

Sept. 29, 63 AM''

WIND AND FIRE

Acts 2:2-4

INTRODUCTION:

From the coming of the Holy Ghost at the beginning, we may learn something concerning this operation at this present hour.

Remember, at the outset, whatever the Holy Spirit was at the first, that he is now. For God remainth forever the same.

Whatsoever he then did, he is able to do still. For his power is by no means diminished.

Micah said, oh thou that art named the house of Jacob is the spirit of the Lord straightened. We should greatly grieve the Holy Spirit if we suppose that his might is less today than in the beginning.

Although we may not expect, and we may not need, the miracles which came with the gift of the Holy Spirit. So far as they were spiritual, we may both desire and expect that which was intended, and symbolized by them. We may like to see spiritual wonders performed among us this day.

Pentecost, according to the belief of the Jews, was the time of the giving of the law. If when the law was given, there was a marvelous display of power on Sinai. It was to be expected that when the Gospel was given, whose work was to be far more glorious, there would be some special unveiling of the divine presence.

At the beginning of the Gospel we behold the Holy Spirit working great signs and wonders.

Shall we expect a continuance, of these signs. If anything, there will be an increased display of his power as the ages roll on.

The law vanishes away, but the Gospel will never vanish. It shines more and more to the perfect day. I think with the exception of physical miracles, whatever was wrought by the Holy Ghost at the first, we may look to be wrought continually until the dispensation lasts.

Pentecost was the feast of first fruits. It was a time when the first ears of ripe corn were offered unto God. If then, at the commencement of the Gospel harvest, we see so plainly the power of the Holy Spirit. Then sure we can expect infinitely more as the harvest advances. And most of all, when the most numerous souls shall be gathered in. Pentecost was a marvelous harvest. And it should still be.

It is not my object today to talk about the Holy Spirit as a piece of history. But to talk of it as a fact, bearing upon this present hour.

The Father hath sent us the comforter - that he may dwell in us the coming of the Lord. The Holy Spirit has never returned for he came in accordance with the Saviour's prayer. To abide with us forever. The gift of the Holy Spirit was not temporary. The display of his power was not once seen and then to disappear. The Holy Spirit is here and we ought to expect His divine work among us. If he does not so work, we should search ourselves to see what it is that hinders his work.

I. THE INSTRUCTION GIVEN THROUGH SYMBOLS

The Holy Spirit which was made prominent at Pentecost, we will note

was by symbols.

1. The symbol of wind, - V. (2) The emblem of (deity) was therefore proper - the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament God revealed himself under the emblem of breath or wind.

The Hebrew word for wind and spirit is the same.

The Greek word - when Christ talked to Nicodemus - it is very easy translators tell us, that when he said "spirit" - and when he said "wind" - indeed there is every reason to believe that the spirit is interchangeable as a symbol of the wind. The original word signified either one or the other.

Wind is of all material things one of the most spiritual in appearance. It is invisible. Ethereal - mysterious. Hence men have fixed upon it as being nearest to the spirit.

Ezekiel's famous vision - he saw a valley full of dry bones. We all know that the Spirit of God was intended by that vivid wind which came when the prophet prophesied. And the wind moved over the bones. They were quickened unto life.

The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind. This is the way that God manifest, or displayed his works. The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.

He says that the wind was (with a sound) - a rushing mighty wind. The spirit of God can work in silence. Yet, in saving operations, he may use sound.

In the stillness of the inner life, the Holy Ghost does his work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. ^{For} ~~By~~ faith cometh, ~~by~~ hearing, there is a sound as of the mighty rushing wind that goes forth through the whole nation - by the publishing of the Gospel.

If the Lord had not given men ears or tongues, silent worship would have been necessary. But in as much as we have ears, the Lord has intended that we hear something. And in that he has given us tongues, it is meant that we should speak this Gospel. Some of us are too quiet about this Gospel.

The sound came, on this occasion, to call the attention of the assembly. To what was about to occur. And it (filled them) with awe. It was of the rush of a rising tempest. And awe inspired sound. There was a clear indication that it was coming from Heaven. Now ordinary winds blow from this or that way, through the skies, but this descended from Heaven straight down. It was distinctly like a down-draft from above. This set forth that it was the true spirit. The spirit of God. It was coming from no other place. It was the work of God from above. The work of the Holy Spirit is so to speak - the breath of God. And this power is ever more in a special sense the immediate power of God. Coming downward, into the meeting hall where the Disciples were, filling the room.

Now an ordinary rushing wind would have been felt outside the room and would probably destroyed the house or injured the group. If it had been aimed at any one building, but this Heavenly wind did not destroy the house - it blessed. And it did overflow, into this waiting company.

The symbol is that as breath - air, wind, is the very life of man. So the Spirit of God is the life of the spiritual man. By him are we quickened at

the first. By him, are we kept alive afterwards. By him, we grow into perfection.

This holy breath was intended to quicken them. What a blessing would a breeze be just now to us who sit here in this atmosphere today. How gladly would we hail a gust of this breeze coming from Heaven.

In the hot summer time the winds from the sea - the air on the earth, refreshes us. What must a wind from Heaven do. That rushing, mighty wind, soon cleared away all that would discourage. And they drank deep of this and they be stirred themselves. And enthusiasm came upon them, as they were filled with the Spirit.

The wind showed the irrestible power of the Holy Ghost. For simple as the air is, and noble, and apparently feeble at times^s- yet, set it in motion, and you feel that it is a thing of life that moves among you. The wind picks up and it feels like a giant that is restless. And soon, it becomes a storm or a hurricane, or a tornado. And nothing can be more potent than the wind when it is thoroughly aroused.

So through the Spirit of God, despised among men so much, that they do not even believe that he exists. He comes as a gentle breeze upon a flower. He comes to stir the sails of the boat on the lake. He comes with great strength and moves gusts into a storm. He comes and he roots up oak trees - and what can stand against him. He breaks the cedars. All is swept away before his mighty power.

II. THE SYMBOL OF FIRE

As an instructor - V. 3. Abraham saw a burning lamp.

Moses saw a burning bush.

Solomon built a holy, beautiful house. And he layed a sacrifice and God descended upon the sacrifice in fire. The mark that the Lord was there. He had dwelt in the tabernacle that was ahead of the temple.

He revealed himself in the pillar of fire by night.

Our God is a consuming fire. Thus the symbol of fire is a good instructor, of God's Holy Spirit.

Tongues of flame, sitting on each man's head - spoke of a personal visitation to the mind and the heart of each one of the chosen company.

The fire did not consume them. No one was injured by the flaming tongue. There is no danger in the visitation. They see God. Their lives are preserved. They feel his fire.

The instruction here is that the Holy Spirit gives them light. He will lead them into all truth. Henceforth, they will be more than untrained children - they were to become teachers. Instructors. They were to be disciples unto Christ. The Spirit of Light was upon them.

Fire does more than give light - it enflames. And the flames which sat upon each showed them that they were to be ablaze with love and zeal - burning with self-sacrifice. To go forth among men - to speak and to please and to persuade. And to welcome men to come to Christ - that they might live.

Fire signified inspiration. God was about to make them speak under divine influence. To speak as the Spirit of God - to give them utterance.

This is exactly what God would have us to experience. And the tongue of fire did sit upon every servant of the Lord. And that fire destroyed sin. And gave them zeal.

Note the emblem here - (a tongue of fire) - V. 3. Now in this, God meant to have a (speaking church). Not a church that would fight with the sword, with a weapon. But there was to be one weapon. A proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now the Holy Spirit came with these two symbols. When the Holy Spirit came to Jesus - he was as a dove.

When he came upon his Disciples - it was as a breath. Jesus breathed on them and said, "receive the Holy Ghost". This was an inner life - a quickening. And he comes upon us with the intent of using us to bless others. He comes as the wind, which brings the words we speak. He comes as a fire and burns his way as the truth is uttered. Our words are full of life and flame. They are moved by the breath of the spirit.

If the Holy Spirit rests upon us - or upon you, or upon any of us - to qualify us for service, it shall be after this fashion. Not merely of life for ourselves - but of the firey energy of dealing with us.

You put these two symbols together - the wind and fire. And I have discussed them separately. What are they together. A rushing mighty wind by itself is terrible. Who can stand against it. It will destroy a ship or a forrest.

And fire alone - who can stand against it. It devours. A fire on a prairie, a fire in a home. But you set the wind and the fire to work in a union - then you have something. In Chicago when that first little flame started -

and the wind fanned the breeze - it was like a torrent. You let the wind encourage the flames and you see how it devours and sweeps across dismal swamps, picks up the trees - what a sight. You can hear the mighty trees crunch in the flames. What can stand against it. The fire can set a whole forest ablaze. The smoke blackens the skies. It grows dark at noontime. It's hard to imagine.

If we could see a spiritual fire with equal grandeur - it would consume. Our prayer would be, Oh God, send us the Spirit in this fashion. Give us the breath that will be unconquerable til the lost of this city shall yield to the sway of Jesus. Answer us by fire and by wind. And then we shall see what God intended, for his Kingdom to do.

Jeremiah said, that his word was in his heart as a burning fire. Shut up in his bones. And he was weary with fore-bearing. He could not stay. He was ready to quit preaching. He was ready to resign. But his spiritual temperature, sent him on to preach.

This was the experience of the Disciples on the way to Emmaus - their (hearts were set on fire) as they heard afresh of Jesus being raised from the dead. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit - but the fire has quieted down. And there may be a coldness. Is Jesus real to you? Is your heart warm.

III. SOME EFFECTS OF THIS INSTRUCTION

First - there was a filling. V. 4. It filled all the house where they were sitting. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The crowd outside the building - mocked and said, they are filled with new wine. Yet, there was

something that they were all very much alike. Poor empty vessels. There was a fullness - no room for anything else or anybody else - completely occupied, by the Spirit.

They became different men from what they had been. They were men full of God - no longer filled with self. There was ^{Not} an empty one in the church - they received salvation and they began to speak out of this fullness.

How many empty vessels do we have in our church? There are some who ought to be teachers, but they themselves need first to be taught of the Lord. How can you communicate - that which you have not received.

He first fills - then he (gives utterance) - that is his way. They, that were cold, dead, and empty of life (as we sometimes are) - there was no room for anything else now. They were completely occupied of this Heavenly power. This pushed them out. Now they had many faults. But they were filled with the Spirit of God.

They became different men. And they had a thirsting to pass this on. You can get something from a full vessel. Out of a full church - the world can receive salvation - but never out of one that is empty.

Now at this point, I do not mean to hurt anyone - but a discerning Christian can tell when a preacher preaches, when a layman speaks, when a woman teaches. He can tell whether or not it comes from one that is filled - and this is coming out of the over flow. It is a fountain of living water. And who would restrain it - and who can restrain it. It comes out of a mind that is filled. First of all.

Second, there was the effect of utterance. V. 4. They began to speak at once. It seems to me that they began to speak before the people had even come to gather. I don't think they could help it. The inner forces demanded expression. They just had to speak.

When the Spirit of God is really upon a man, he does not wait until he has gathered an audience of a certain size, but he **seizes** the next opportunity.

He speaks to one person. To two, to three. To anybody - he must speak. For he is full and he must speak.

And I believe that a man that God fills will speak. And he can be understood. The crowd spoke different languages - and I think each person heard the message.

Third, the people understood. V. 37. They felt - it was like an arrow - this Pentecostal preaching - the hairs were pricked in their hearts. The truth wounded men. They were slain before the Lord. They could not make it out. Why, they had heard speakers before - and this was quite a different thing. These men spoke and it was like fire. What is it. It was the fire dropping in their hearts. And they were amazed and they were confounded.

This is some of the effects of the Holy Spirit. Speaking so that those around them were effected like themselves. And the wind and the fire ministry soon did it's work. We read that this was noised abroad. Of course, it was because there had been a rushing mighty wind.

Next, we read that all the people came together and were confounded.

There was a natural stir in the air. A great wind from Heaven was rushing. All were amazed and astonished. Some were believers - others were mocking. There was a fire burning. Fire began to separate between the precious and the vile. And that is what will happen in the city in the church when we know the presence of God.

We need to come back to this good old day when people began to tell everyone about their experience with the Lord. We talk about every kind of experience today - except the one when we found Jesus.

→ IV. THE SUBJECT USED IN THEIR PREACHING

What did these ministers preach about. What did these people testify too. They were full of the Spirit.

And the Spirit today works in the church. What shall we preach about? What did these men say?

First, they talked about redemption - V. 11. Their hearers said, we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God. Their subject was "The wonderful works of God".

Oh, that this might be my subject until my dying day. That this might be my only topic - the wonderful works of God.

The wonderful works of God - Peter in his sermon spoke of it as redemption. He told the people that Jesus was the son of God and that they had crucified and slain him - but that he had come to redeem them and there was salvation through his precious blood.

He preached redemption. How we need to echo again, again, and again - redemption! redemption!, by the precious blood. When the Holy Ghost is with us.

Now this is fuel for the tongue - a flame. This is something worthy. And God was in Christ reconciling the will unto himself. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The second thing about this subject and the wonderful work of God - is regeneration. There was no covering up the work of the Holy Spirit, at this time.

Peter said, ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. The preacher at the Pentecost told of the Spirit's work, by the Spirit's power = conversion, repentance, renewal, faith, holiness, and such things were spoken of freely. They were ascribed to the work of the Spirit - that the Spirit was able to give the New Birth to a person.

This wonderful work of God also brings remission of sin. Now this was a point that Peter pressed home to them. That on repentance - they would receive remission of sin. And what a message for this hour. Pardon for our crimes, for the deep died sins. Pardon brought through Jesus blood. He had once been nailed to a tree. And this was a message for prodigals. What a happy word - that they had to deliver.

→ V. NOTE THE RESULTS

If you find the details of this chapter long, have patience because this

is the last thing that I want to point out about it.

The results of the Spirit coming As wind and fire.

First, the hearers received a deep feeling. V. 37b. There is never, perhaps, in the world such a feeling of excitement. Men who were aroused in the crowd at Jerusalem that day. They were all listening to the same story of the wonderful works of God. They were all stirred and affected by the Heavenly wind. The fire swept through the preaching. They could not help but feel it's power. The Bible says they were pricked in the heart. They felt the wounds kill their enmity. The word hit the center, the vital point in their lives.

People today, go into places of worship, and they hear a preacher preach and then they say to their friend - "How did you like him?" Well, was that their errand, to see how they would like to hear that young fellow preach. Or that old man preach. What practical benefit is there in such a way as to using of the service of God. Do we go to get an opportunity to criticize the preacher. Yet the mass of people think that there is nothing better than to go in and look at him as an actor on the stage for an hour. If we are true to God, and true to you, and true to our solemn business, the object of all the true preaching is the heart. Our aim is to get you to break with sin and to wed you to Jesus Christ. My preaching has failed unless it makes men tremble and makes them sad - and brings them to Christ who is able to cause them to rejoice.

Sermons are to be heard in thousands - and yet how little come of them all. Because the heart is not aimed at or else we miss the mark. Alas, our hearers do not present their hearts as our targets. But they leave them home and they bring only their heads and their ears to church.

Second result - earnest inquiry - V. 37b. They were pricked in their hearts, and they said to Peter and the rest of the Disciples - men and brethren - what shall we do.

Now emotion is of itself a poor result of my preaching. It does not lead to practical action. To make men feel is well enough - but there must be an immediate movement of what they shall do under the Spirit of God. Men shall not hear and go their way and forget what they have heard. They will arise and seek the Father. They will taste and see that the Lord is good.

What must we do to be saved - this is what we need. This is what is needed. We do not need or require a new preacher. But we need a new anointing of the Spirit. We do not require a formal novel service - but we do require the fire of the Spirit. The Spirit will work and every man will cry - what must I do, to be saved.

Third, there was a grand reception of the word - V. 41. They gladly received the word. And they received it in two ways - first, Peter bid them to repent. And they sorrowed after a Godly sort and quit their sins.

Second, they believed in him whom they had slain and accepted him as Saviour. They trusted in him whom God had sent for their salvation. And repentance and faith are complete with the reception of Jesus. And why should we not see the same results today.

In this reception, they were baptized - V. 41. Having repented and believed and making a confession of faith - they did not postpone the matter of being baptized. They faithfully engaged in that holy service.

If the Holy Spirit should come fully with us, we would never have to complain that believers never confess their faith. For they would be eager to confess the Saviour in his appointed way. They would be able to point backward to their baptism. And where they lost their pride and gave up disobedience.

The next thing in receiving the word, there was great steadfastness. V. 42. This was a result of the Spirit - they continued in the Apostles doctrine. Now we have had revivals of human sort, and they have been disappointing. Under excitement - some converts have been multiplied. But where are they after a little testing. What has happened to the reaping. The hopes have all gone down the stream. But where the Spirit of God is really at work, the converts stand. They will be well rooted, they will be grounded, they will not be carried about by every wind of doctrine - instead, they will continue steadfast. The Apostles truth.

Another thing, there was an abundant worship of God. For they were present in the breaking of bread, in prayer, and in fellowship. There was no difficulty in getting a prayer meeting going. No problem in having communion with the saints. There was no coldness in the fellowship - the spirit of God was among them.

How preachers say today - if we could get somehow our members to do this, we would do well. If we had the Holy Spirit, we would have everything else.

There was also great generosity - V. 46. These believers poured out, their silver and their gold. When the Spirit of God operates powerfully, there is little need to always make appeals for offerings for widows, for the mission work, etc. And some churches today can scarcely support even a pastor. They want a George Truett, but they keep him on the starvation rate. But I believe

if the Spirit of God would visit these churches, that the means would be forthcoming to keep them going. When God comes, Christians yield their substance to the Lord.

They had continual gladness - V. 4~~6~~⁴⁷. They did eat their meat with gladness. They were glad about prayer meetings. They were glad to hear a sermon and to come to the Lord's Supper. They were glad to gather in homes and talk about Jesus. These Disciples - there was joy.

There was praising God. They were so glad. They were ready to leap for joy. Perhaps, we have lost some of this. We have lost much of the spirit of God in joy and gladness.

There was a daily increase in the church. The Lord added to the church daily - such as to be saved. Conversion was going on. Additions to the church were not events that happened one time a year, they were every day matters. So mightily did the word of God grow and prevail. The wind and the fire overturned and moved.

Roger Babson reported a conversation with Charles P. Steinmetz, one of the world's greatest electrical engineers. They were talking about the prospects of future inventions, in the field of radio.

What line of research will see the greatest development in the next 50 years. This engineer said, along spiritual lines. He says, history teaches us that here is the greatest power.

People are now learning that material things do not bring happiness.

at wonder if you agree with this great man.

I wonder if you agree, with this great man.