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An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

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Pentecost

By James Gibson*

It has always been a conundrum to me why the modern church makes so much over Easter in the church calendar and almost totally ignores the "Feast of Pentecost," which is likewise an important day in the history of the church. I think the answer lies in the fact that Jesus fully underwrote the cost of Easter through His sacrificial death on the cross but if we are to get anything out of the Day of Pentecost it will cost us something in our own lives. Pentecost will be meaningless to those who refuse to pay the price to make it possible in their individual lives. Pentecost was provided as a part of the great plan of salvation and was intended to meet a definite need in the heart of the believer. Since this is so, it has been repeated and will be repeated everywhere and at all times when men believe and meet the conditions to make it personally possible in their lives. To me, the truth of a personal pentecost, or, if you wish, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, stands out because of at least three important factors:

First, it is unquestionably real in God's Word. A clear unbiased study of certain statements in the Gospels, the Acts, and especially the Pauline Epistles, such as "Baptised with the Holy Ghost," "Filled with the Spirit," "The Holy Spirit fell upon them," "The Gift of the Spirit," "Endued with power from on high," and other closely-allied phrases, will lead one to the conclusion that they all stand essentially for the same experience, that experience being none other than a personal repetition of Pentecost in the life of every believer who will thus believe and receive such into his or her life.

In the second place, it is unmistakably needed in the life of every believer. Anyone who has had much experience in Christian work will readily agree to this. After dealing with thousands of people with regard to their spiritual problems and needs, I would be compelled to say that if God had not provided, but thank God He has, for such a cleansing and filling of the human heart. He should have made such provision. I have contacted many ministers, who even though theologically they could not see a second work of grace, were willing to confess that most of their parishioners needed some such experience in their lives. A good Baptist minister once told me he could not use some of the most capable people in his church because they were so filled with carnality. How glad we are that on the day of Pentecost adequate power was released to cleanse the hearts of those one

hundred twenty in the Upper Room.

In the third place, "the fullness of the Spirit" has been made undeniably real in my own life. As a young minister during my days of college preparation I discovered my need of this deeper experience in the life of the believer. How glad I am that I can go back to a definite spot in the beautiful hills of old Kentucky where I made a full and complete surrender upon my waiting heart. God has vindicated the scripture, "For the promise is unto you, your children, to them that are afar off, even as many as shall call on the name of the Lord our God," Acts 2:39. My word of witness is but one among the multitudes who have likewise tested the promises and found them to be real.

"There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the Heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the Heart of God."

* Evangelist of the Methodist Church.

Look back to Pentecost. See Christianity at her first step raising up her armies by thousands. She seeks not the wilderness; she seeks not the few; she affects not little, dispersed, hidden groups. In the sight of Jerusalem, in the sight of the world, she starts as the religion of the multitude; the religion of fathers and mothers, of traders, of landowners, of widows, of persons of all classes and of all occupations. She takes in her hand, at the very first moment, an earnest of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, of every grade and age, as if to expand forever the expectation of her disciples, and impress us with the joyful faith that her practical redemption was for the multitude of men.

—William Arthur in "Tongue of Fire".

The Spirit of God, the Paraclete, is to be to the disciples and to the Church all that Christ would have been had He tarried among us and been the personal companion and counselor of each and all.

And by the Spirit of God working in and through the believer and the Church, believers ars, in their measure, to be to the world what the Spirit is to them."—Arthur T. Pierson in "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

I urge upon you communion with Christ, a growing communion. There are curtains to be drawn aside in Christ that we never saw, and new foldings of love in him. I despair that I shall ever win to the far end of that love, there are so many plies in it. Therefore dig deep, and sweat and labor and take pains for him, and set by as much time in the day for him as you can. He will be won in the labor.

—Rutherford

The Divine Outpouring

By John A. Ferguson

Again and again in the book of Acts the "Promise" is portrayed by such expressions as "poured out," "shed forth" or as Weymouth translates it in Acts 2:33, "poured forth". The term "poured" used in Acts 2:17, 18 is the same word used in Revelation 16 for the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath. The copiousness of the Gift of the Spirit, then, may be measured by the wrath that is to be meted out to a rejecting world. The "shed forth" as used in Acts 2:33 appear to be the same as those in Acts 22:20 where Paul speaks of being a witness to the "shedding" of the blood of Stephen. Here again is the idea of "pouring out" generously of the great Promise.

The Church is a community of believers who owe their religious life, first and last, to the Holy Spirit. The Christian religion is not an institution but an experience. Apart from the Spirit there can be neither Christian nor Church. At Pentecost the people who had not been in direct contact with the mighty outflowing stood back bewildered and mystified: they were awed by this revelation of the supernatural. In our age there is a frivolity, a coarse familiarity with the things of God, for people see little to stun them into silence in His presence.

"God's skies are full of Pentecosts,
For you, for me, for all;
Then let us humbly, boldly press,
Our heritage in Christ possess,
That power from heaven may fall."

Pentecost was not a passing thin, a "will-o'-the-wisp", a "flash in the pan", a "necessary" result. It was a world-transforming crisis which eventually shook the empires of that age.

I. Let us look first at the SIGNIFICANCE of Pentecost. Pentecost is proof of God's regard for man. Man does not have to save himself; God brings salvation to him by the Spirit. We no longer are struggling UP to God but God has come DOWN to man. The Gift of the Holy Spirit—what a wonderful testimony to divine interest and love!

Again, Pentecost is a pledge that salvation is open to ALL men. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Weymouth puts it thus, "For to you belong the promise, and to your children, and to all . . ." Here at Pentecost is evidence that with God there is "no respect of persons," that all may come under the provisions of grace.

Then, Pentecost is the time of inauguration and confirmation of the Church. A standard is

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