

The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 35-8

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PENTECOST: ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

Sixth Radio address by Rev. W. Edmund Smith

Text: Acts 1:8. "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Recently, the Christian Church has been commemorating Pentecost, and it may not be amiss for us to consider this morning the significance of that event. Pentecost, literally, means fifty, and was a name given to one of the great feasts in the Jewish calendar. Just fifty days after the Israelites had eaten the Paschal lamb, in the house of bondage and had been led by Moses out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, they came to Mount Sinai, where God called Moses to the top of the mountain, and gave him the ten commandments graven on tables of stone. Note now this coincidence: Just fifty days after God's Paschal Lamb had been sacrificed on Mount Calvary, the Holy Ghost was outpoured upon the hundred and twenty disciples assembled in the upper room at Jerusalem.

This event has been called the birthday of the Holy Spirit.

True, the Holy Ghost had ever been in the World. He was the active agent on creation's morn. He had been converting and sanctifying prior to Pentecost. But all of his work had been in anticipation of the redemptive work of Jesus, and so the Spirit's working was limited, and religious experience could not be as full and complete in anticipation of Calvary as it would be after Jesus lived, suffered, rose and had been glorified.

Someone has called Pentecost the birthday of the Church. True, the Church existed in nebulous form when Jesus called his disciples, but with the coming of Pentecost the Church began to assume organic form, and received her commission to evangelize the World. We must believe that Pentecost was the glorious climatic event in the plan of redemption. It gave significance and efficiency to all that had gone before. It took away from Jerusalem its religious prestige, and by sanctifying and exalting common things and common people, took from the special days and feasts, and the priesthood of the Jews their glory and exclusive claims. Pentecost made possible a Holy Land anywhere. It gave the humblest believer the privilege of becoming a king and a priest unto God, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, more acceptable to God than the blood of bulls and of lambs. Pentecost broke down forever the walls of separation between the Jew and the Gentile, giving to the latter repentance unto Life. Pentecost disclosed God's great plan for World redemption, He having made the Jews the channel of revelation.

But we wish to consider briefly, what Pentecost meant to those disciples and apostles.

Firstly: Their hearts were purified. There was a subjective work accomplished in them. Peter referring to the Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost said: He put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. We must believe that grace had done something for the apostles prior to Pentecost. They had left all to follow Jesus. Jesus had told them, when they came back from a preaching expedition rejoicing in their success, not to rejoice so much in those things, but rather to rejoice that their names were written in Heaven. Jesus declared that He was the vine and they were the branches. In his high priestly prayer He declared to the Father that they were not of the World, but that He had chosen them out of the world. If they were of the world, the world would love its own. He said they have kept my word, and none of them are lost but the son of perdition. How any candid person can fail to believe that these disciples were what we might call "converted" persons, I fail to see.

But Jesus did recognize the fact that their religious experience was very defective. And so He said "Father for their sakes I sanctify myself that they might be sanctified through the truth. Sanctify them through the truth; Thy word is truth."

Now we know that Jesus did not need any subjective cleansing. He was pure and holy. Sanctification to Him meant that he set Himself apart to accomplish the complete redemption of men. But these apostles and disciples did need a subjective cleansing, and sanctification meant this to them. They were in a measure spiritual, and yet they were carnal. Even in the presence of Jesus they would get into carnal controversy as who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. John and James wanted to call down fire from Heaven to consume those that followed not their band. This brought upon them the condemnation of Jesus for their narrow bigotry. Peter who had boasted that he would follow Jesus even unto death, denied Him in the presence of a little maid. He petered out. Thomas doubted and in the presence of danger they all forsook Jesus, these very ones that Jesus said had kept His word.

Truly they needed something more than they had received, and at Pentecost it came to them. Their hearts were purified from carnal fear, ambition and all sinful affections. Their spiritual nature was unified, and thus they could become worthy representatives of their risen and glorified Lord.

Secondly: Their vision was clarified. Under the immediate instruction of Jesus they failed to understand the spiritual character of His kingdom. They looked for a temporal kingdom, in which they were to hold conspicuous and impor-

tant offices. The question with them was, Who will be greatest? Even after Jesus had risen and appeared to them, the first question they asked was, Lord wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel? Then it was that Jesus told them that they should receive power after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them. It was the power of a purified heart and a clarified vision.

How true it is that spiritual things are spiritually discerned. God hides things from the wise and prudent and reveals them unto babes. A multitude of the worldly-wise fail to see the benefits of Pentecost because the veil is over their spiritual eyes. An interpreter of the New Testament told out, with positive emphasis, that there is no such thing as a second crisis in religious experience. An old colored mammy who knew the indwelling presence of the Comforter for years was told what he said. She replied: "That professor put that too strong. He ought to have said, not that he knows on". After Pentecost those apostles never doubted the deity of Jesus and the full redemptive character of his death and resurrection. What Jesus could not make plain to them in the days of His flesh the Holy Ghost revealed to their consciousness. They were united in heart and purpose in a common cause to make known the saving grace of the blessed Son of God.

We honor education and mental discipline, but these can never rightly interpret the Word of God. The same Holy Ghost that clarified the vision of the disciples, must clarify our spiritual vision, so that we may rightly understand the plan of redemption and all our privileges in the covenant of grace. Amanda Smith the colored washer-woman, with the Holy Ghost was a better interpreter of the Word than the profound scholar who can read the ancient tongues, but has not the indwelling Comforter to illuminate his understanding.

Finally: This Pentecostal baptism energized their wills and enabled them to do. Think of the task before them. Jesus had commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature and they went forth against a hostile church, without the prestige of ecclesiastical endorsement, the support of governmental authority, the resources of material wealth, or the confidence of educational equipment, to win the World for Jesus, who had lived the life of a tramp preacher and had died like a malefactor between two thieves. At first Roman power was tolerant, and saw in those Christians only another form of Judaism. But when they began to multiply and declare that there is no salvation in any other but Jesus, Rome began to persecute. Had they been less radical the Christians could have gained for Jesus a place in the Roman Pantheon, where the gods of all the nations Rome had conquered were honored. Paul might have become the

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Beulah Camp Meeting, July 3-12 '31