

The Effect of Pentecost

by Joseph Parker

The sermon explores the effect of Pentecost on Peter, highlighting his transformation into a heroic orator, profound expositor of Scripture, and powerful apologist for doctrine and truth.

Scripture: Acts 2:14, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 2:13, Ephesians 1:17, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 3:15, 2 Peter 1:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Joseph Parker preaches about the transformative power of the Holy Spirit using Peter as a portrait of the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit on the entire church. He highlights Peter's heroic eloquence, profound insight into Scripture, strong grasp of prophecy, and powerful defense of Christian doctrine and truth when inspired by the Spirit. Parker emphasizes the importance of being unanswerably argumentative in faith and using Peter as a standard to measure our spiritual growth and understanding of the Bible.

Transcript

THIS IS A FULL LENGTH portrait of Peter himself. If we see clearly the effect upon Peter, we shall have a true idea of the effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the entire church. God shows us things that are too great to be seen in their completeness, in illustrative and easily comprehended parts. Those who carefully study Peter's speech in answer to the mockers will see in the case of one man the effect which would follow by the loving acceptance of the inspiration of the Spirit on the part of the whole church. Inspiration is followed by self-revelation; a man may thus reveal himself with perfect unconsciousness. Peter is not an egotist in this case, but, so to say, the passive instrument through which the Holy Spirit delivers new and gracious messages to the church. Fix your minds therefore upon Peter in the first instance. We know what he has been up to this time-ardent, impulsive, unbalanced, enthusiastic, cowardly. Since we last saw him, during the days of the bodily-present Christ, he has been the subject of Pentecostal influence. We have therefore to look on this picture and on that, and upon the change discoverable between the two pictures you may find your estimate of the value of spiritual inspiration.

Heroic Eloquence

Notice his heroic eloquence. He is not only a speaker, he is a burning speaker. It is not enough to speak—you may teach an automaton to speak, you may so instruct a machine as to utter a mimic cry. This man is not only speaking words, he is speaking them with unction, with fire, with emphasis never heard in his tone before. A man does not read simply because he pronounces words that are in the text that he is

perusing, a man does not give out a psalm simply because he articulates without inaccuracy every individual word in the meter. There is something in the reading which cannot be put into type, a halo, or say an atmosphere, or say an aroma, or say an illustrative and far-reaching fire of the soul.

It is even so with this speech of Peter. You have not the whole speech in the words. You must be enabled, by a kind of semi-inspiration of your own, to read between the lines in order to get hold of all the force and weight of this burning oration. We do not gather all from the speaker that we gather when we take down the mere words which he utters: there are palpitations which cannot be reported, and tones which have no typical representation. It was emphatically so in this great speech of the inspired fisherman. It carries everything before it like a fire marching through dry stubble. Already therefore in the mere matter of eloquence, we discover a wonderful change in the man who denied his Lord with an oath. He was always an ardent man, but now he burns as he says the elements themselves will one day "burn with fervent heat." Who but he himself could have put those two words together? They are part of his very self. Others might have said, "The elements will burn"; they might even have gone so far as to say "the elements will burn with heat," but it was Peter's very self that said, "the elements shall burn with fervent heat." That fervent heat, in its own degree and with its own proper spiritual limits, we find in this great deliverance.

Profound Insight into Scripture

It was not only eloquence, it was reasoning on fire. For notice Peter's grasp of biblical truth. Who had ever known Peter before as a reader-who was aware until this moment that Peter ever opened the sacred Book and perused it with a student's curiosity and eagerness? We had never thought of Peter as an expositor; an errand-runner, a zealous, not always well-balanced friend, a crude thinker, an incoherent speaker-under these terms we may have formed some conception of the apostolic fisherman, but certainly it never entered into our minds that he had been a reader, a student, an inquirer into the deep decrees and hidden things of the sanctuary-yet in a moment he opens the prophecy of Joel, and reads it in the language and tone of his own day, and then he searches into some of the richest psalms of David, and quotes from them enough to establish the continuity and solidity of his great argument,

Not only was he transformed into an orator, he was transformed into a profound expositor of the divine purpose in the creation and education of the church. He speaks like a philosopher. He sees that the ages are not unrelated days, broken and incohesive nights, but that the ages are one, as the day is one, from its gray dawn to the time of the lighting of the evening star. This always follows deep acquaintance with the mysteries of God and high fellowship with the Spirit of the living One. We are delivered from the vexation and torment of daily details, and are set in the great currents and movements of the divine purpose, and thereby do we acquire the balance which gives us rest and serenity, which often glows into courageous joy. Think of Peter, a fisherman, uniting these, and calling upon prophecy as its own witness, and pointing out how life is a development, a growing upward and onward, and outward, into new and harmonious expressions. When the church is inspired, it will be eloquent; when the church is inspired it will be biblically wise, it will be able to read not the letter only, but to decipher the spirit, and to read the letter so that it will quiver into music under the tone refined in the sanctuary and made alive with the vitality of God.

Strong Grasp of the Meaning

and Purpose of Prophecy

Peter shows us how prophecy is fulfilled. The fulfillment of prophecy is not something which God has been arduously trying to do and has at last barely accomplished. The fulfillment of prophecy is not a divine

effort; God is not a great giant trying to carry some infinite globe up an infinite hill, and at last just succeeding in unloading the burden. The fulfillment of prophecy is a natural process, and it comes to express a natural end. Prophecy is not to God a mere hope, it is a clear vision of what must be, and of what He Himself will bring to pass. You do not prophesy that the child will become a man; you speak of his manhood as future, but quite certain; you say what he will be, strong, wise, chivalrous, gentle, prudent, brave and in so saying you are not expressing the result of an arduous effort on your part which you hope to bring to a successful issue, but you are taking your stand by the side of God when He created the typical Adam, and you say this is God's purpose and Adam shall come to this estate.

We want the right way of reading the fulfillment of prophecy. It is prophesied that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. It is not a mere hope, it is the sure outcome of the divine way of doing things. Christ must, by a necessity which cannot be explained, even by the necessity of righteousness and light and truth, reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. So we are not trusting to a vain promise; prophecy is not a daring expression of a fanatical hope, it is God's prevision of the future, and God's note of hand that He will yet give His Son the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, signed in every ink in the universe, signed in heaven before the earth was formed, signed on Calvary with the blood-ink of the Cross. We must rest in this assurance; the Word of the Lord will prevail, not by means of education, eloquence, or mechanical efforts on the part of the church, but the world will be converted to Christ because God has said it will be so, and when His Word has gone forth it cannot return to Him void.

Powerful Apologist of Doctrine and Truth

Not only was Peter eloquent and instructive—he startled the church by becoming its most solid and convincing reasoner. What a wonderful argument this is, to take no higher view of it in the meantime. "Ye men of Israel," said Peter, "hear these words," and mark how cunning the words are, in the best sense of the term. Observe where and how Peter begins his address. "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man," there is no appeal to theological bias or prejudice. Had he begun by saying to such people, "Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate God," he would have lost his audience in his first sentence. He was made into a master of assemblies, he began where his hearers could begin, and he who begins otherwise than at the point of sympathy, however eloquent, will lose the reins ere he has time to put one sentence to another. Already therefore this inspiration is beginning to tell in the mental force and astuteness of this unlettered fisherman. He gives up the deity of Christ, does he? He plainly calls Jesus Christ "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." But does he conclude so? He begins by describing Christ as a Man, but the glittering point of his glorious climax is this—"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Note the argumentative skill. Had Peter broken off his speech in the first sentence, the coldest Socinian that ever wrote about Christ could have endorsed his utterance, but Peter makes way through scriptural quotations and through inspired exposition, until he concludes with this burning breath, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Notice, too, how Peter stands without equivocation upon the historical fact of the Resurrection. He was not talking to people who lived a century after the reported rising again of Christ: he was talking to those who knew perfectly well what had happened. Does he put any gloss upon the matter--does he seek to make it a parable, a typical instance, a quasi resurrection? He talks with the absolute frankness of a man who is

relating facts, which every child in the assembly knew to be such, and he was in the presence of people who could instantly have risen and contradicted the statements which he made, had they been in a position to do so.

Does Peter separate Christ from the wonderful manifestation of the Spirit which had been granted? On the contrary, he connects Pentecost with the risen and glorified Son of God. This enables him to use another "therefore." I refer to these therefores in this connection because we are trying to show how inspiredly argumentative the apostle had become. 'Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.' This is His last miracle, this is the spiritualization of all the miracles, this is the marvel to which all signs and wonders were leading up, this is the capital without which the column would have been unfinished, this the revelation of the purpose which moved His heart when he came to save the world and found His church.

It was also a great evangelical speech which Peter made. He gave the house of Israel a new chance. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly"-it is as if Peter would say, "Now you have the opportunity of escaping all the past and beginning a new and glorious future." That is the continual speech of Christianity. Every morning Christianity says, "You can make today better than yesterday. Every morning is a new chance, every new year is a new opportunity, every turn in the affairs of humanity is a new gate opened upon some higher road." Would that we had understanding of these things and could turn our chances to high spiritual use!

A Standard for the Church

All these features will characterize a revived church. We shall have heroic eloquence, profound insight into Scripture, strong grasp of the meaning and purpose of prophecy, and we shall ourselves become unanswerably argumentative in all Christian doctrine and truth when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us.

We have in Peter a standard whereby to measure ourselves. When the Holy Spirit falls upon us we shall go to the Bible with a new reading power, and we shall see wonders where before we saw nothing because of our spiritual blindness. There are portions of the Bible with which we are nominally familiar, but what do we know of its inner meanings, of the minor prophets, the out-of-the-way histories, the deep things of God? Under the enlightenment of the Spirit we shall see that everything grand in thought, thrilling in poetry, tragic in experience, noble in heroism, is in the Bible. This is the Book out of which all other books are made. All science is here, all history all fiction, all philosophy, all poetry, even the best titles of all books are in the Bible. There is nothing in any literature whose root is not to be found in the inspired volume. This is the Book out of which all other books are made, as the earth is the quarry out of which all its palaces have been dug, and as there are grander palaces in the rocks and woods than have yet been built, so there are more glorious visions in the Bible than we have yet beheld.

How slowly we realize that everything that is upon the earth actually came out of the earth itself. Is the marble palace superb? It was dug out of the earth. Is the city vast and noble-the glittering Jerusalem, imperial Rome, immeasurable Babylon and Nineveh? They were all dug out of the heart of the earth. Is the navy proud and strong? It was all cut out of the forests which fed themselves at the breast of mother earth. There is nothing upon the earth which did not come out of the earth itself. It is even so with this Bible. You have a thousand libraries, but they all came out of Gods Book, yes, the libraries that were founded, if any such there were ages before the Book was written, came out of the Book. God is older

than any book that can be written: inspiration is the most ancient fact in all history, yes, it antedates all history and makes all history possible. There are those who want to run away from the Bible and set up other books, as though they were independent and original. I will believe in their independence and originality as soon as you show me one block of polished marble that did not come out of the earth. Prove to me that you stole it from some of the upper stars, then I will believe in the independence and originality of the marble block- My own deep conviction is that the tune will come when every other book will fling itself, so to say, in loyal homage at the foot of Gods Book and say, "Whatever is good in me I owe to you." The earth grows no polished marble: the old earth will polish no blocks for you; she will, so to say, grow them for you, hold them in custody until you come for them with great iron keys and open the recesses within which she preserves them. Polishing you will have to do, squaring and measuring, all this you will have to do, but the solid block itself came out of the heart of the earth. So with all books that are good and true and wise and useful; they have their vital relation to God's Book, in whatever language written, in whatever country published, though in those languages and in those countries the Book we call God's has not yet been known.

Why do men limit inspiration-why do men want to yet trace any good thing to any source but God? If there is anything good in Mahomedanism, I claim it for Christ: He was before all things. If there is anything good in Brahmanism, I claim it for Christ. If there is anything good in the heart of the wildest savage that this day tears his fellow creatures in lands of barbarism, I claim it for Christ. My Christ is more than a merely historical figure, born on a certain day, and on a certain day crucified: the Christ in whom I believe is always born, always crucified-the same yesterday, today, and forever, not a name upon a calendar, but a name that hides itself under the foundations of everything solid, above everything brilliant, and around everything wide, and that crowns with everlasting glory everything philanthropic and noble.

As the earth owes nothing to any other world but her light, so God has made people that we carry everything in us but our own inspiration. He does not make us new in the sense of losing our old identity; He makes us new by His inspiration in the sense of lifting us up to the full expression of His own holy purpose in our original creation. We cannot inspire ourselves. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God. We are made in the divine image and likeness, we have wondrous faculties as the earth has wondrous treasures-all these are the gift of God, all these we hold in stewardship for God. But these will be in us so many weights and burdens, curses rather than blessings, unless there falls upon us the mighty Pentecostal Holy Spirit. Then shall we be our true selves, eloquent, wise, argumentative, strong, evangelical, sympathetic, new creatures in Christ Jesus through whom the Holy Spirit has been shed abroad in our hearts.

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