

Holy Spirit 03

PENTECOST

By Leonard Ravenhill

Lord Montgomery, that unpredictable British field Marshall, said recently that England went into the Second World War equipped to fight the First World War. This was a polite way of saying that in World War II England was way behind the times in battle equipment and strategy.

When Sir Christopher Wren designed the great St. Paul's cathedral in London, he planned a thing of lasting beauty and unfading charm, but did not order it air-conditioned. When George Stephenson built his rocket engine, it was not smooth, herculean diesel, but a low-powered hissing machine. In other words, both Wren and Stephenson underestimated the needs of our day, and designed for their day.

Many today have a benevolent patronage of the church of Jesus Christ (or what they mistakenly think is the church of Jesus Christ). These "wise ones" think that the psalm-singing saints are as much out of line with the atomic age as a penny-farthing bicycle would be on a motor-crowded four-lane highway. Was Jesus Christ guilty, then, of underestimating the need of this twentieth century? Is the Church which Christ founded a cumbersome, slow-moving thing, badly needing a gigantic overhauling and a government subsidy to get her up to date and moving? No! The church does not need state support.

We concede, however, that the Church does need a mighty overhauling by divine Hands, that is, she needs the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. When the Lord Christ ascended into heaven from Mt. Olivet, He charged the disciples that they should "wait for the promise of the Father" - the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" with its resultant power.

This promise was exclusive - "Ye shall receive power." Who was to receive the promise? Only the followers of Christ.

The promise was exciting - "Ye shall receive power." In eager anticipation of this blessed enduement, the waiting ones could see all their weakness evaporating in the baptism of fire.

The promise was explicit - "Not many days hence."

The promise was expanding - This thing was not to be done in a corner, nor whispered among the redeemed. It would reach out through them to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

This promise was exalting - In the whole world of created things there is no greater power than that of the Holy Spirit of God. They were to be filled with the Spirit of the living God. Earth has no greater honor than that.

Angels, behold and wonder!

Every thing in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters above the earth - all these are the work of His fingers and this Mighty one is He who condescends to come and indwell mortals.

But though Pentecost meant power to the disciples - it also meant prison to them. Pentecost meant enduement - it almost meant banishment. Pentecost meant favor with God - it also brought hatred from men. Pentecost brought great miracles - it also brought mighty obstacles. Pentecost brought anointing for the upper room preachers - it also brought appointing a deacon and under the enduement he turned Samaria upside down.

In Europe Pentecost Sunday is always called Whitsunday (White Sunday), and the children usually dress in white. The disciples were "made white" at the first Pentecost - that is, their hearts were "purified by faith" (Acts 15:8, 9). This purification is a lost accent these days in interpreting the Baptism with Spirit. Under the title of Spirit-filled churches, there are some weird and wanton things operating at present.

If too much stress has not been made of the gifts of the Spirit, then too little has been said of the fruit of the Spirit. Note how few books are available on the fruits of the Spirit, but how many on the gifts of the Spirit. Yet the Son of God said, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The first essential for the coming of the Holy Ghost into a heart today is that the heart should be cleansed from sin, for the Holy Spirit does not fill an unclean heart. What God has cleansed, He then fills. Finally, whom God fills, He uses. A holy life is the authentic sign of being filled with the Spirit.

Today we need a revival of holy living. Why do we have to hang a sign outside our church to announce that we are Fundamental and Biblical? Because without a sign, no one could identify us? When I passed through a town that a few days before had been torn apart by a tornado, I assure you I had not to be told a mighty wind had cleaved the place. A fire is self-announcing. A conflagration needs no publicity. When the fire of the Holy Ghost falls again and the mighty wind of the Spirit comes (I am positive He is coming), then our "bush" will burn too, and a Moses will turn again to see the great sight. Even so, come Holy Ghost! Come quickly!

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