



The Power of Pentecost

By: Hardy Steinberg

At the beginning of His earthly ministry Christ constantly emphasized the Cross. At the conclusion of His earthly ministry He emphasized the Cross. At the conclusion of His earthly ministry He emphasized the coming of the Holy Spirit. In His last communications with the disciples He said, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). He also said, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

There was a reason why Jesus placed great emphasis on the importance of the power of the Spirit. He knew the disciples were completely inadequate for their mission. Only through the enablement of the Spirit could they successfully fulfill their assignment.

The mission of the Church is equally great today. Supernatural power is required. For this reason believers once again need to consider the implications of the Spirit’s outpouring on the Day of Pentecost.

THE PROMISE OF POWER

A. Old Testament Promises

As Peter rose with the Eleven on the Day of Pentecost to refute the charge that the disciples were intoxicated, he used two forms of proof. First, he said it was illogical to assume intoxication because it was only 9 a.m. Celebrations were not indulged in at this hour. Second, he pointed out that what was taking place was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

In referring to the prophecy of Joel he said, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my hand maidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:16-18).

To people acquainted with the Old Testament this would have been a familiar promise. They might also have remembered other promises by the prophets. Through Isaiah God had said, “For 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” (Isaiah 44 :3).

Through Ezekiel God had promised, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . . And I will put my Spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:26,27). And God’s word to Zerubbabel was, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain” (Zechariah 4:6,7).

B. New Testament Promises

Not only did the Old Testament prophets announce the Pentecostal outpouring, but the New Testament also makes both general and specific references to it. In his brief ministry, John the Baptist said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto

repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11).

Even before His crucifixion Jesus began to emphasize the ministry of the Spirit. He pointed out that the Father would send another Comforter who would abide with them forever (John 14:16). He also indicated that it was necessary for Him to leave in order that the Holy Spirit might come (John 16:7). Of course, His final words instructed the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with the power of the Spirit (Luke 24:49).

The Church today, facing its complex mission, cannot disregard the promise of the Spirit’s power without personal loss. It must give priority to the power of the Spirit as did the Early Church.

THE PURPOSE OF THE POWER

Whether power is good or bad often depends on the individual’s understanding of it. This is certainly true concerning the Spirit’s power. This is one reason why the Bible gives such definite guidance concerning the purpose of the power.

A. Power for Living

The life of Peter is a tremendous example of the Holy Spirit’s transforming power. Prior to Pentecost Peter did not have the courage to witness to servants near the judgment hall (Matthew 26:57, 69-75). After the outpouring of the Spirit he boldly gave witness to Christ before the multitudes (Acts 2).

Other facets of Peter’s personality were also changed. Before Pentecost he was among those seeking position (Luke 9:46; 22:24-26), but after Pentecost he disclaimed credit for the healing of the lame man (Acts 3 :12). Before Pentecost it was difficult for Peter to believe concerning the resurrection of Christ (Luke 24 :36-45)) but after Pentecost the Resurrection was always an important emphasis in his preaching and witnessing (Acts 2:32-36).

Peter’s life was drastically changed because he had yielded completely to the Holy Spirit; and when the Holy Spirit was given control, the character or fruit of the Spirit was manifested. Paul indicated there are nine facets to the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5 :22,23). Complete surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit is still the secret of Christlike graces in the believer’s life.

B. Power for Service

The power of the Spirit is also the secret of effective Christian service. The Spirit-filled believers of the Early Church witnessed before large multitudes in spite of threats and actual physical harm (Acts 4 :5-12; 5 :29-33). They witnessed to individuals such as the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8 :26-40) and they witnessed before kings and other dignitaries (Acts 24-26). It seemed that no one and nothing could stop the efforts of believers who had been empowered by the Spirit.

Jesus gave the secret of effective witnessing when He indicated that after the Comforter had come, the world would have a twofold witness. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness” (John 15:26,27). He also said, “I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:7,8). As the believers witnessed, the Holy Spirit also bore witness.

THE PRINCIPLE OF POWER

A. Recognizing the Person

Scripture uses many symbols to illustrate the nature and activity of the Holy Spirit. Among them are fire (Isaiah 4:4), wind (John 3:8), water (John 7:38,39), oil (1 John 2:20,27; 2 Corinthians 1:21), and the seal (Ephesians 2 :13). For this reason some have looked upon the Holy Spirit as an influence or nonpersonal power. It is of greatest importance that believers recognize the Holy Spirit as a divine Person rather than a nonpersonal influence. The Holy Spirit is

equal to and one with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28 :19; 2 Corinthians 13 : 14). He is a Person as much as the Father and Son. He is divine as much as the Father and Son.

B. Yielding to the Person

When the Holy Spirit is properly recognized as a divine Person, different attitudes and terminology will be manifested in relation to Him. Dr. R. A. Torrey mentioned three results of recognizing the personality of the Holy Spirit:

(1) Rather than speaking of how they can use the Spirit, believers will be concerned to know how the Spirit can use them.

(2) Rather than depriving the Holy Spirit of worship due deity, believers will worship the Spirit as they do the Father and Son. While worship of the Spirit is expressed in some songs such as "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," it is sometimes not as prominent in the believer's prayer worship.

(3) Rather than thinking of the Holy Spirit merely as a gracious influence, believers can enjoy the pleasure of knowing that God the Holy Spirit is a Person who is always with them. The more believers recognize the personality of the Spirit, the more earnestly will they seek to determine how they can make themselves completely available to the Spirit's control. As the Spirit controls the believer, God's personality and power are manifested.

CONCLUSION

At this Pentecost season believers will again want to recognize that they must decrease, but that the Holy Spirit must increase. As the Holy Spirit is given priority in the believers' lives, they will be able to pray with deep conviction, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen" (Matthew 6 : 13). God's work done in God's power God's work done in God's power will result in God's glory.

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