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PENTECOST AND MISSIONS

By Alton E. Liddick
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Three imperative commands establish the order of the Christian mission: "Come," "Tarry," and "Go." They are issued in orderly succession by the Son of God, our divine Master.

"Come unto Me," a compassionate invitation, is to all the world—the sin-laden the sin-suffering, and the sin-sick. When men, in response to that invitation, come, they are pardoned and commissioned. The "come" is quickly changed to "go." But between the two is the all-important period of preparation, "Tarry ye," and "ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you." Go! But tarry first. And don't go until you have tarried. "Come" is the message of Calvary; "go" the commission from Olivet. Between the two must come an upper room experience where the purified heart is filled with a passion and empowered by the Spirit to perform its mission.

Pentecost was the birthday of the Church of Christ. It was born a church with marching orders, a church that received and understood its mission. For it began in a world-gathering. Men out of every nation under heaven were in Jerusalem, and the Spirit's gift of the power of tongues revealed the wide sweep of the Master's plan for the Church. Filled with the Spirit, His disciples became His messengers to the nations. "Ye shall be my witnesses," He said, and, "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Jesus always had a world vision. When He epitomized the Gospel to the Jewish ruler, Nicodemus, the starting point was God's love for the world. Jesus had a world passion, for He commissioned his disciples to go to "all nations," and to "the whole creation." Jesus has a world plan. And the completion of His plan depends on the faithful obedience of His followers around the earth. The chief use God has for his people in this world is that the world may find Him through them.

The early Church, fresh from Pentecost, was chiefly a missionary church. One great purpose gripped it—to take the news of Jesus everywhere. Its members held their lives and property subject to that one purpose. Obedient to Christ and filled with His Spirit, the whole church was one missionary society. It had been called into existence for that purpose and it understood both its mission and its scope. As a result, everybody went everywhere. World-winning was the object and soul-winning the method. And the Holy Spirit made it possible.

Strange as it may seem, with the Master gone, the disciples were better equipped for their task. He Himself had told them His departure was for their benefit. Far from being orphaned, they now had the constant companionship of the Third Person of the Trinity—the blessed Holy Spirit. He had come to do the work of Christ—through men. After Pentecost they were men empowered by the Spirit. This was the reason for their wonderful success. For the Spirit can do the work of Christ only through human instrumentality, and men can do the work of Christ only through the power of the Spirit. Soul-winning is a co-operative business, the Spirit working through man. Where men have failed to go, the Spirit has been hampered in speaking to men. Where men have gone without the Spirit, they have been hampered by a lack of power. For if anyone needs the Spirit it is he who attempts to win other men. And if any soul winner needs the Spirit, it is most certainly the one who goes to foreign lands and lives in the difficult atmosphere of a non-Christian society.

So while Christ's last word to His disciples was "go," His first word after the resurrection was "tarry." The resurrection fired them with zeal, but they were not ready. They must not only witness, but witness with power. They must not only speak the message; they must live it. And for this they must be Holy Spirit possessed and controlled.

The modern missionary movement has much that is pre-Pentecostal about it. No doubt the Church today is better organized, its missionaries are better trained and they go out with better equipment. But our chief dependence dare not be on these advantages but on the Holy Spirit working through them. Without the Spirit, how imperfect is the best equipment, how inadequate are any resources, how inferior the messenger's dynamics!

How can we influence other men for Christ when our own spiritual personality is weak? How can we heal the wounds of the world when we suffer from the same diseases? We are living too much like pre-Pentecost disciples. They wear a look of defeat instead of the impressive character of profound spirituality. They shuffle in weakness and impotence, until the Spirit fills them and they prove stronger than all the mighty tides unleashed against them. We, like them, are too often tired or with reserves exhausted. But Spirit-filled, our lives become buoyant, serene, and fragrant. Then we can "run and not be weary." Do we shun the cross, or, do we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer? Do we flee from danger, or, glory in affliction? Do we talk the language of the wilderness when we

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GO IN FOR LARGER SUNDAY SCHOOLS

By A. S. London

Dr. L. G. Beauchamp, of Nashville, Tennessee, says, "Six out of every ten additions to the Methodist church come from the ranks of the Sunday school." Because of the importance of this work, he says there are three basic principles for building our schools. First, every teacher must consider himself an evangelist to win his pupils. Second, a teacher must develop a deeper consecration in his own life. Third, the teacher must be helped by the pastor and the superintendent to know how to lead his pupils to Christ.

Sunday schools represent spiritual strength. The more contacts made, the wider the influence extended through the channels of the Sunday school. J. Edgar Hoover says, "It is impossible to evaluate fully the effect of the lessons which are taught in the Sunday school."

Dr. Lee Roberson, pastor of a church with a Sunday school of 4,000, has said: "In this time of crisis and uncertainty, we need to enlarge our Sunday schools, to reach out into the farthest corners to bring all we can into Sunday schools now in operation, and establish new schools in the thousands of places where they are needed."

Everything rises or falls on leadership. Weak, unprepared teachers mean a weak Sunday school. Marion Lawrence used to say: "If you want your pigs to stay at home, throw some corn at your door. If it takes a high paid executive to guide a client, develop a product, and keep a corporation intact, what is the teacher worth who takes a child, guides him, develops him, puts him on his feet, and makes a man out of him?"

Special drives may get a large number of people into the Sunday school, but a high average attendance will depend largely upon the teaching Sunday after Sunday.

We can have bigger and better Sunday schools when we have better Christians in our schools. We must avoid divisions and quarreling in our schools. Inability to work peacefully together will hinder any school from permanent growth. And we must keep always before us the truth that organization, mobilization of resources, training of personnel, use of modern methods and the latest techniques, will add up to futility without the energizing presence of the Holy Spirit. We must guard against being wrapped up in programs that do not win souls to Christ, if our schools are to become larger and wield a greater influence in the community.

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