

PENTECOST

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

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¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." ¹² And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. ¹⁵ For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says,
'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;
AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,
AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;

¹⁸ EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,
I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT
And they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE
AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW,
BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

²⁰ 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,
BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

²¹ 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

The perennial question that we hear always when we look at this passage and see the way Peter stands up and speaks is: How? What happened? These were a bunch of timid, fearful people who were hiding. What happened to them that they could speak with such boldness. "This man sent by God, you nailed to the cross; God raised Him up." Those are Peter's words – with such power, such authority. Do you think these are the same people who we hear were hiding in the upper room? In

John 20:19 they were filled with fear they were in the room with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. And suddenly that fear is taken care of and all of a sudden there's boldness, an authority that has come over them. And we must ask the question:

What brought about that change?

I think there are a couple of things. The obvious answer of course – it's the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is! But there is a little more if we mine this passage further. I believe that Jesus Himself prepared the way in many ways for this to happen. because in the forty days before His ascension and after His resurrection, the forty days that He was there, walking and talking to them, He did a lot of things. He especially taught them. He helped clarify in their mind what the resurrection meant for them according to the scriptures.

Remember in Luke's gospel, Cleopas and his companion walking away to Emmaus, dismayed and dejected, their dreams all shattered. Then Jesus comes alongside and He brings clarity to them. He helps them. Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures. He explained to them everything. They knew so much but it hadn't clicked. The penny hadn't dropped. But on that walk as He talked to them, as He broke bread, their eyes were opened and they realized. Then instead of carrying on their journey, they turned around and came back to Jerusalem and they shared with the disciples all that Jesus had spoken to them. They told the disciples: This is the story. This is how it connects with the Old Testament. This is how Jesus and the resurrection and what the prophets said all come together.

Then while they are there, Jesus Himself shows up. Luke 24:45-49 says:

⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, "So it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. (He said to these disciples) ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

This is what Jesus was doing – helping to clarify their thoughts, helping them to understand the resurrection, His death in the context of what was God's plan of salvation.

Did they have doubts?

They did! I think there were many moments when they were questioning, wondering how and what this meant for them personally. "You will be My witnesses." What does that mean? In all Jerusalem, Judea, you'll be My witnesses. In John 21:3, we see Peter in this kind of mindset, not sure of it all still, because right at the back of his mind is the fact that he denied Jesus. And in all the teaching, Jesus hasn't dealt with this issue. So he is wondering.

Then he does what we all do when we fall, or we have a problem with our relationship with God. He goes back to the familiar things in his life. and the most familiar thing for him was fishing, and that's where he went. He went back fishing. And along with him were Thomas and Nathaniel. I love the fact that in every list after Thomas met Jesus, you'll find his name. he never missed another meeting. He wasn't going to miss out again. Thomas made sure he was present. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John and two more, all of them going fishing. What a wonderful metaphor this is for us that when we have a break in our relationship with God, and we go back to the old familiar things, they cannot in any way bear fruit. They cannot be fruitful. "You haven't caught any fish, have you?" was Jesus' question to them. He knew it. Then He says, "Cast your nets on the right hand side," and when they did, they had so many fish that they needed help.

I wonder whether even as we are going through this, whether some of you sitting here have a broken relationship with God. You're upset maybe, angry. It's been a while because God hasn't come through in the way you expected. You're not hearing His voice maybe. You've quit reading the bible or praying, and you're just going through the motions, doing the familiar things. But the will of God isn't leading you and you look at what's going on around you and say: There's no fruit in what I'm doing. I wonder whether that relationship needs to mend, that fellowship needs to be re-established? And Jesus does that with Peter.

Jesus did a lot of things during those 40 days, apart from teaching.

1. He showed them from scripture how He fit into all of this.

2. He showed them the motivation for ministry.

Motivation for anything that they were going to do in His name. You shall be My witnesses. Yes! But let me tell you what's going to motivate you: Peter, do you love Me? Peter, do you love Me? Peter, do you love Me more than these? After each question, when Peter responded, Jesus said, "Tend my sheep." Do you love me? Yes Lord. "Be my shepherd." Do you love me? "Look after the sheep."

Love comes first.

First answer the question of love with God. We cannot do things in His name without making sure that the love relationship with Him is secure. Very often, the tendency is to get involved in doing things, and we get so busy doing the things of God that we have little time for prayer and meditation, reading the Word, and growing in the Word. Jesus says: This is the first. Make sure that you have a love relationship with Me. Once that is established, then look at ministry – feed My sheep, tend to My lambs, shepherd My flock. But first, make sure that you have the right motivation which is love.

Do you love Me more than these? More than relationships, more than your ambitions, more than the success that you want to see in your life. More than.... And you can put whatever it is in that space of 'these'. Jesus was teaching them that this is the only motivation that will help them go through a fruitful ministry. He taught them and then He showed them the motivation.

Wait for the Holy Spirit.

But then, Jesus also said, "Wait, there's more! You need empowerment. Wait for the Holy Spirit."
Luke 24:49

⁴⁹ "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

For you to go out as My witnesses, to showcase Me, it can only be done under the power of the Holy Spirit within you. And He made it clear to them that they were not to do anything until that empowerment happened.

I wonder whether you've been in a waiting position. I know you have. So many times, things are not panning out the way we want, and it seems like the door is shut, that the heavens are silent and all your prayers are falling on deaf ears. And you say: Lord are You there. I don't see forward movement. I can't see ahead. Lord, what's going on? And the waiting gets so frustrating and sometimes it leads to resentment, to get upset with God.

But if we look at the way the disciples handled this period of waiting, we can learn something. What did they do?

- **They devoted themselves to prayer.** when they had entered the city, they went up to the upstairs room where they were staying, i.e. Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, Simon, Judas the son of James – all these were

continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brothers. They continued to pray.

Beloved, if you are in a waiting mode today, and you stopped connecting with God, I would urge you to reconnect with Him, to call upon Him again, because strength comes from Him for the waiting period. They devoted themselves to prayer.

- **They met together.** That is so important – like iron sharpening iron. When talking about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul said, “²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others decide.” In other words, there needs to be a group of people to even receive the words that God is speaking through a prophetic voice. There needs to be others present to validate it. So often, this prophetic voice gets corrupted. And yet, it is meant to be in the context of the body of Christ, so that even when it is spoken, it is not “This sayeth the Lord.” It is: This is what it seems to be that God is saying; you decide whether this is something right and to be followed, or how it is to be followed. Let the others decide. That’s why community is so important – to be coming together and meeting together as iron sharpening iron.
- **They replaced Judas.** They picked Mathias to fill his place. They did something during the waiting period. They kept their connection with God through it.

Then Pentecost arrived!

- **Flames.** Picture that! Flames coming and settling on each of them.
- **Filled with the Holy Spirit.** What a sight that must have been! I sure would like to see that video when I get up to heaven.
- **Speaking in different languages.** They start to talk in different languages that they never knew. The people were saying: Hey! That’s my tongue, that’s the language I speak. How do they know it? They’re just Galileans, uneducated. How can they speak in my language? The number of languages that they began to speak. Doesn’t seem possible.

Sheila and I were at a conference and we met this girl who was at IHOP, the International House Of Prayer in Kansas City. She gave us her testimony. One day they had a speaker from Rome, an anointed man of God, who was going to bring the Word to a large group of people the next day. He didn’t speak any English and so always travelled with his translator. It so happened that his translator lost his voice the previous day and so they were stuck with a man who could only speak Italian and no English, and a translator who couldn’t speak. The leadership went into a huddle; they prayed about what to do. This girl felt the Lord saying to her: Tell them you’ll translate. Imagine her shock because she didn’t know a word of Italian. She struggled with that for a bit until she finally blurted out to the group saying, “Hey, listen. This is what the Lord is placing on me. You guys decide. I just want to put it out here.”

They prayed about it and they also felt that this was what should happen, that they would just go with what God was leading and what He wanted them to do. So they communicated to the speaker and they were going ahead. So he stood up and spoke and this girl stood next to him and everything that he spoke in Italian she translated into English. Everybody was amazed, including her. Whenever she tells the story, she cries.

That’s not the end of the story. They were so taken up with what had happened that they invited her to Rome to speak. As she was going to speak in English, they had a translator available. But she felt the Lord saying, “Speak in Italian.” She replied, “Lord, you put me on the spot once. Don’t do it again. I don’t know a word of Italian.” And the Lord said, “I’ll be

glorified through this. Stand up there.” So she stood up there, telling the others with her, “If you hear anything heretical, take me down. Full permission given!” She stood up and spoke in fluent Italian. There were people sitting who came to her after the talk and said: Some of the words that you used, we had to look up the dictionary to understand what it meant. It was pure Italian.

God does wonderful things to draw His people to Him, to be glorified. And of course, all His gifts which are meant for good, Satan will try to corrupt. We’ve seen that. He takes the gifts and he twists them and makes it look unpalatable. Yet, God gives these gifts to us so that He can bless people and it can glorify Him.

- **They were emboldened.**

The Holy Spirit came upon them and there was such a transformation. All of a sudden, we see not timid men, but bold authoritative men. Acts 2:22-24 tells us the way that Peter spoke:

²²“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—²³this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. ²⁴But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Bold! Authority! The Holy Spirit working through Peter to speak these kinds of words to a group of people who were the same people who had seen to the crucifixion of Jesus. A boldness came over them as the Holy Spirit took control.

Then Peter and John meet the lame beggar. He’s been lame for forty years and Peter says to him: Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have, I give thee. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. It takes a lot to be able to say those words to somebody who has been lame for forty years. In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk!

- **The people recognized the disciples for who they were.**

In Acts 4, Peter’s second sermon: Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. They recognized from the way they spoke, the way they acted, that they had met Jesus. I wonder, as we look at ourselves, and as we interact with the world, whether people look at us and say, “Huh! This person has met Jesus. This person knows Jesus. That by our demeanor, our actions, our attitudes, people say: They know Jesus.

Then we read that Peter and John are arrested and when they are summoned, it says, “They commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.” Listen to their answer. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, make your own judgment; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” The same person: “You are one of them.” “I don’t know Him.” “Yes, you are!” “I don’t know Him.” “Yes, you are!” “I don’t know Him.” But now, he tells the people in authority, “I don’t care what you say. You decide what you are saying. As far as I am concerned, the things that I have seen and heard I will continue to speak.” Bold. Authoritative. The power of the Holy Spirit within.

Their obedience to the Holy Spirit is the key.

As we look at all these passages, it's a good conclusion to say that it was the Holy Spirit who made the difference in their lives. And you would be right. But I think there's something even deeper; more than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit as we know, is in us. The bible tells us in Ephesians 1, that when we accept what Jesus has done on the cross for us, we confess our sins. When we accept Him as our personal Savior, the Holy Spirit comes into us. But the one thing that God will not override in us is our will. He never overrides our will. So you can have the Holy Spirit within you and not listen to Him; and we will never see anything that is bold. We will never see anything that God wants to do and touch another person. We won't see those things because at the core of the power of the Holy Spirit in the world today is our obedience to Him. Without that, nothing will happen because God will not override your will. It is the acquiescence of their will, their willingness to say "Not my will but Thine be done" that allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to show forth.

I think there are two places for that obedience.

1. The waiting: To be obedient to Him in the waiting. How? To make sure that we pray, that we meet together, do all of those things to keep the connection.
2. To be obedient in the acts that He wants us to do. Just as Philip was willing to go where he was led, Thomas was will to go where he was led, Paul was willing to go on those missionary journeys, to preach, to teach under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. To do all that God wants us to do.

That's where I believe the rubber meets the road for us. If you've accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, you have the Holy Spirit inside you. The question is: Is He locked up inside because your will has put a lock and you have the key? He's there but it is of no use to you because you don't listen. A good way to ask is: Do I see the fruit of God's Spirit flowing through me? Is it visible? Do I see things that only the power of God can manifest? Have I settled for just 'I've got a ticket to heaven and I'm going there?' or can you see the excitement that comes from allowing God to work through you?

To see the things that He wants to do through His power, not yours. Maybe even in your waiting period to just allow it to be a wonderful period of rest and wait. Just receive from Him as preparation, because often, that is what God is doing. He's preparing you for something, but He says, "You're not ready for it and so, till you're ready, wait on Me," just as He said to the disciples: For this to happen, you need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Maybe He's saying to you to wait. I have a plan and a purpose for you, but the time is not yet.

I always say: Sometimes God births something in us; He tells us that this is what He wants us to do. And we jump into it right away. But God is saying: Wait a minute. I just shared with you what I want you to do. But you're not ready yet. I'm going to prepare you. So, from the time of conception to the time of birthing, there is a time of waiting. In all of nature, that time is there. Or maybe, you're here and you're thinking: Gosh! I can feel the incessant knocking on my heart's door, telling me that this needs to be done, and I'm not doing it. I'm saying: No, Lord. God is saying: Just say yes, so that the empowerment of My Spirit can take charge; it will do it through you.'

1 Thessalonians 5:24 reminds us, "Faithful is He who has called you and He will bring it to pass." How? Through His Spirit.

So, beloved, on this Pentecost Sunday, are you willing to be obedient to Him and say: Yes Lord. I'll go where You want me to go. I'll do what You want me to do. I'll say what You want me to say. I'll be what You want me to be. I yield my will to You.
