

This Is That (Acts ii. 16-18)

by Seth Rees

The sermon calls for a return to Spirit-led preaching that empowers all believers to share the gospel boldly and effectively.

Scripture: Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:17, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Pentecostal Preaching"

Description

Seth Rees preaches about the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the power and transformation that comes with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He highlights the need for reckless and free expression in preaching, urging believers to prophesy in various ways as led by God. Rees stresses the significance of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost's anointing, calling for a return to Pentecostal preaching that leads to genuine conversions and revival.

Transcript

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts iii 16-18.)

These are the words of the Apostle of Pentecost, repeating the prophecy of Joel, which foretold the wonderful event of Pentecost. Especially do we call attention this afternoon to the fact that the descent of the Holy Spirit, the advent of the third Person of the Trinity into this world, results immediately in the preaching of the gospel of the Son of God. As a result of the outpouring of the Spirit, the sons and daughters and servants and handmaidens prophesied. That word "prophesy" is very frequently misunderstood. The original word means "to bubble " or "to shout" or "to run over like an artesian well." Prophecy is referred to in the text we have read, as something to which all of God's people are called, for a careful study of the Word of God reveals the fact that it covers all phases of practical gospel preaching. Preaching is not preaching that does not "bubble"; that does not "spring up." Preaching is not preaching that is worked up; it must bubble up or spring up like an artesian well, to meet the New Testament standard.

We have searched the Word of God in vain to find a single trace of what is known as modern sermonizing. We can find where men, women and sons and daughters preached, but we find no trace of an attempt at sermonizing, a systematic presentation of what some people call "truth." The greatest sermons the

apostles ever preached were very largely from their own experience. From the day of Pentecost to this hour, when men have preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," it has been with a holy recklessness and freedom from any sort of manmade or human system that would put a man in bondage.

The fact is, God has called all of His children in these days to prophesy in some way, and Pentecostal preaching is that reckless, free expression of what God has done in the heart, that cannot be put under bands and will not work in harness. There were one hundred and twenty men and women, but they all began to speak, they all began to prophesy; the sons and the daughters and the handmaidens and the servants began to prophesy; they told out or let out what God had put in. That is all Paul did when he was arraigned before the council; he just turned the faucet and let the thing flow. There are a great many people who have a very false idea of what it is to preach, and there are many people sitting back and excusing themselves, saying they are not called to preach, or they are not called to talk, who ought to be up and at it.

I have a concern in my soul for the sisters in the church. Thousands are making a most lamentable mistake in waiting for some human recognition. Beloved, when we swing back to Pentecost we can not wait for the ordination of any man. We can not wait for human recognition. We can not wait for the backslidden church to get ready to ordain us. We have got to preach because God puts it in us and we must give expression to it.

What are we to preach? Beloved, if we are going to preach, we must preach that which God bids us. We are not called upon to preach science or philosophy, nor are we called to advance social schemes or theories about higher education. We are not called to do a thousand and one things that the Church has turned aside to do, but we are called to preach the gospel of the Son of God, regeneration for sinners, the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire for believers, that men may know holiness of heart and holiness of life: that men may be redeemed from sin and be brought to a place where they can know God and enjoy Him forever. God save us from modern preaching and swing us back to Pentecost!

The average preacher is preaching his way to hell, and thousands of church members hold church membership, and it will do them no more good than simply to give them a passport to the regions of the damned. All over this country people are calling for and receiving something that is human; something that is concocted in the study, something that comes upon the plane of human intellection, when God has commanded us to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." It is an appalling fact that some awful stuff is poured forth from the pulpits of many of our churches. No one who knows me can properly understand me to tirade or abuse any one; but, sir, if to know the facts is to be oppressed with a great burden, I dare to tell the facts that our people may get under a living concern and that the Church may be redeemed from the fallacy of this latter-day preaching. Lord, give us something out of the skies that will save men from an endless hell.

What do we want to preach? We do not want to preach ourselves; we want to stop that sort of thing, every one of us. It would be a good thing if we would stop testifying with a perpendicular pronoun "I" six and a half feet high at the head of our testimony. It would be a good thing if we would change things and put the Son of God to the front, and instead of saying "I am sanctified," and "I am this and I am that," if we would say "He sanctifies me wholly." If we would keep Him to the front, people would understand things better. The tendency everywhere in these days is to relegate God to the rear and promote man and bring him to the front, and the devil is helping us to do it. He wants preachers and laymen and everyone else to keep themselves to the front and leave God out. We can't afford to do that. We must preach Jesus.

We must preach the cross. I know there is some reproach connected with it, but I know that for a man who shares the reproach without complaint there is a tremendous reward. There is some persecution, but it is little compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. We are called to preach "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"; salvation for the sinner from his record and salvation for the saint from what he is that he may be filled with the Holy Ghost.

The fulfillment of the words of our text gives us victory; gives us success; insures success. How is it that all over this country men are complaining of defeat? How is it that men are mortified and say they are deeply pained that they can not have a revival? Do you know it is just as easy to have a revival this afternoon as it was eighteen centuries ago? Do you know a revival is sure to follow certain conditions, as surely as God is God, and truth is truth?

The reason we do not have a revival is because we do not preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. We need a regular Mississippi to sweep over us and carry away a whole lot of trash and give us an eternal victory. Many a man "preaches well." He is "logical," he is a "systematic thinker," he has a "delightful delivery," the people are "held in admiration," and they are free to express it, but no one gets saved! Another man comes along with no new truth, very little system and a great many objectionable features in the way he presents the unvarnished truth, and the fastidious are offended, but they get converted, and the backslidden church members are enraged, but they are shown that they are out of harmony with God, and the result is that a great and lasting revival breaks out! What is the difference? One man preached and he depended on brains and human education, and the other man preached the truth and depended on the Holy Ghost. A very popular evangelist said some time ago at the close of a fruitless series of meetings: "I can not understand it. I preached this same series of sermons in a certain city in the very same order, and there were two hundred converted." He ought to know that the Holy Ghost does not go according to order. He does not go by rule! One time the man preached and depended on the Spirit, and the Spirit honored the truth. The other time he depended on a systematic presentation of the truth he had preached somewhere else, and the Holy Ghost retired and did not honor it. Many a time He retires and does not honor our efforts because we try to repeat something we have preached somewhere else.

Many a preacher preaches well. He is entirely orthodox, but he does no good. Why? Well, because he is so immersed in his own ideas that my text fulfilled would fill him with dismay. Do you know that we have fallen upon times when things that can not be understood are not only denounced and decried, but people are afraid of anything like the supernatural. They are afraid of being fanatical. God in heaven help us!

The valley of the Nile has been famous for its fertility for thousands of years. This fertility is owing to the annual overflow. If it stayed within its banks it would serve for all the purposes of navigation, but the soil would not bring forth food, and a famine would follow. A man can not go through a round of duties simply, and yet accomplish much for God. But if he could have a freshet in his soul men could get bread from him; there would be food in God's house for the people. Lord, run us over!

The freedom from excitement that is so complimented by the world, and is so generally characteristic of the church, will never bring us a harvest of souls. We must get more reckless and more ready to preach and pray and sing and shout, regardless of what people say about us. When we get there, it will make but little difference whether people have been "ordained" or not. It will make but little difference whether you have ever had a bishop's hands on your head or not, if you get the Holy Ghost on you. If you receive the unction of the Holy One you will preach and have converts and victory, and God's name will be glorified,

and Pentecost will return.

When people receive the Holy Ghost a little child can have a revival. A little child has a revival many a time when the preacher can not. Many a revival comes to a church when it is not the preacher who is to blame for it. It is some child or some "cranky old woman" who shouts her bonnet clear over to the wrong side of her head, but who knows how to pray and wait on God until the skies part and victory comes. There is going to be a great change after a while, and many a tall fellow is coming down and many an insignificant person is going up. When the judgment is set there will be such a changing of things as will astonish many a tall-hatted preacher and many an elder, and many obscure souls who are God's valiants but who will not even remember when they did anything extraordinary. It was all recorded, and they remember it up there.

O, the blessed results of the pouring out of the Spirit. The man of weakness becomes a man of power; the woman of timidity and bashfulness becomes a steady-voiced witness to the work of God in her heart. Do you remember the account of the sanctification of Jacob? Do you recall how the blessing the Lord bestowed upon him on the bank of the brook Jabbok transformed his whole nature and life?

Years before there had been estrangement between Jacob and his brother Esau, and now as Jacob starts home from his sojourn with Laban, his father-in-law, he learns that his angry brother is coming to meet him with an armed host. Ah, how fearful is the heart of Jacob! How his courage flees! In his desperation he calls earnestly upon God: "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear lest he will come and smite the mother with the children." Then the Lord comes and seeks to break his will and get him to a place of complete consecration. At last he yields and confesses that his name is Jacob (Supplanter). Now the blessing comes, and the Lord says, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (a Prince of God), for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed."

How different is the life of the man henceforth. Esau is conquered by merely meeting his brother. Peace is made at once without a particle of bloodshed. Henceforth the life of Jacob is changed and made blessedly powerful.

Peniel corresponds to Pentecost and gives us power with God and with men. My fellow preacher, do you want your words to have effect when you preach? Do you want men to quail and tremble and turn to God? Then get power with God, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and power with men will naturally flow from it.

It was this baptism, this anointing, that made Caughey a red hot revivalist. Before it came he was weak like any ordinary preacher, but no sooner was the Spirit poured out than he became a messenger from God, whose words shook men's hearts as the wind shakes the leaves.

Nothing else than this anointing with the Holy Ghost would ever have made a soul winner out of Sammy Morris, the Kru boy. He was ignorant, unlearned, and only a short time out of the jungles, but on the night of his arrival in New York seventeen men were brought to the feet of the Savior through his instrumentality. It is a wonderful power that can take a poor heathen lad and make of him a more successful soul saver than white-haired clergymen who have been in training for scores of years. What is this power? It is the power of Pentecost; the power of the anointing of which Joel speaks.

Do you know it is a burning shame the way the Holy Ghost is neglected in these days? No man is fit to minister God's Word until he has had this holy anointing with the Holy Ghost. Yet men are seeking every other equipment but this absolutely necessary one. What is Hebrew? What is elocution? What is

sociology? What is rhetoric? Can these things put a mysterious power on men's souls and make them yield to God? Can these things make men weep for sin? No; only the Pentecostal baptism will do this.

It is alarming how men turn away from the ministry. Eight hundred ministers left the work of preaching last year and went into the practice of law or the work of journalism or some other work to which God had not called them.

There is no nobler, more blessed work than that of preaching for Christ to never dying souls. The reason some men shirk it and forsake it is because they have not had the preparation for it, viz.: the enduement with the Spirit. He who has had his Pentecost would rather preach than eat, and he would preach if he had to hire people to listen to him.

Is there some one here who feels that his or her talents are small and yet there is a desire in the heart to preach? Let me tell you God is as glad to get you as he is the college graduate. It was to John, the untutored, and not to Paul, the pupil of Gamaliel, that the apocalypse was given, and God will give as much success and as clear a revelation of Himself to the man of meager gifts as to the one of more extraordinary talents.

We forget, sir, that if some one receives the Holy Ghost it means the conversion of sinners, and we forget that if Christians are filled with the Holy Ghost they can touch a button that will turn on a current from the upper skies until men will come tottering to the feet of Jesus Christ. If you receive the Holy Ghost you can preach; you need no man to ordain you. Our boys and our girl sought to preach, and I am here with a message to tell you to preach.

At all hazards, preach! You say, "I am nothing, I can do nothing." Well, God bless you, let the thing go for nothing, and let God have a chance. All He wants is a shepherd's sling or a ram's horn. All He needs to confuse the Midianites and have victory is just a three-cent loaf of barley meal to tumble down into the camp. If God could get a chance at holiness people here, you would not have to be ashamed of holiness in Cincinnati; it would go through these streets and through these alleys like the Mississippi goes through the valley when she is on a tear, clearing away rubbish and sweeping away obstacles. When you get the Holy Ghost you will not have to apologize for holiness. It will make its own impression on people. God bless you, it will defend itself.

The reason we have to "defend holiness" is because we have not got the pure article on hand. When the fire jumped out of heaven at Carmel it scattered unbelief, and when fire comes on you unbelief hides its accursed head in everlasting shame, and God's people take on an air of victory and courage and strength that frightens the devil. God save us from this "holiness" that has to be apologized for! You hold a ten days' meeting and spend all your time apologizing for holiness, and wonder why the meeting is a failure! I for one am not going to any field and suffer defeat. Not until I know they are bankrupt in heaven and until there is no more power in the throne, will I ever suffer defeat on my field. Cincinnati is a hard enough field, but God stretched people out here on this floor last night as if they were ready for the coffin. God saved people here at this altar as if it was an easy field. It is time we got through our talk about "gospel hardened" fields. There are milk and water surfeited fields. There are places where they have preached nonsense until people are tired of it, but I tell you there is an awful dearth of the real gospel. Real Holy Ghost preaching will succeed anywhere and everywhere.

We demand success of everyone else but preachers and Christians, and why do we not demand success of them? We have no time, life is too short, eternity is too long, hell is too awful, and sin is too damning, for

us to employ men who do not have converts. We can have success. A child preaches and prays and sings in the Holy Ghost and people weep and laugh and shout and get converted, and no one seems to be responsible for it. Over there is a man with all logic and eloquence and a system of orthodox truth who does his very best and every one seems to be interested, but no one is converted; but yonder is an old man who has not much more than half sense, but he is filled with the Spirit, and he gets up and utters a few words and the whole audience takes fire. You have heard some one sing, -- how beautifully they sang! How the people admired it and how beautiful that voice was, but no one was saved. There was, however, an old black woman who sang in the Holy Ghost and the whole audience wept.

God in heaven give us something that will moisten people's eyes. In these days, when everything is dry, we need something that will touch people's hearts. The fire of the Holy Ghost will do it. Many a preacher has had more converts in a single week after he received his Pentecost than he had in ten years' preaching before. James Caughey was an ordinary preacher until he was sanctified wholly, and then he ran like a blaze of fire all over England and all over America, and myriads of people were converted to God. We have lots of ordinary preachers today who would be extraordinary preachers if they were filled with the Holy Ghost. We have lots of preachers who are extraordinary in their own eyes who if sanctified would be very ordinary in their own sight, but they would have a great deal more success than they are having.

In conclusion, I want to say that the call of God is upon us. I do not know whether I will ever come to Cincinnati again or not, but if I do, and find you people sitting around in the same nest you are in now, I will find you backslidden from God. I might just as well deal plainly with you. We can not feather our nest and settle down and take care of ourselves, and retain our experience. We must "preach it and pray it and sing it and shout it." We must go to every house, we must go to the cellars and garrets; we must go among the wharves along the river; we must go everywhere and carry the gospel of the Son of God. You can preach the gospel with your mouth and with your money and in your business. You can preach it in a great many ways if you have God with you. I notice when people have received the Holy Ghost they are looking out for ways to spread the truth. A colored man went from these meetings to one of the hotels last night and brought a stranger down here, and God brought him to the altar and saved him. He had come all the way from Detroit down here on purpose to get this salvation, and he did not know what he had come for. And the colored man was the means of bringing him to God.

If we get this blessing we will preach it some way. There is one way in which we can all preach it. When God called me out of a delightful pastorate and a lovely home and a salary of sixteen hundred dollars, and I laid it all down without the promise of a dollar, and agreed to live in a trunk from January to January, He put in my soul the burning desire to get this message to the greatest possible number of people. So He impressed me that I could preach it and write it and give it away and circulate it in holiness books and holiness literature. All over this country He has blessed me in giving away books and papers and scattering this gospel. Any one can preach the gospel thus, and yet people sit around and say, "I do not know how I can do it." You can do it by buying books and giving them away. You can do it by taking a paper and giving it to other people. You can do it by sending the gospel to your unsanctified pastor, and your unsanctified brothers and sisters.

The time is coming when we must invest money in things that will go for something in the upper skies. The time is here when we must give some thought to things that will never die. If we do not we are going to get lean in our souls. I know people who are just ready to dry up and blow away simply because they have failed to keep step with God in spreading the truth. In fact, until we come to the place where we are ready

to give out everything that God puts in us, we can not hope to prosper. God help us this afternoon to spread this gospel; to preach it in every way possible. My concern this afternoon is that people may receive the Holy Ghost. My concern is that people may receive the Spirit who will make them prophesy. I know of girls, servant girls, who are prophesying in such a way as to astonish angels.

I know a girl who received the Holy Ghost and she could hardly speak a word of plain English, and her worldly mistress and her husband got under awful conviction, and they did not know what they would do. One morning they were at the breakfast table. There was a lovely breakfast, but they could not eat it. They did not ordinarily have much use for Mary in the dining room, but that morning they had to have Mary. They could not think of any one else who knew how to teach them and they sent for her -- she was frying batter cakes in the kitchen, and she came in and was enabled to lead those people to Jesus Christ. You can be so full of salvation when you are frying batter cakes that folks will send for you. You can be so full of salvation when you are blacking a man's boots that he will want you to tell him about salvation. If people had the Holy Ghost they could scatter this fire everywhere. God help us to receive Him. Cincinnati, O.,
Afternoon of Dec. 5, 1898

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