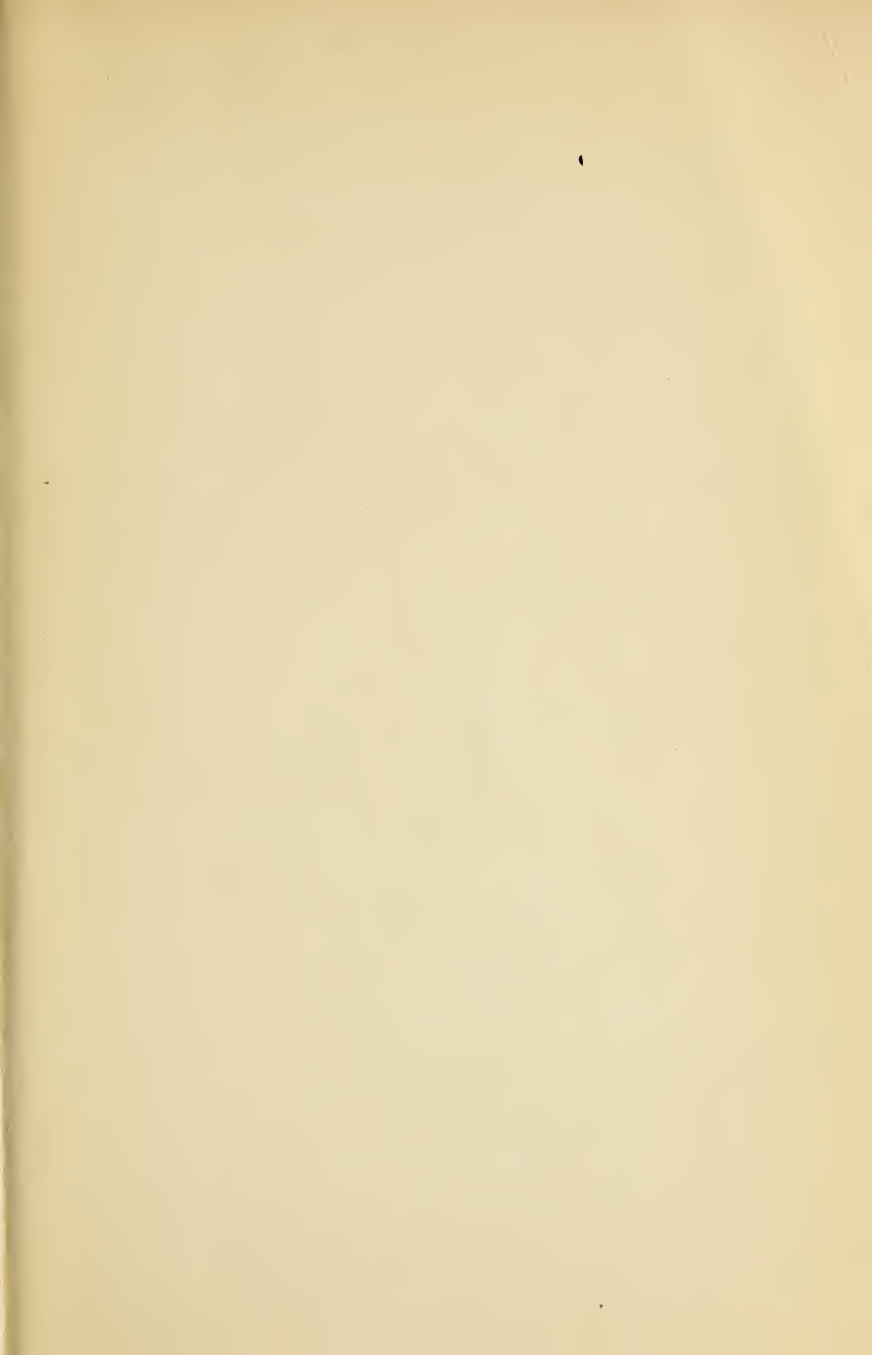
to the smaller places of service. Then, when he left Samaria, he left the people also and did not keep in touch with a few personal admirers to the embarrassment of the work. Then when he had baptized the eunuch, although this man was in high authority, he left the eunuch in the hands of God, and departed without leaving his address for future correspondence. Such evangelists as Philip will do great good and give true revivals to our churches.

WHY DO I PREACH THIS EXPERIENCE?

I am so glad that God revealed to me that the Bible teaches regeneration. If I had not seen that, the Bible teaches a definite experience of regeneration, inside of one year after I was converted, from what I had seen on the outside and from the temptations I received within, I would have given up. But when I saw the Bible taught it, and I saw that my experience was in harmony with it, then I said, "I am on the sure foundation." And I am satisfied, beloved, what we need is a conviction that our experience is on a biblical foundation.

(1) I never should have been preaching what I am this morning, if I had not been convinced that the Bible teaches it. If I could in any way explain it, or move it out of the way, then I should think that I had been mistaken in my own experience. But I know the Bible teaches it, thus I know I must bring my own experience into harmony with it. It doesn't make any difference what your experience has been, we cannot interpret the Bible by your experience. If you have received the Holy Ghost so near your conversion, that you cannot distinguish the second definite work done, don't say the Bible doesn't teach it. This is not an exceptional case, I have been preaching to you this morning. If what I say is true, then we have discovered God's thought and God's plan as taught in the New Testament.

(2) I preach it because it is an experience which all believers may have. This blessing is to be received soon after conversion. I am praying that God will search our hearts. I have not been preaching this morning to convince you of a theory or a doctrine, but I have been speaking that you may definitely see what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that you are to seek and receive the Holy Ghost. God will sanctify you wholly. It is His will. You are seeking something that the Bible presents. You are seeking something that Jesus Christ has said was for you. When a man comes seeking something he is convinced is for him, it doesn't take him a great while to get through. The reason why people are so long getting through is because there are doubts in their minds, and they wonder whether the thing is for them or not. But, beloved, let us go a step farther and know that the blessing is for us. And that it is given for our benefit. Let us seek it confidently, let us seek it with faith, because God will not deceive us. May God help us, then, to receive this fullness. How quickly the believers at Samaria opened their hearts to receive the Holy Spirit. Shall we not follow their example? It is for us all today.



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