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A PICTURE OF PENTECOST. Acts 2:1.

"The day of Pentecost was being fulfilled", Dr. Campbell Morgan calls this expression, which is the literal translation of the original in Acts 2:1, the key to this chapter, and to everything that follows in the book. We might add that it is the key to the entire history of the whole Christian church thru the ages. It is the story of the acts of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at five scenes in connection with the day of Pentecost, as the curtain is drawn back for us in the first two chapters of the book of Acts.

1. Preparation in the Atmosphere of the Holy Spirit.

On the evening of the day of the Resurrection, Jesus had appeared to His disciples when the doors were shut, and breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. These disciples were the first ones mentioned of the 120 who tarried in Jerusalem for ten days in preparation for Pentecost. The second group included were devout women, in particular, Mary the mother of Jesus. Probably Mary and Martha were there, and Mary Magdalene. It is interesting that an ancient document includes with the women, "the children." I can easily imagine that children were in that company. And there were the brethren of Jesus. One of them no doubt was James who later wrote these words, "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much."

This was no mere external getting together of 120 people. In the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit there was a spiritual unity—with one accord, unity of the Spirit. They also had a spiritual understanding of scripture. The Risen Christ had opened the minds of the disciples, that they might understand the scriptures. They realized that the Holy Spirit spoke thru the scriptures. In this gathering Peter interpreted the covenantness and the curse of Judah, and the choice of Matthias in the light of Psalms 79 and 109. In such an atmosphere as this there could not but be perseverance in prayer. Continuing steadfastly. Prayer was the uppermost feature in that gathering.

In 1907 there took place in Korea a mighty spiritual awakening which I like to call the Korean Pentecost. It marked the spiritual rebirth of the Korean church. United prayer preceded that Pentecost—ordinary means back of extraordinary manifestations. Before this Pentecost two women missionaries, a Methodist from China, and a Canadian Presbyterian in Korea were led to meet together often and pray for a revival among the missionaries. Others joined them in prayer and Bible study. In the fall of 1906 Dr. Hardie, Methodist missionary, was called to lead a group in Pyongyang, when a study together of First John was most richly blessed. In January 1907 as daily noon prayer groups continued, which were a veritable Bethel, a big week's Bible class for men was being held with some 1000 in attendance. Something extraordinary had to take place, and it did. On the night of January 15th after the Presbyterian missionary, Graham Lee preached to an audience of some 1500 the fire of the Holy Spirit flamed up, and from those meetings torches were carried up and down the peninsula, and even to China, and beyond. The effect of that Pentecost is felt to this day in Korea. The secret of the strength of the Korean church lies here. Today some 90% of the Korean churches have early morning prayer meeting every day. And this church is today in a sense the model and the inspiration of the Christian church around the globe.

2. Praising through the Infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4. According to Campbell Morgan whom I quote repeatedly, the form of their speech or utterance was probably singing or chanting. We have good scripture suggesting this idea. See Ephesians 5:18-19 and Col. 3:16. The subject of this praising was "The mighty works of God", the very theme of the Hallelujahs of the Psalms. And the language was that of "other tongues", the reverse of Babel. I think Charles Wesley had the right idea of what took place then, and applied it to our needs today when he wrote, "O for a thousand tongues to sing——"

The Spirit gave them utterance. Here was the witness of a joyful life, an illustration of the truth that the "joy of the Lord is your strength."

"We've a song to be sung to the nations, That shall turn their hearts to the Lord
A song that shall conquer evil, And shatter the spear and sword."

3. Preaching in the Illumination of the Spirit.

When the multitudes heard this praising thru the infilling of the Spirit, they were amazed and perplexed. They misunderstood it all, and raised the question, What meaneth this? In answer there follows preaching in the illumination of the Spirit. Peter was the spokesman for the apostles. Peter who before Pentecost had been fearful, foolish, and weak, was now bold, courageous. He had wonderful spiritual understanding, and spoke with power. He proclaimed the Word written "this is that", and the Word living, "He hath poured forth this." First, the Word written as found in Joel. Joel had prophesied this very Pentecost, its commencement, its characteristics, and its consummation. And he preached the Word living - Jesus (1) His person, (2) His perfect life (3) His death upon the cross (4) His ~~exaltation~~ resurrection, (5) His exaltation at the right hand of God (6) His reception of the Holy Spirit, (7) His bestowal of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of his message was the pivotal fact - the Resurrection explained from Psalm 16 and witnessed by all present. And in the light of Psalm 110 is presented the fact of His Lordship and the fact of sin. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." With such a powerful presentation of the gospel message in all its fulness comes the second question from the hearers, "What must we do?"

4. Penitence under Conviction by the Spirit.

This brings us to a fourth scene at Pentecost. Peter, Spirit filled as he was, preached for a verdict and followed up the results. In answer to the question of those under conviction of sin he says, "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit——" Peter instructs as to the Lordship of Christ, the sin of man, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And he tells the sinner what to do to be saved.

"The only messages to the unconverted which we find in the N.T. are in Acts, and they invariably seek to convict their hearers of sin by exalting Christ before them."

A striking illustration of penitence under conviction by the Holy Spirit was seen in the Korea Pentecost of 1907. Dr. W.M. Blair, Presbyterian missionary who experienced that awakening in what is now the red capital of North Korea describes it as follows:

"Then began a meeting the like of which I had never seen before, nor wish to see again unless in God's sight it is absolutely necessary. Every sin a human being can commit was publicly confessed that night. Pale and trembling with emotion, in agony of mind and body, guilty souls standing in the white light of that judgment, saw themselves as God saw them. Their sins rose up in all their villainess till shame and grief and self-loathing took complete possession; pride was driven out; the face of man was forgotten. Looking up to heaven to Jesus whom they had betrayed, they smote themselves and cried out with bitter wailing, 'Lord, Lord, cast us not off forever.' Everything else was forgotten. Nothing else mattered. The scorn of man, the penalty of the law, even death itself, seemed of small consequence if only God forgave. We may have our theories of the desirability or undesirability of public confession of sin. I have had mine, but I know now that when the Spirit of God falls on guilty souls, there will be confession, and no power on earth can stop it."

5. Progress by the Power of the Spirit.

in the shifting scenes of Pentecost

Observe again the shifting scenes in the picture of Pentecost. First, preparation in the atmosphere of the Spirit; second, praising thru the infilling of the Spirit; third, preaching in the illumination of the Spirit; fourth, penitence under conviction of the Spirit, and once more, progress by the power of the Spirit. This progress is summed up in verse 42.

Note how inclusive is this program of progress.

- 1) Scriptural obedience—they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching
- 2) And fellowship. This fellowship was thru the stewardship of goods, in the worship of the church, and in Christian home life. What a field for Christian fellowship!
- 3) In the breaking of bread
- 4) and the prayers. All of this is real progress continued thru by the power of the Holy Spirit. And it is summed up in the last verse of the chapter
"And the Lord added together day by day those that were saved."

Progress continued by the power of the Holy Spirit is recently reported from Korea in the very words of some of our missionaries on the firing line as follows:

In pioneer evangelism:

"The most amazing spectacle in our province is the rapid growth of churches. One seldom visits an empty church. Much of the increase is due to the interest of young people in the gospel. At a recent Wednesday evening service in a city church about 80% of those present were students. It was cold, and raining, but the church was full. Christian groups flourish in most of the schools and colleges—
In the country districts of our province a new church has been born on the average of at least one a week during 1954. I have travelled among some 35 or 40 of these churches holding sacraments, examining new believers 1018 of them in 1954."

In hospital evangelism: "Among those who have been brought to Christ in our hospital lately is a notorious thief— We rejoice when one of our homeless babies is adopted into a good Christian home; when a patient recovers from a serious operation; when a good doctor or nurse is trained or when an amputee is rehabilitated, but ~~how~~ how much more in their cause for rejoicing when one of these we minister to physically comes to Christ. My heart was gladdened this morning in church when a boy who is a triple amputee was baptized and received into full church membership along with 24 others."

In Missions to Thailand: In a personal letter from our son who attended the 1955 meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Korea he reports as follows:

"Sunday night they had the commissioning service for the four new missionaries they are sending to Thailand, beginning new work there. The four were two young ministers and their wives and are an exceptionally fine group of young people. The wife of one of them is a doctor and the wife of the other has had two years at the Seminary and is a musician—the latter has an eight month old baby. They put on the whole ~~service~~ service in fine style. I don't know as I ever saw a Korean audience quite so interested—especially the women's side—as when the two young wives and boy were called to the platform."

The progress of the church of Jesus Christ is being continued by the power of the Holy Spirit

on 1957

The day of Pentecost is being fulfilled. How may each of us have the Holy Spirit? The scriptural answer is simple. It is found in Acts 2:38, Acts 5:32, and Luke 11:13. Repent—Obey—Pray.

Pentecost revivals continue. Not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of praise.