

BACK TO THE UPPER ROOM

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"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 in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

Our Lord Jesus shut the disciples up in Jerusalem between a command and a promise. The command was to tarry; the promise was a baptism with the Holy Ghost which was to give them power to become witnesses.

Evidently they were to bear witness to the Godhead of Jesus, his fulfilment of prophecy, his teachings, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, his ascension, his coming again, and his great mission in the world and the salvation of the lost; and they were to witness to their own salvation. This witness was to be carried into all the world.

They were not to leave Jerusalem on their journey to the ends of the earth with the glad tidings of salvation until they had received power, and that power was not some gift from the Holy Ghost; it was the Holy Ghost himself coming upon them, indwelling them, giving them courage, faith, fortitude, zeal, persistency, making them indomitable. Nothing in the world, or all things in the world, can be equalled to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Without him the work of the ministry cannot be carried forward successfully. However broad and fundamental the education, the ministry cannot accomplish its God-appointed task without the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

We must not overlook the fact that having received the Holy Ghost they were to go, first, to their own neighborhood; second, to the adjoining community; and then on to an ever-widening circle until they had touched the uttermost parts of human existence. Let it be remembered that the spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. If God loved the world well enough to give his Son to die for its redemption, God wants the world to know it.

The commandments, promises, and blessings of God are so united and combined together that we must not dare to undertake to separate them—obedience, faith, activity, gracious results. The church that loses the missionary spirit, loses the Holy Spirit. To have the Holy Spirit is to desire to witness to others. It is the plan of God to so fill men with the Holy Spirit, the joy and assurances that he gives, that they can but witness; they must tell others of the blessing that has come to them. Testimony or witnessing has a large place in the spread of the Gospel and Kingdom of God in the world.

The result of the labors of that group of people upon whom the Spirit fell in the upper room at Pentecost was most marvelous. They went forth with great joy. They could not be suppressed. If you beat them, they rejoiced and continued to witness. If you imprisoned them, some angel came, chains fell off, and prison doors were opened. They climbed the mountains, crossed the deserts, and sailed the deep. Wherever they went, the people who saw and heard them realized that they were not ordinary men; that there was something strange, powerful, and divine about them. It's the will of God to place a stamp upon his witnesses; to put something into their faces, into their tone of voice, into their very manner of living that distinguishes

them from the ordinary, that gives them prestige in their community and power among their fellowbeings.

Failure is impossible with the church if her ministry and people are filled with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is God in the Third Person. He is the Almighty One. When he indwells his church she is invincible. When he indwells his ministry, and they bear their message, it is with the demonstration and power of the Spirit. It will produce fruit, revivals will break out, the crowds will gather, results will be gracious, wide-spread and permanent. Wicked men will realize the presence of God and feel the hateful burden of their sins.

Men are so constituted that they will be mightily moved when they are fully convinced of the presence of the supernatural. Even wicked men can tell when God is in the midst. Nebuchadnezzar, of old, when he looked into the fiery furnace and saw four persons walking, said, "We cast in three, but, behold, there are four, and one of them is like unto the Son of man." He was a pagan. He was not acquainted with the prophecies. What did he know about the Son of man? And yet there was something in him that at once recognized the deity of this fourth Person. There is a divine Person who can come into us as the minister of God's grace, and into the laity as well, that has a strange, compelling power. People will take knowledge of us, not only that we have been with Jesus, but that Jesus is with us.

It is very generally understood and widely lamented that there is a great dearth of spiritual power in the world; that we are in need of a revival. All sorts of suggestions are being offered and experiments are being made. It is safe to say that the building of the vast cathedral churches will not bring the needed revival. The beautiful pageants, religious theatricals, with vast stages, hundreds of participants in all sorts of costumes and attractive paraphernalia, with historic settings and waving banners will not bring the revival. It has been tried sufficiently to prove that it does not contain saving power. Our religious summer resorts with lectures, courses of study, golf links, baseball, tennis, and swimming pools, when weighed in the balance are found wanting, so far as revival power is concerned.

We shall have to fall back on the upper room method. There is no way to substitute the person and power of the Holy Ghost when it comes to the great work of soul saving. When we leave him out, whatever we may do, however expensive and laborious, is a kind of idolatry; it is substituting something else for the plan, the person, and power of the Holy Ghost. We can build our magnificent temples of worship and they will become nothing more than human clubs, places for the gathering of unsaved and worldly people.

There is a way to power, to victory, to the energizing of the church with holy zeal and the carrying of the Gospel to the ends of the earth for the salvation and uplift of the people, but that way leads up the stairsteps to the upper room of tarrying, to absolute obedience to the command of Christ and unhesitating faith in the promise of Christ. We must have the spirit of obedience and faith that will tarry, that will continue to wait, that cries out in an agony of expectation and longing, "I will not go unless thou go with

me!" If we obey the commandment of Christ, we may be sure he will keep and fulfill his promise. The need of the ministry and of the church is to come back to the upper room, to tarry and pray until we receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost. This we must do or we are and will be confronted with failure.

SETTING DOUBLE WATCH

In the last issue of "The Bible in the World" which is the organ of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the editor has this very timely little word which we have borrowed for the leading article in these pages this month.

Macaulay had this to say about Scott: "He seems to me to have been most carefully, and successfully, on his guard against the sins which most easily beset literary men. On that side he multiplied his precautions and set double watch."

We all need to set double watch against our own faults and failings, and in this meditation let us consider some of those faults and failings to which we are specially susceptible in war-time.

Let us set double watch against collousness. These are days in which we are constantly reading and hearing of the loss on the battlefield, in the air, and at sea; and the repetition of such news can make us hard. Our fund of sympathy, called upon so often, may get used up, and when we read of heavy casualties we may no longer be moved by the dire tidings. This is one of the most dreadful penalties of war: it exhausts our capacity for emotion, and leaves us callous to the sufferings and woes of mankind. Only by the exercise of the imagination, only by learning "to sit where they sat" can we keep our hearts open to the sufferings of our fellows; and we can best learn the secret of sympathy at the feet of the Christ.

Let us set double watch against cynicism. The war goes on and on; its havoc spreads from land to land; the sufferings of nations extend and deepen; and the end seems far away. Surveying the human scene in all its terror, we are tempted to inquire just what it all means, and to what it all leads. The cynic, in such times, tries to persuade us that our life is but "a tale that is told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Against this cynical view set the strong and penetrating teachings of Jesus. He represents life not as meaningless, but as full of significance and purpose. We are here to do the will of God, to be witnesses of Him, and to show forth the Christian spirit day by day. In our cynical moods we do well to listen to that Voice which banishes cynicism, and calls us to be our best and bravest: "Be of good cheer."

Let us set double watch against irritability. The strain of war tells even more on the strongest nerves, and the strain is cumulative. After more than four years of war most of us, whether we know it or not, are feeling the strain; and strain often reveals irritability. We become impatient if we are contradicted; we want to have our own way in all circumstances; and we show little consideration for the feelings of other people. The explanation is that we are suffering under the strain of war, but it is not an adequate excuse. We must pull ourselves together and, once again, we must learn from the Great Teacher Himself.—The Evangelical Christian.